

Traces of the Past: Documents, Literacy, and Liturgy in Medieval Japan

Thomas D. Conlan

Few today can read the documents of the Kamakura era and of those who can, and who teach in North America, most, if not all, were trained by Jeffrey Mass. His advanced seminar in Japanese sources attracted a select number of students, for to enter one had to be well versed in modern and classical Japanese. The first meeting, held in his office, proved memorable. Jeff, seated at his desk, near where a sketched portrait of Yoritomo looked on approvingly, solemnly read an 1184 Yoritomo edict (*kudashibumi*), from the Jingoji archives, and I, along with my classmate, Rob Eskildsen, took copious notes on the pronunciation.¹ We were then required to read and translate five documents for the next week. For, as Jeff confided, “you cannot fully understand them unless you read them out loud.”

I managed to read the documents and translate them, and every week Jeff would correct our pronunciation and discuss our translations. Some passages proved so opaque that we all debated the precise meaning. Jeff was always open to new interpretations, even admitting on occasion errors in his own published translations. This course opened up the world of Kamakura documents, and I remember being enthralled by their content: the endless, complex judicial cases that included references to cormorant fishers and fish tribute, absconding paper makers, nuns on guard duty, or daughters named “Crane Demon.”² After going to Japan to conduct my dissertation research, my experiences in Kyoto University mirrored those at Stanford, but now we were reading original handwritten

documents, rather than published versions. Again, the emphasis was on fluent reading. Much of my graduate training in Japan, it seemed, consisted of learning the art of reading such difficult sources.

Accuracy in reading sources has determined scholarly reputation, particularly in Japan, and explains the seemingly pedantic debates concerning the proper pronunciation of a particular term. Nevertheless, the definitive pronunciation of some terms remains unknown. For example, a directive is called a *migyōsho* by Tokyo scholars, while in Kyoto the same document is invariably read as *mikyōjo*.³ Because Jeff was trained in Tokyo, he adopted the *migyōsho* reading, and I could see my Kyoto tutors wince when I followed his lead.

I assumed that the necessity of reading documents aloud stemmed from their inherent difficulty. Most were written only in Chinese characters, in the manner of *kanbun*, which profoundly differs from Japanese language structure and pronunciation. In the medieval era, too, basic competence in recognizing Chinese characters was rare. Taira Tsunetaka, writing in the mid-thirteenth century, characterized one gathering of high-ranking nobles as “infantile,” while lambasting one courtier for confusing the character for the “eight ministries” of state with a similar one of radically different meaning, resulting in the erroneous rendition of the “eight tigers.”⁴ The essayist Yoshida Kenkō, writing in the early fourteenth century, preserved an anecdote about a physician who was ridiculed for failing to identify the radical for a Chinese character, a mistake that cast doubt on his competence in medicinal and pharmacological matters.⁵

On the other hand, proficiency in reading, writing, and interpreting texts, especially ones which had come to be seen as repositories of significant cultural wisdom, added much to a person’s standing. Yoshida Sadafusa, an able administrator, was immortalized as one of the “Three Fusa,” or three masters of calligraphy of the fourteenth century.⁶ One of the bases for his reputation lay in his ability to copy out, and presumably understand, obscure texts such as the *Kojiki*, the oldest written

history of Japan.⁷ Sadafusa’s political forecast proved less accurate, for he argued that the Kamakura bakufu was at the height of its powers only a few years before it collapsed.⁸ Sadafusa also leaked word of Go-Daigo’s plot to overthrow Kamakura in 1331, which caused his emperor to endure arrest and exile. However, Sadafusa’s reputation seems not to have suffered, for when Go-Daigo destroyed the bakufu and returned to power in 1333, he promptly reinstated Sadafusa as an adviser.⁹

Documents, and those exhibiting facility reading them, thus enjoyed a social and political significance beyond their literal content. Rather than focus on administrative content per se, this essay will explore how documents served as an important medium. At one level, the act of writing served as a physical link to the individual. In addition to its indisputable legal value, the handwritten document had a talismanic link to its author, and the document itself could stand as a valid representation of his physical body. On another level, documents, themselves a formalization of language, were written to be read flawlessly out loud by qualified individuals. The act of reading a document served to make its contents “real”—less a trace of the author, as one might assume, than of his actual voice. The aural presence of documents thus served as their own truth, requiring the formality of response as if the person writing them were present. Documents, in this sense, functioned as a kind of liturgy, which required exacting precision from the scribe in reproducing the oral sounds, and the messenger, who could take these ritual cues and allow them to be heard as they had been spoken. Hence, considerable influence and prestige accrued to those who were capable of fluently reading documents, particularly the more difficult sources of the court, for only through their pronouncements could the voice of those in authority exist. The most important admonitions, orders or explanations had to be drawn orally from documents, for in order to be real, and realized, they had to be heard.

Oral Arguments, Petitions, and the Increasing Importance of Literacy

In Japan, the act of reading initially entailed the vocalization of written records. Members of the court were most proficient in reading, and during the ninth century, they stopped voicing administrative documents, preferring instead to peruse them in silence.¹⁰ This process remained limited to the confines of court administration. Appeals to the court and contracts of sale continued to be read aloud.

Speaking documents (mōshijō)

One particularly old genre of documents, known quite literally as “spoken documents” or *mōshijō*, functioned as petitions. They represented utterances that were encoded in writing at the time of their creation, and were spoken aloud during all subsequent exchanges. The format is of a direct quotation, for the word “states” (*iwaku* 云), marks the beginning of speech which ends with a final quotation mark, known as *teheri* (者). The first reference to such a document appears quite early in Japanese history, for a bill of sale of slaves.¹¹ The embedded quote in this *mōshijō* may be translated as “the petition states that these slaves were purchased.”¹² After questioning the veracity of these words (*kyojitsu toiseshime*), three people agreed to serve as guarantors, or witnesses for the sale of slaves. The original statement (*mōshijō*) was then embedded in a witness’s statement vouching for the transaction, and formalized on 10.21.748.

Other documents reveal that *mōshijō* were generated after an oral statement. Thus, someone described merely as a “woman,” presumably a wife or daughter of a certain Hiroyoshi, spoke (*mōshi iwaku*) about a land transfer to district officials, who then created a *mōshijō* that recorded her words, thereby granting them the stamp of authority.¹³ *Mōshijō* were written down in the presence of the one who spoke their words, and this person had to be present when others heard its words.

A new term, *taiketsu*, came to describe the actual meeting of aggrieved parties, each armed with documentary statements.¹⁴

In one of the earliest uses of the term, a 1076 inspection of documents (*monjo no taiketsu*) met with difficulty because one party failed to appear. This reveals that documents themselves had to be explained or described by those contesting land rights.¹⁵ A *taiketsu* required plaintiff and defendant to be physically present. This practice seems to have continued in the early Kamakura era, for the shrine attendants (*shōji*) of Nitta Hachiman Shrine traveled to the capital in order to state their case. Likewise, the Nitta Hachiman document reveals that on the provincial level, a document was then issued on the day that “particulars” concerning a dispute were stated (*shisai o gonjō seshimuru hi*), suggesting again that documents were created through transcribing actually spoken words.¹⁶

Despite the rise of more formalized institutions of adjudication in the thirteenth century, the notion remained that individuals actually needed to state their cases orally. Written evidence served to formalize statements, but plaintiffs needed to be heard during court proceedings. In some court cases, individuals were summoned for personal meetings, or *taiketsu*, and they also argued their cases at the bakufu court of appeals (*teichū*).¹⁷ Picture scrolls commissioned by Takezaki Suenaga, a Kyushu warrior who traveled to Kamakura just to speak to a bakufu official, provide one of the most vivid examples of such an encounter. Suenaga had an artist depict his official meeting, and he recorded verbatim his debate over the precise meaning of documents describing actions against the Mongol invaders of 1274.¹⁸

After the Kamakura regime’s creation of a comprehensive legal code in 1232 (*Goseibai shikimoku*, or Jōei code), the ability to decipher the language appearing in documents gained importance, despite the continued oral nature of legal defenses. Those unable to read or write seem to have been stigmatized, for the pejorative term “text blindness” (*monmō* 文盲) begins to appear in documents around that time.¹⁹ Some used their illiteracy to justify spurious accusations, but the illiterate proved to be at a disadvantage in most legal cases. They not only lacked

an understanding of the law, but they also had to rely on others to present their documents at court.²⁰ An inability to read became the basis for declaring incompetence among officials. In 1242, the head of the Ise Inner Shrine declared an attendant unable to understand objects of antiquity because he was illiterate, and prevented him from traveling to the capital.²¹

The writing of documents "in one's own hand"

With increasing recourse to Kamakura law and the need to transmit and defend land transactions in court, those who could read and write had an advantage in maintaining their property. Wills proved to be particularly significant for transmitting land rights, most commonly in the form of confirming authority to manage the land. In order to be accepted as valid, these documents had to be written by the land donor.²² It was much easier to write in the phonetic *kana* syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*) than in *kanbun*, and this partially explains the increase in records written phonetically in Japanese. In one case, a donor had a conveyance prepared in *kanbun* by a scribe, but then added in *hiragana* the comment that "as [proof] for the future, I have written in my own hand on the reverse." He wrote his name in *hiragana* and added his signature.²³ In another example, Kumagai Naotoki attested to the veracity of his testament, which he had written in *hiragana*, with the comment that, "as this is in my own hand, there will be no later doubt."²⁴ When the donor was incapacitated, a scribe could be relied upon to a limited degree, but some appended statement remained necessary. In one such case, the author declared that "this should be in my own hand, but [I] had trouble seeing and writing proves difficult so I had a scribe record the list [of statues and sutras at Ise's Kōmyōji] and wrote only this postscript (*tetsuki*) in my own hand."²⁵

The increasing numbers of documents in the Kamakura era

The Kamakura period (1185–1333) witnessed a marked growth in literacy. Analysis of chronological compendia of Japanese documents reveals roughly how the numbers

of surviving sources increased in Japan. The *Heian ibun*, a compilation of documents from the Heian era (794–1185), consists of thirteen volumes and 5,775 documents while the *Kamakura ibun* (1186–1333) comprises forty-six volumes and 35,036 documents.²⁶ The first thirteen volumes of the *Kamakura ibun* cover only eighty-three years (1185–1268), in contrast with the Heian period, where reaching a similar number of documents required a span of nearly a hundred years. At the same time, although omissions are rife, the final thirteen volumes of the *Kamakura ibun* cover only twenty-eight years (1306–1334), providing ample testimony to the increasing amount of written documentation.

Wills or testaments conveying property, written by provincial landholders, and judicial documents recounting disputes over property account for some of the increased volume of Kamakura documents. For the Heian period, 207 testaments (*yuzurijō*) survive, with over three quarters written after 1123 and fully half written just between 1158 and 1185. The Kamakura period witnessed a tenfold increase in testaments (2,946) written or referred to in judicial documents.²⁷ Of these, 655 were written phonetically in one or another of the two *kana* syllabaries. The number of wills so written increased dramatically, with as many surviving for the years 1300–1333 as for the years 1185–1300.²⁸

Methods of Writing

Some scholars have postulated that the two phonetic scripts used in testaments functioned differently, with the blocky *katakana* used virtually as italics to express utterances such as oaths. Amino Yoshihiko theorized that this distinction explains the use of *katakana* in modern times to convey sounds, while syllables written in cursive *hiragana* are used for standard administrative documents.²⁹ Unfortunately, this generalization overlooks the fact that the systematic use of one type or another did not terribly concern the denizens of the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Wills were written in both *katakana* and the

more common *hiragana*.³⁰ Some individuals wrote functionally similar documents with both *kana*. Hōjō Shigetoki, for example, wrote one precept in *katakana*, and another in *hiragana*.³¹ Some documents even mixed both phonetic forms indiscriminately.³²

Katakana seems to have been thought the easier to write, for as Kanezawa Sanetoki explained, somewhat defensively in a testament to his son, “as the days pass my illness worsens, and as the years have passed, now my hand shakes, my eyes cannot see but I have written this in my own hand thus.”³³ *Katakana* remained a favored means of clarifying Buddhist texts, and one sees that inhabitants of regions located near the great temples, such as Mt. Kōya, tended to use this script more commonly. Generally, however, no systematic rationale fully explains differences in usage for the two syllabaries.

In addition to the absence of any standard or systematic usage of *kana*, no common pronunciation existed for numerous words. Documents written in *kana* reveal important variations in the pronunciation of even the most significant offices or terms. For example, the Mōri of western Japan pronounced the office (*shiki*) of *jitō*, which determined status as a provincial warrior, as *jitō shoku* rather than *jitō shiki*.³⁴ Such a pronunciation, if offered by a graduate student today, would be deemed erroneous. Likewise, the names of provinces sometimes appear incorrectly. The nun Shinmyō, who was in fact a resident of Bungo province in Kyushu, wrote out the province name as Fuko or perhaps Bugo in one of her wills.³⁵ For another example, the famous era name Jōei was read by the Fukabori of northern Kyushu as Tei’ei.³⁶ These differences in pronunciation are obscured, however, because official documents, particularly edicts of *jitō* investiture, were written solely with Chinese characters.

Documents written in *kanbun* possessed more prestige than those in *kana* and avoided vagaries in pronunciation. When Kamakura quoted phonetically written wills in its judicial documents, the *kana* were transcribed into *kanbun* by officials adept at the more difficult style of writing.³⁷ Writing in *kanbun* had its appeal for petitioners, for it allowed them to conceal that

they did not necessarily know the “proper” pronunciation for some place names, important offices, or era names.

Important documents of investiture were sometimes rewritten phonetically so that provincial warriors could read them out loud.³⁸ Given the large numbers of provincial warriors and their wives, daughters, or mothers represented in documents, a substantial percentage of the population wrote wills, but only the more educated could read or write in *kanbun*. When coupled with variations in dialect, this meant that one could write phonetically, or even recognize, Chinese characters and yet still be unable to pronounce them properly.

The documents of the Aokata family, from the geographically isolated Gotō islands, are unusually well preserved. They contain an original Kamakura bakufu judicial decision and a *hiragana* copy of that decision, which was a record of the messenger’s speech.³⁹ When the Aokata received an important edict, they reproduced it in *kana* so that they could in turn read this record precisely. Concern over the proper reading of a name or term partially explains why the Aokata went to the trouble of reproducing a long court case phonetically. At the same time, replication in *hiragana* suggests that they themselves intended to read this document to relatives, retainers, rivals, and their descendants as well. Long after the Kamakura messenger had departed, the judgment and words of the document would continue to reverberate throughout the Gotō islands.

The act of individually writing a will mattered more than its actual content. Phonetically written wills continued to predominate, but some heroically attempted to write in Chinese, copying a *kanbun* will even though they were illiterate. One such example, written by Mataga Muneie on 1.11.1422, contains minimal *kana*, but the characters are in an unsteady hand, and have a tendency to slope to the right, as was often the case for the texts of an unskilled writer. Mataga Muneie most likely copied a scribe’s template to the best of his abilities, but his weakness of hand forced him to explain that: “[I] the writer am illiterate but

my lord should not doubt this record's authenticity." Poignantly, he wrote "illiterate" incorrectly.

The personal writing of wills served as legal proof of intent, and was evidence of the "presence" of the individual. Any personal communication seems to have required that the person actually be the one who wrote the words. This meant, in cases of illiteracy, that individuals such as Mataga Muneie copied down records that they otherwise could not understand. Letters were likewise expected to be in the hand of the writer.⁴⁰ In addition, documents in a person's hand were considered an extension of the individual's body. For example, the letters of Yamanouchi Tsuneyuki, a warrior who died in battle during the fourteenth century, were cut into small pieces, and stamped with images of either the *Fudō* or *Daikokuten* deities.⁴¹ These documents served as a trace of the deceased, and a means of praying for his salvation, or rebirth. At the same time, the paper might have an image printed on it, thereby making it a talisman that could be, if necessary, ingested to allow the health of a stricken individual to recover.⁴²

In sum, documents written in one's own hand possessed a special legal and cultural significance. They served as evidence of the wishes expressed by an individual. They also served as a trace, or talisman, of an individual, as with the letters of the unfortunate Yamanouchi Tsuneyuki. Some documents even functioned as a kind of liturgy, for they allowed messengers to reproduce the actual voices of individuals, and the sound of the voice functioned as a disembodied truth. This meant that those who read the documents possessed an important role as speakers or interpreters of this particular reality.

Documents as Disembodied Voices

The act of voiced reading served to formalize edicts, much as mastery of knowledge today in graduate school is formalized through an oral defense.⁴³ The significance of hearing the sound mattered more than formalization, for in the case of Kamakura documents, they were thought to constitute the disembodied

voices of the writers when heard. The same respect was due these words as to the individual who had had them committed to paper.

Writing, in other words, was not an end unto itself. Rather, the written paper served as the medium for conveying these utterances. The one who read from this medium had to do so flawlessly, for his words constituted disembodied speech of another. It was through hearing that one gained a sense of the truth. Added explanations carried weight equal to the text itself, for voiced words were most "real." Hence, a messenger had to be deeply trusted.

The *Azuma kagami*, a late thirteenth-century compilation of sources that constitutes a history of the Kamakura regime, provides valuable evidence of contemporary behavior, even though on occasion it has not been absolutely accurate in institutional chronology.⁴⁴ One memorable episode, drawn here from Minoru Shinoda's translation, illustrates Minamoto Yoritomo's behavior upon his initial receipt, in the fourth month of 1180, of the edict that would legitimate his uprising:

27th day. Today the edict (*ryōji*) of Takakura no Miya [Prince Mochihito] was delivered by Minamoto Yukiie to Minamoto Yoritomo at the Hōjō Residence in Izu province. The Military Protector [Yoritomo], wearing ceremonial robes and bowing respectfully toward distant Otokoyama, gave instructions to have the pronouncement opened and read.⁴⁵

Yoritomo's listening to the words voiced by Yukiie demonstrated what was considered typical practice, even though one cannot verify that he actually listened to these documents in this manner. The nature of Yoritomo's reaction suggests that the words voiced by Yukiie, the messenger, were those of the prince who was actually dead by this point, causing Yoritomo to bow to Mochihito's presumed current location at Otokoyama.

Fictional accounts also suggest that the reading of documents, particularly important edicts, occurred commonly,

and they provide rich detail regarding the ceremony of having these documents read. The *Genpei jōsuiki*, a fourteenth-century chronicle of the Genpei War (1180–1185), describes how Yoritomo washed his hands, gargled (*ugaishite*), and changed into clean clothes before the messenger Mongaku read to him a document from the retired emperor Go-Shirakawa.⁴⁶ In another passage from this tale, Yoritomo dispatched an edict to Miura Yoshimura, who changed into white robes, put on a formal standing cap (*eboshi*), washed his hands and rinsed out his mouth (*kuchi susugi nando shite*). He then had the document from Yoritomo opened and read to all the relatives of the Miura, along with retainers (*rōtō*) and even low-ranking followers (*zōshiki*).⁴⁷ The reply, when given, was likewise proffered orally.⁴⁸ Thus, the giving and receiving of documents occurred quite literally as a formal conversation that required a purification of hands (which held the document) and mouth (which voiced it), suggesting that the one who read the documents might even be seen as functioning as a kind of shaman who brought back the traces, or speech, of another.

Even more prosaic orders were voiced. For example, Kamakura officials read their edicts out loud to their “housemen” (*gokenin*). A 1305 letter (*shojō*) by Kurasu Kaneo describes how, in the aftermath of a rebellion by Hōjō Tokimura, warriors residing in the capital and Rokuhara council members (*hyōjoshū*) were summoned to hear an edict (*migyōsho*) read (literally, “read and listened to” [*yomikikasare sōrai owannu*]) by the head of the Rokuhara headquarters.⁴⁹

Social superiors read important orders out loud to their subordinates. The practice was quite common, and varied references exist to documents being “read and listened to.” The priest Nichiren added the following postscript to his document: “All my disciples and followers should read and listen to this letter. Those who are serious in their resolve should discuss it with one another.”⁵⁰ Variations in language exist, for one finds references to “have read,” or, most commonly, having someone “read and state” (*yomimōsu*) their content.⁵¹ For example, Sahara

Naritsura “read and stated” a retired emperor’s edict (*inzen*) at a Kamakura bakufu council.⁵² The notion of having documents read out loud for others suggests a shift in consciousness from the Heian to Kamakura periods. For the Heian period, although thirty-three references exist to prayers and documents read at court (*yomimōsu*), during this era no examples exist of documents being read out loud, and only occasional references to documents being “seen.”⁵³

The rationale for this shift in Kamakura times seems to be that the written words when read had a formality and weight otherwise missing from regular conversation. Nichiren demanded that his followers hear his words, not merely read them silently. Likewise, Hōjō Shigetoki wrote to his son that “to impart my precepts by word of mouth would be inadequate; that is why I have put them into writing. Never show them to a stranger; but in your spare time you should get someone in whom you can have complete trust to read them aloud to you while you listen carefully to every detail.”⁵⁴ Carl Steenstrup and other commentators have suggested that this message implies that Shigetoki’s son was too young to read at the time, but this conclusion seems mistaken.⁵⁵ A second letter, written considerably later in life, contains similar sentiments, namely that words when written had a formality and weight that something merely spoken did not:

While I would like to explain to you by word of mouth how to achieve this [i.e., be a person whom others remember fondly] I am aware that there may be no suitable occasion to do so. For this reason I have put my ideas into writing, in proper form, and here present them to you. When you have nothing else to do, read them carefully. But let no one else see them!⁵⁶

In another precept, Shigetoki specified that his son was to “try then to get together in a small group and read them quietly together.”⁵⁷ He who read the document out loud spoke with Shigetoki’s presumed voice. This record had to be kept a secret, for only those worthy of hearing Shigetoki’s voice were to be

given access to this record. The most trusted individual of all, however, was he who read these precepts, for by sounding them out, he reproduced the voice of Shigetoki, and was obligated to do so precisely and accurately.

The significance of messengers

Messengers possessed the voice of authority when reading documents out loud. Their power doing this proved great, and was enhanced because they not only read documents, but by voicing them, concurrently interpreted them as well. A passage from the *Mineaiki* proves informative, for it reveals how messengers explained, or contextualized, these texts. Accordingly, “On the twenty-fifth day of the eighth month of 1331, at half past the hour of the cock [6 p.m.], a messenger from the protector (*shugo*) [of the province] arrived, unfolded an edict (*migyōsho*) and said “To the *jitō* and *gokenin* (*onchū*) [of the province]: During the past night of the twenty-third, [the emperor] departed from the palace (*kinri*). Find another time to travel to the capital.”” To this opaque message, the messenger added the following verbal statement, which is quoted directly: “This is the beginning of upheaval in the realm,” thereby suggesting that travel to the capital at this time would be construed as an act of political rebellion.⁵⁸ Hence, orders could be given, but nuance or context was best expressed verbally by messengers. The distinction allowed for discretion.

Messengers transmitted documents in a way which gave weight to their words, in order to emphasize that they were not mere disseminators of rumor. Above all, they orally conveyed the most important content, which had not been explicitly recorded in documents. This can be gleaned from contemporary writings. One fourteenth-century document declares that “I would be delighted if you could question and listen to the messenger, as I have told him what I have intended to say. Please state the particulars [of your situation] to the messenger.”⁵⁹ Other documents, such as one written by Kanezawa Sadaaki, are notable for an almost singular lack of content, serving only to vouch for the veracity of a messenger’s oral comments. Sadaaki would, for example,

write: “As the situation is not yet settled, [I] shall abbreviate this letter. Respectfully.”⁶⁰ Save for notifying his compatriot of a disturbance, his letter contains almost no information. Most likely, however, the messenger who brought this letter to the priest Meinin would have verbally explained the situation in more detail. This conduct becomes manifest in another document describing the rebellion of Hōjō Tokimura. Here, Sadaaki writes “concerning the unusual circumstances these days (*yo no ue no koto chinji sōrō*) the details of those events will be stated by Shukuen.”⁶¹ By writing this missive, Sadaaki did not record any sensitive information, but he ensured that Shukuen’s narrative would not be dismissed as unsubstantiated rumor. Messengers, then, orally conveyed sensitive and significant information, which is why they were so important, and why, during the outbreak of a civil war, their capture proved significant.⁶²

Messengers possessed discretion as well, not only to explain documents, but at times to withhold information, or threaten to do so. Sadaaki would write of how a messenger was unable to explain the particulars of his promotion, which suggests that these men had the discretion to withhold certain information.⁶³ Such behavior appears again in the fictionalized *Genpei jōsuiki*, where the priest Mongaku purportedly refuses to convey information to Yoritomo without a prior confirmation of lands.⁶⁴

The speech of emperors

Messengers proved most significant when conveying messages from the court, and the need to enunciate imperial documents explains the particular format of these records. *Rinji*, an imperial order that was issued by a secretariat (*kurōdo*), marked a simplification of the mechanisms for transmitting records that bypassed the older institutions of court bureaucracy. These new documents provided a method of conveying speech by directly quoting the imperial command. The oldest surviving *rinji* from the emperor Go-Reizei dates from 1054 and reads:

It has been ordered as follows. From this night, [you] are to arrive and serve. So [I have received] the personal imperial order (*rinji*). The Captain of the Bodyguards of the Right (*Ukonoe chūjō*) Takatoshi reports this respectfully (*uketamawaru*). 2.12.

Respectfully (*kinjō*): To the head (*zasu*) of Daigo temple (Daigoji).⁶⁵

Go-Reizei's spoken order, "From this night, [you] are to arrive and serve" was transmitted to the *kurōdo*, Takatoshi, who concurrently served as the "Captain of the Bodyguards of the Right." Takatoshi wrote this imperial command, which served as a medium of transmitting it to the head of Daigoji, who in turn was to serve as a protector priest, issuing prayers for the welfare of the imperial body. A messenger took this document and conveyed it to Ningai, the Daigoji priest. The document served as a vehicle to ensure that the words were conveyed as precisely as possible, and that, through a messenger, the imperial voice could be heard.

Secretariats possessed great skill in calligraphy, and their fluid cursive *hiragana* contrasts sharply with the blocky, clear *katakana* style of Kamakura wills and judicial documents. Of all orders and edicts, those from the secretariats possessed the ultimate prestige. They confirmed rights to the land and were faithfully enforced by the bakufu. In sum, orders from the secretariat's office (*kurōdo*) of an emperor were known as *rinji*, and those issued from a retired emperor's office were called *inzen*. Both documentary forms linked the sacerdotal prestige of sovereign authority, or the authority of the lord who rules (*chiten no kimi*), with the mundane minutiae of policy. Even though thirteenth-century Japan was judicially fragmented, the exalted nature of these orders remained unquestioned.

Imperial orders constituted the physical manifestation of authority. Through an almost metonymic process, these pieces of paper constituted tangible representation of the state and were awarded the same respect due to its officials. Picture scrolls reveal that when a man received such a document, he did so

in his most formal court robes, with his family arrayed around him respectfully.⁶⁶ The mystique of these documents proved so great that some families, such as the Iriki, kept their *rinji* and *inzen* in a special box, separated from all other records.⁶⁷ In other instances, imperial documents were preserved in brocade bags, and their prestige could be transformed into sacerdotal power. Aso Korenao, for example, perished in battle in 1336, and the brocade bag containing his documents was discovered in a remote valley by a commoner. The bag was then presented to a local *jitō*, who in turn handed the documents over to the Aso shrine because the deity claimed the imperial edict (*rinji*) as a treasure of the gods (*kami no ontakara nari*).⁶⁸

As these documents were thought to represent imperial authority, the voice of the emperor, or the sovereign himself, the act of throwing one of these edicts to the ground was regarded as an "unspeakable and outrageously evil act" demanding the strictest punishment.⁶⁹ Such conduct was conceived as the equivalent of striking the person of the emperor. Even in the midst of military campaigns, generals stopped to read or listen to imperial messages as if the emperor were present. Not only would individual generals serving on behalf of the court read imperial edicts (*senji*) aloud with their helmets removed, but even armies advancing against the court would pause and carefully listen to an imperial missive.⁷⁰

For example, in 1221, a messenger carrying Go-Toba's edict (*inzen*) confronted the attacking Kamakura bakufu army. Hōjō Yasutoki, behaving as if he were meeting the sovereign, immediately dismounted and removed his helmet as a sign of respect. He then promptly searched for someone in his army who possessed the requisite knowledge and ability to read this edict accurately, representing the exalted personage who had ordered it produced.⁷¹ According to the *Azuma kagami*, only a miniscule number would have been qualified to read the message flawlessly.⁷² This episode is not indicative of Yasutoki's literacy; it was he who created Kamakura's legal code and frequently adjudicated disputes. Rather, it suggests that the ability to read

such a document aloud was confined to a handful of “experts,” who might transmit the imperial voice with perfection.⁷³

Such records functioned as the vehicle for conveying policy, and at the same time, they could only be created and interpreted by experts. Those who wrote these records occupied a privileged position where policy became reality and where orders were codified and articulated. The expertise of *kurōdo* remained unquestioned and indispensable even in times of civil war. Emperors might be deposed and replaced with more pliable successors, but the writers of edicts were firmly embedded within the fabric of government and occupied a privileged position in state and society.

The political power of the imperial secretariat (kurōdo)

Writers of imperial documents flourished as the thirteenth century progressed. Their mastery of the language of power deployed in these documents allowed them to monopolize a vital position at court, even though their nominal rank remained low. Their absence or indisposition could adversely affect the ritual functioning of the state, or imperial processions. For example, on 3.23.1294, Hino Toshimitsu and his fellow secretariat (*kurōdo*) Masatoshi decided to rest and do some drinking, thereby obliging the entire procession of a retired emperor to pause until they returned.⁷⁴

Even the most ambitious emperors relied upon their *kurōdo*. Go-Daigo, who strove to rule as an absolute monarch, nevertheless could not countenance issuing orders without his secretariat. Once, during the turmoil of 1333, Go-Daigo needed to issue edicts while his *kurōdo* Chigusa Sadaaki was directing armies far away. Go-Daigo resorted to the drastic step of writing an imperial edict in his own hand, but then forged his secretary’s name on the document to assure its credibility!⁷⁵ An emperor characterized as a revolutionary determined to forge a new order, Go-Daigo could not imagine supplanting his secretariat.⁷⁶ He purportedly stated that *rinji* were like sweat: having once seeped out, they could not be retrieved. *Kurōdo* of the mid-thirteenth

century favored this statement as a legitimization of absolutism, and an enduring justification of their own positions as the actual producers. To extend the analogy, while Go-Daigo saw the *rinji* as sweat, the *kurōdo* saw themselves as the pores.⁷⁷

Just as only a select few could write these documents, so, too, only the expert few could properly read them. Qualifications seem to have included not only expertise but also status. Cases where men of insufficient rank or status read the documents resulted in dire consequences for those who had the temerity to peruse the lofty phrases from the most elevated. The *Taiheiki*, a fourteenth-century chronicle, records how a Kamakura scribe was commanded to read an imperial letter from Go-Daigo that denied any participation in an aborted rebellion.⁷⁸ When he read: “Let the Sun Goddess be the witness that the imperial heart is not false... suddenly his eyes were blinded, blood dripped from his nose, and he withdrew without reading the rest.”⁷⁹

Imperial commands, in short, expressed imperial power, but at the same time, transubstantiated it. Indeed, they were invested with the same authority as the regalia, which earlier narratives described as blinding men who looked upon them.⁸⁰ The taboos associated with the imperial body, and their regalia symbols of legitimation, also accrued to *rinji*, *inzen*, and any other documentary forms used exclusively by emperors and members of the imperial family. Nevertheless, giving such ominous warnings to prevent those able to read, but lacking sufficient status to do so, suggests that in actuality, the casual reading of imperial records had become conceivable.

Thrown in the mud: Changing attitudes toward documents

Late in the thirteenth century, the documents themselves served as the basis for legitimacy as much as the spoken word, but an increasingly transparent reliance on these documents alone undermined their prestige. For example, a retired emperor’s *inzen* legitimated the transfer of lands according to a map drawn from early in the tenth century, but those who were thereby dispossessed resisted violently in favor of their precedent-based

rights.⁸¹ The resisters were declared to be enemies of the court and the gods, but when confronted by the imperial edict, they remained unfazed, assaulted the shrine attendant who carried the *inzen* to them, and threw the document into the mud.⁸²

This hitherto unthinkable abusive handling of documents became more common in the late thirteenth century, when a sense that inheritance trumped even imperial edicts was augmented further by the fact that the court was increasingly active in redistributing lands.⁸³ Some litigants threw an edict into the mud as an expression of their disdain, and by doing so, prevented its words from being spoken. In addition to inviting punishment on those who dared to defile imperial edicts, such affairs led to a focus on the legitimizing force of the document itself, rather than on the act of reciting its contents. Even administrative nobles who did not serve as *kurōdo* attempted to emphasize the sacrosanct nature of their own documents, and asserted that they, too, had the right to demand absolute obedience to an imperial command. Kitabatake Chikafusa, who served as the head (*bettō*) of the imperial police (*kebiishi*), later explained that this office not only had the same policing and judicial powers, but also had the authority to compel absolute obedience to the results of its adjudication that imperial edicts (*rinji*) required.⁸⁴ This increased emphasis on the inviolability of the written word also explains why, precisely at this time, some who had their interests ignored resorted to throwing these documents into the mud. Over the course of the fourteenth century, it became progressively more difficult to hear the pronouncements of those in authority.

Conclusion

Documents functioned as a trace of the individual who wrote them, and at the same time, they represented a medium for reproducing the voice of important individuals. Most analysis of literacy sees writing as an end to itself, as individuals progressed from emphasizing sounds, to focusing on the written word. In the Kamakura era, however, individuals capable of writing were not always competent to read all records, particularly those

emanating from the court. Imperial records, after all, possessed unsurpassed prestige and power in their own right, for they functioned as talismans and shrine treasures worthy of special preservation precisely because they embodied the voices of Japan's sovereigns.

The act of reading documents out loud in the Kamakura era allowed for the wide dissemination of the voices of emperors and retired emperors, who were otherwise constrained by ritual and social prerogative from talking directly to all but a few. To a degree, the mystique associated with the words of imperial documents explains how the court retained primacy in spite of the institutional and judicial advances of the Kamakura regime.⁸⁵ Likewise, the nature of the transmission of these documents meant that imperial messengers and secretariats exercised considerable power, and that their actions during the Kamakura era deserve further scrutiny.

The medium of documents began to change in the Kamakura period, however. The earlier notion that they constituted immutable voices requiring the deference due to their authors began to shift, as the documents themselves came to be emphasized as talismans, having a unique meaning and inviolability. This trend allowed the court to gain power, and led to a civil war from 1333 until 1392, but also witnessed incidents where these talismans were literally and figuratively thrown into the mud. As time passed, the papers themselves mattered as much, if not more, than the voices that they had conveyed.

Jeffrey Mass anticipated the unique importance of these records when writing that documents "are not merely remnants of the past, but also a window to the future. More effectively than other sources they reveal human aspirations and indicate life's options by exposing its constraints. Documents anticipate—and in the process help make us contemporaries."⁸⁶ His observation proves accurate and suggestive, for by reading documents out loud, one can still hear the whispers of the distant Kamakura past.

NOTES

1 This represents the first document translated by Jeffrey Mass in *The Kamakura Bakufu: A Study in Documents*, pp. 25–26.

2 For cormorant fishers and disputes over fish levies, see Jeffrey Mass, *The Development of Kamakura Rule 1180–1250*, p. 193; for nuns on guard duty, *ibid.*, p. 271; for paper makers fleeing rapacious warriors (*jitō*), see Mass, *The Kamakura Bakufu*, p. 117; for “Demon Crane,” see Gentoku 4 (1332). 4.28 Ama oni tsuru gozen yuzurijō an, in Takeuchi Rizō, ed., *Kamakura ibun* vol. 41, doc. 31743, p. 79. (Hereafter, *KI*, 41:31743).

3 Some documents, most notably wills, are written phonetically, allowing for a reconstruction of how these records were read. Unfortunately, the reason for such an intractable debate is because the diacritic markers that distinguish a “g” from a “k”, or a “sh” from a “j” are absent, making it difficult to ascertain the correct reading. For a similar debate concerning “*shigyōjō*” versus “*segyōjō*,” see Seno Seiichirō, *Rekishi no kansei*, pp. 124–128.

4 The two characters superficially resemble each other. For the “juvenile” nature of the courtiers, see *Heikoki* Kangen 2 (1244).10.15. For the incompetent courtier, see entry for Kangen 3 (1245).4.14. See also Hayakawa Shōhachi, “Kangen ninen no Iwashimizu Hachimangū shinden oai jiken,” p. 268.

5 Donald Keene, trans., *Essays in Idleness*, no. 136, pp. 114–115.

6 Reference to the “later three Fusa” of Go-Daigo’s reign (1318–1339) as a direct comparison with the three Fusa of Go-Sanjō’s reign (1068–1072) first appears in Zuikei Shūhō’s diary, *Gaun nikkenroku batsuyū*, entry for Bunshō 1 (1466).7.12. For a treatment of Go-Sanjō’s seminal period as emperor, see G. Cameron Hurst, *Insei*:

Abdicated Sovereigns in the Politics of Late Heian Japan, 1086–1185, esp. pp. 100–124.

7 See Hirata Toshiharu, “Yoshida Sadafusa,” p. 343, and Nakamura, “Yoshida Sadafusa,” p. 267. The *Kojiki* is written phonetically, using Chinese characters for their sounds rather than their meanings, making it virtually incomprehensible to most readers. Reference to Sadafusa appears on the Shinpukuji text of the *Kojiki*, the oldest surviving copy (dating from 1371–1372) by the priest Ken’yū. See Donald Philippi, tr., *Kojiki*, p. 30.

8 Satō Shin’ichi et al., eds., *Chūsei seiji shakai shisō* (hereafter *CSSS*) 2, pp. 149–154. There has been debate for some time whether this essay dates from 1324 or 1330. More recently, Murai Shōsuke has suggested that it may even be dated to 1321; see his “Yoshida Sadafusa sōjō wa itsu kakareta ka.”

9 For Sadafusa’s betrayal of Go-Daigo, see Gentoku 3 (1331).2.22 *Kamakura nendaiki, buke nendaiki, Kamakura dai nikki*, p. 64. For further on Sadafusa, see Andrew Edmund Goble, *Kenmu: Go-Daigo’s Revolution*, pp. 11–13, 44, 66–69, 139.

10 Yoshikawa Shinji, “Shinbun shibun kō.”

11 Tempyō 20 (748).10.21 Ōhara mabito kushigami nuhi baibaiken, in *Dainihon komonjo, hennen monjo*, vol. 3, p. 126, Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo Nara jidai komonjo full-text database (accessed April 29, 2007).

12 Here, English conveniently allows for the usage of a verb (states) that accurately conveys this oral exchange.

13 Jōwa 8 (841).8.11 Ōmi no kuni Achi gunji ge, in Takeuchi Rizō, ed., *Heian ibun*, vol. 1, doc. 50, p. 34 (hereafter *HI*, 1:50).

14 *Taiketsu* was characterized by Jeffrey Mass as “a court trial or hearing in which the two sides had to confront one another.” Jeffrey P. Mass, *The Kamakura Bakufu: A Study in Documents*, p. 211.

15 Jōho 3 (1076).11.23 Tōji ryō Ise no kuni Daikoku no shōji no ge an (*HI*, 3:1137).

16 Kenkyū 5 (1194).5 Nitta Hachimangū shojira mōshijō (*KI*, 2:727).

17 Shōan 1 (1299).6 Raishin teichū mōshijō dodai (*KI*, 26:20151).

18 Thomas Conlan, *In Little Need of Divine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan*, p. 88.

19 Jōei 1 (1232).9.11 Hōjō Yasutoki shōjō (CSSS, 1, pp. 40–41; also *KI*, 6:4373). See also Jeffrey P. Mass, *The Development of Kamakura Rule 1180–1250*, pp. 90, 102ff. The oldest reference to illiteracy (*monmō*), dating from the late eleventh or early twelfth century, describes the Middle Counsellor Fujiwara Yoshichika. Matsumura Hiroji, ed., *Ōkagami*, p. 146. This term does not commonly appear in documents and literary sources before the thirteenth century.

20 For the accusations, see Jōei 1 (1232).11.28 Kantō gechijō an (*KI*, 6:4407). Bun'ei 3 (1266).4.9 Kantō gechijō (*KI*, 13:9521), p. 163, contains a passage about a certain illiterate Honbutsu relying on others to present documents in court.

21 See the Ninji 2 (1241).4.26 Arakita Ujitoshi ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5812); Ninji 2 (1241).4.26 Arakita Nobunari ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5813); Ninji 2 (1241).5.2 Arakita Nobunari ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5833); Ninji 2 (1241).5.3 Daijōgū kannushi chūshinjō (*KI*, 8:5835); Ninji 2 (1241).5.3 Arakita Ujitoshi ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5836); Ninji 2 (1241).5.9 Arakita Ujitoshi ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5848); Ninji 2 (1241).5.9 Arakita Nobunari ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5849); and Ninji 2 (1241).5.13 Arakita Tsunemoto ukebumi (*KI*, 8:5858).

22 For an example of how the fact that a document was written by the donor proved decisive, even where a seal, or monogram, was otherwise lacking, see Kōan 9 (1286).5.3 Kantō gechijō (*KI*, 21:15888) and, for an English translation, see Mass, *Lordship and Inheritance in Early Medieval Japan*, doc. 115, p. 248.

23 See Mass, *Lordship and Inheritance*, doc. 150, p. 291, and Gentoku 2 (1330).3.18 Chōkai (Yamanouchi Michisuke) yuzurijō (*KI*, 40:30977).

24 See Kōchō 3 (1263).10.8 Kumagai Naotoki okibumi (*KI*, 12:8998). For another example, see the Engyō 4 (1311).3.26 postscript to a will of Shōan 3 (1301).2.5, which states: “As Ebina Saemon no jō Tadatō states that this document is a forgery (*bōsho*), I have written this on the obverse.” (*KI*, 31:24264). These records are quite common. For another written in the hand of the donor, which was confirmed by Kamakura, see Genkō 4 (1324).3.29 Ama Ikuwan yuzurijō (*KI*, *hoi*

4:ho 2034). For a variant transcription of this document, see *Dai Nihon komonjo Yamanouchi Sudō ke monjo*, doc. 33, pp. 39–41.

25 Ama Rennin okibumi an (*KI*, *hoi* 3:ho 1424).

26 Index volumes of these series were not included in determining the number of volumes of these series.

27 *Kamakura ibun* full-text database, Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo (accessed on December 23, 2006).

28 Thus, the same number of phonetically written wills (203) exist for the period from 1185 to 1280 as from 10.5.1280 until 10.16.1311. Furthermore, while 203 wills were written during the thirty-one years of 1280 until 1311, 248 were written with some kind of phonetic script over the next twenty-two years. *Kamakura ibun* full-text database, Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo (accessed on February 14, 2007).

29 Amino Yoshihiko, “Nihon no moji shakai no tokushitsu o megutte.” For an excellent summary of Amino’s argument in English, see Henry Smith, “Japaneseness and the History of the Book,” p. 510.

30 Amino Yoshihiko has postulated that documents such as wills would be written in *hiragana* because they were not oral records, but in fact his generalization ignores that approximately 5 percent of all surviving wills written phonetically were written in *katakana* (20 out of 407 written between 1185 and 1311). Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo database (accessed December 2006). Many wills written in *katakana* can be found in Kii province (modern day Wakayama), suggesting that considerable regional variation in practice and education existed. See for example, Shōō 3 (1290).11.20 Minamoto Kagetomo denchi kakiuchi yuzurijō and Jōwa 5 (1349) Minamoto Kagetomo, haha Yashame renso denchi yuzurijō (*Wakayama kenshi, chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, pp. 640–642.) The former document is not included in *KI*.

31 Compare Shigetoki’s two precepts, in CSSS, 1, pp. 310–346. See also the Taira Shigetoki shōsoku (*KI*, 12:8730) and the Hōjō Shigetoki shōsoku (*KI*, 12:8731). Inconsistencies in practice exist, however, even among relatively close relatives. Shigetoki’s nephew Sanetoki preferred writing his similar, if more succinct precepts, in *katakana*. For translations of Shigetoki’s letters, see Carl Steenstrup, *Hōjō Shigetoki*.

32 One can see in a 1350 document that Raiyū and Raishin purchased lands, and in their document of sale, they mixed both

syllabaries. Jōwa 6 (1350).3 Raiyū Raishin rensho denchi uriwatashijō (*Wakayama kenshi, chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, p. 460). For a later example exhibiting a similar amalgamation of *kana*, see Kakitsu 3 (1443).11.6 Tenjinji Kenjiku hatachi uriwatashijō (*Wakayama kenshi, chūsei shiryō*, vol. 2, pp. 540-541).

33 Hōjō Sanetoki kakun, *CSSS*, 1, pp. 348-349.

34 Eiwa 1 (1375) Mōri Motoharu kotogaki utsushi, in Matsuoka Hisato, comp., *Nanbokuchō ibun Chūgoku Shikoku hen*, vol. 5, doc. 4250, p. 76 (hereafter *NBI-Ch*, 5:4250).

35 Shōgen 1 (1259).12.19 Ama Shinmyō yuzurijō (*KI*, 11:8450). I am grateful to Andrew Goble for bringing this document to my attention.

36 Jōei 1 (1232).7.6 Hōjō Yasutoki (?) shojō (*KI*, 6:4339).

37 For a translated example, see Mass, *Lordship and Inheritance*, doc. 59, p. 182; see also document 75, p. 202. For the originals, see En'ō 1 (1239).11.5 Kantō gechijō (*KI*, 8:5496) and Kenchō 8 (1256).7.9 Shōgun ke mandokoro kudashibumi (*KI*, 11:8010).

38 Examples exist of edicts written in Japanese characters (*wa no ji no migyōsho*), which were most likely transcribed copies of an edict that had originally been written in *kanbun*. See Kenchō 4 (1252).6.30 Kantō gechijō an (*KI*, 10:7454). For the text and a photograph of this document, see <http://www.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/IRIKI/EJTL/ejt50-2.html>.

39 Shōwa 4 (1315).6.2 Chinzei gechijō (*KI*, 33:25527) and Shōwa 4 (1315).6.2 Chinzei gechijō an (*KI*, 33:25528). See also Seno Seiichirō, *Zōtei Kamakura bakufu saikyōjōshū ge*, doc. 94, Shōwa 4 (1315).6.2 Chinzei tandai saikyōjō, pp. 194-198 and added (*hoi*) document 6, pp. 342-348. The few Chinese characters used, largely names, were written with phonetic glosses. Thus, the name "Saki no Kazusa no suke Taira no ason" is written in characters, but also with glosses written in *furigana* so as to allow the participant to read the document out loud correctly, and on a few occasions where the character for "year" appears, one sees it glossed as "nen."

40 This becomes evident in the writing of Kanezawa Sadaaki, who apologizes for using a scribe because his eyes are strained. See the (year unknown) intercalary 6.3 Sūkan (Kanezawa Sadaaki) shojō (*KI*, 40:31093). For analysis of this letter, see Kanagawa kenritsu Kanazawa

bunko, ed., *Kanezawa Sadaaki no tegami*, p. 12. This letter most likely dates from 1330.

41 See Minegishi Sumio, "Tainai monjo to inbutsu," in *Hino shishi shiryōshū Takahata fudō tainai monjo*, pp. 181-84. Most of the images (sixty) were of *Fudō*, while eighteen were of *Daitokuten*.

42 See the explanation of Yamanouchi Tsuneyuki's documents in Kodama Kōta, ed., *Hino shishi tsūshi hen jō*, pp. 198-205.

43 Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Routledge, 1982), p. 115.

44 Jeffrey Mass, *Antiquity and Anachronism*, pp. 53-56.

45 *Azuma kagami* Jishō 4 (1180).4.27. This translation is drawn from Shinoda, *The Founding of the Kamakura Shogunate 1180-1185*, p. 150.

46 *Genpei jōsuiki*, vol. 4, maki 19, p. 30. I am grateful to Vyjayanthi Selinger for bringing this to my attention.

47 *Genpei jōsuiki*, vol. 4, maki 20, pp. 54-55.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

49 Kagen 3 (1305).5.16 Kurasu Kaneo shojō (*KI*, 29:22218).

50 Bun'ei 11 (1274).1.14 Nichiren shojō (*KI*, 15:11519), which has been translated as "The Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Persecution," in the Gosho Translation Committee, ed., *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 447-449. Likewise, the postscript of this letter (p. 449) mentions how "Toki . . . and the rest of you, gentlemen and priests, should read this letter to one another and listen." Nichiren also uses the phrase "listening to readings" in a Kenji 2 (1276).3.18 Nichiren shojō (*KI*, 16:12266). See also *Minkeiki*, entry for Katei 1 (1235).1.10 for mention of a court document (*senji*) being read and listened to. These references were discovered via the Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo full-text databases (accessed December 2, 2006).

51 For "have read," see the undated Hōjō Shigetoki shōsoku (*KI*, 12:8731) and Bun'ei 1 (1264).4.17 Nichiren shojō (*KI*, 12:9076). For a translation of Shigetoki's letter to his son, Nagatoki, see Steenstrup, *Hōjō Shigetoki*, pp. 143-157. The Nichiren letter has been translated as "The Recitation of the 'Expedient Means' and 'Life Span' Chapters," in *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 68-72. "Read and state" appears commonly. For a few examples, see the Jōō 3 (1224) Jien

ganmon (*KI*, 5:3202); Katei 2 (1236).3.20 Hōin Shūsei kokubumi (*KI*, 7:4948); Bun'ei 3 (1266).11 Sonshin okibumi an (*KI*, 13:9600); Kenji 3 (1277).11.10 Kantō hyōjō sadamebumi (*KI*, 17:12901); Kōan 7 (1284).9.10 Hōjō Hisatoki shōjō (*KI*, 20:15302); and Shōō 4 (1291).5.12 Bō sojō an (*KI*, 23:17614), Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo full-text database (accessed December 2, 2006).

52 Kenji 3 (1277).11.10 Kantō hyōjō sadamebumi (*KI*, 17:12901). This document is an excerpt from the *Kenji sannenkī*.

53 According to the Tokyo daigaku shiryō hensanjo kokiroku full text database, thirty-three references to the term *yomimōsu* appear in Heian courtier diaries and twenty-six in Kamakura era diaries. The term “being read” (*yomare*) appears eleven times in Heian diaries. In Heian documents, no references to documents being read out loud, or for that matter, words such as “illiteracy” appear at all. Examples can be found, however, of court documents (*senji*) being “seen.” See Ten'ei 1 (1110).12.10 Tōdaiji sangō chūshin an (*HI*, 4:1738) and Ten'ei 2 (1111).2 Tōdaiji mōshibumi (*HI*, 4:1743).

54 Steenstrup, *Hōjō Shigetoki*, p. 143. See also *CSSS*, 1, p. 310.

55 For Steenstrup's analysis of the age of Shigetoki and his son when this letter was written, see *Hōjō Shigetoki*, n. 11, pp. 284–285.

56 Steenstrup, *ibid.*, p. 162. For the Japanese version, see *CSSS*, 1, p. 322.

57 Steenstrup, *Hōjō Shigetoki*, p. 197, and *CSSS*, 1, p. 346.

58 See the *Mineaiki*, pp. 66–67.

59 *Maeda hon “Gyokudaku hōten” shihai monjo to sono kenkyū*, document 1–30, (year unknown).3.29 Sadakiyo shōjō, p. 16. See p. 148 for analysis of these previously unknown documents, many of which were issued by the administrative headquarters (*mandokoro*) of Ashikaga Tadayoshi in 1348.

60 (Year unknown).12.19 Kanezawa Sadaaki shōjō (*Kanazawa bunko komonjo*, vol. 2, doc. 410, p. 43.) This document appears not to be included in *KI*.

61 (Year unknown).5.9 Kanezawa Sadaaki shōjō (*KI*, 29:22206). See also the (year unknown).12.4 Kanezawa Sadaaki shōjō, (*KI*, 29:22207). For another example of messengers “explaining the

particulars in the capital,” see the (year unknown).7.1 Kanezawa Sadaaki shōjō (*KI*, 28:21883).

62 See William H. McCullough, “*Shōkyūki*: An Account of the Shōkyū War of 1221,” p. 207, for the seizure of the imperial messenger, Oshimatsu, for “if he succeeds in making the proclamation known” most warriors “will probably turn” against Kamakura. See also *Azuma kagami Jōkyū* 3 (1221).5.19 (William H. McCullough, trans., “The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the Shōkyū War,” p. 105). For one example of the Kōno family turning against Kamakura after the imperial forces had been defeated, see *Jōkyū* 3 (1221).6.28 Rokuhara gechijō (*KI*, 5:2762). For related Kōno documents, see Mass, *The Kamakura Bakufu*, document 172, p. 182, and Mass, *The Development of Kamakura Rule*, docs. 31–32, pp. 183–184. For more on the Kōno, see *Azuma kagami Jōkyū* 3 (1221).6.28 (McCullough, trans., “The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the Shōkyū War,” p. 137).

63 (Year unknown) Third month Kanezawa Sadaaki shōjō (*KI*, 30:22911).

64 *Genpei jōsuiki*, vol. 4, maki 19, p. 30.

65 The 1054.2.12 Go-Reizei record appears in the Daigoji records. See *Daigoji monjo mukuroku*, p. 1215. This document and the Tenjō 1 (1131).2.2 Sutoku tennō rinji are the oldest surviving original imperial orders. They do not appear in *Heian ibun*, although the latter record has been transcribed in Satō Shin'ichi, *Komonjogaku nyūmon*, p. 293, doc. 16 and p. 105.

66 For an early analysis, see Gomi Fumihiko, *Chūsei no kotoba to e*. This *Eshi zōshi* scroll has been reproduced in *Haseo sōshi, Eshi zōshi*.

67 I thank Kondō Shigekazu for showing me these Iriki documents in July 1997.

68 Kenmu 5 (1338).6.18 Maki Hidehiro kishōmon utsushi, *Nanbokuchō ibun, Kyūshū hen* (hereafter *NBI-Ky*), 1:1182, pp. 357–358. See also the (year unknown).9.5 Chōhen shōjō (*NBI-Ky*, 6:6631) for more on this discovery.

69 Shōō 5 (1292).8 Kakushō mōshijō (*KI*, 23:17994) for a dispute stemming from a virtuous government decree abolishing debt, known as a *tokusei*. Other documents reveal similar disputes. In Sanuki province, where public revenues were earmarked for the imperial

family, the residents of the province disobeyed an imperial edict (*rinji*) in a similar manner. See the Einin 2 (1294).6.23 Fushimi tennō rinji (*KI*, 24:18584).

70 McCullough, “The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the Shōkyū War,” p. 123. The *Azuma kagami* entry for Jōkyū 3 (1221).6.8 mentions one man reading an imperial edict (*senji*) aloud with helmet removed.

71 In an apocryphal debate as to what to do if the Retired Emperor himself should resist the Hōjō, who were nominally attacking his evil advisers, Hōjō Yasutoki stated that he would take off his helmet, put down his bow, and with head bowed surrender. See *Baishōron*, p. 41. This text has been translated by Uyenaka, p. 101. This dialogue appears in other sources, too: see Perkins, *The Clear Mirror: A Chronicle of the Japanese Court During the Kamakura Period (1185–1333)*, pp. 51–52. For a study of the topic, see Haruyo Lieteau, “The Yasutoki-Myōe Discussion.”

72 On 1221.6.15 a messenger from the court approached the advancing Kamakura army. A search revealed that only one warrior of five thousand could do so. McCullough, “The *Azuma Kagami* Account of the Shōkyū War,” entry for 1221.6.15, p. 130, refers to this episode. The variant *Azuma kagami* text transcribed by Ryō Susumu (vol. 4, p. 205) reads one out of fifty warriors as being able to read this document, while the “orthodox” *Azuma kagami* text, translated by McCullough, reads as one of five thousand. See *Azuma kagami* Jōkyū 3 (1221).6.15.

73 Farris mentions this episode in *Heavenly Warriors*, n. 111, p. 434, and equates the ability to read such documents with general literacy. However, examination of a wider range of Kamakura documents reveals varying levels of literacy, and so a more nuanced view of the matter would seem to be in order. For an informative study of many of the modern shibboleths concerning literacy, see M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record in England 1066–1307*, particularly pp. 1–21.

74 *Sanemi kyōki* Einin 2 (1294).3.23.

75 For photograph and brief analysis of a handwritten (*jihitsu*) Genkō 3 (1333).3.4 Go-Daigo tennō rinji, see plate 1, *Nihon Rekishi* 2002.6 (no. 649), analysis by Hongō Kazuto. Go-Daigo wrote it after arriving in Izumo following his dramatic escape by fishing boat from

the remote island of Oki where he had been banished in 1332. For more on *rinji*, see Tomita Masahiro, “Chūsei kuge seiji monjo no saikentō,” pp. 2–3. For a document relating to the movement of his secretariat, Chigusa Tadaaki, see the Genkō 3 (1333).11 Echigo Suwabe Enkyō kyōdai mōshijō (*KI*, 42:32727), which notes him leading an army on 1333.3.22, and attacking the capital on 1333.4.8.

76 See Goble, *Kenmu: Go-Daigo's Revolution*, especially pp. 29–45; and his “Visions of an Emperor.”

77 For a mid-thirteenth-century reference to this phrase, drawing on Chinese texts, see *Yōkōki*, entry for Hōji 1 (1247).4.27, which draws upon a document from Kangen 4 (1246).12.20 (in *KI*, 9:6779, as Fujiwara Tsunetaka kanmon). The document recorded in the *Yōkōki* argues that in fact because *rinji* were inviolate, respect for precedent must be maintained. Go-Daigo had a different view of precedent, but a similar view of the inviolability of *rinji*. According to the Kenmu laws, “*Rinji* issued after Kenmu (1334) cannot be easily changed. If for some reason a *rinji* must be revoked, that clause must be written in a document, and conveyed to the provincial governors and *shugo*. Through this mechanism, *rinji* shall be obeyed.” Kenmu shinsei no hō, no. 8, in *CSSS*, 2, pp. 71–72. See also Goble, *Kenmu*, pp. 145–50; and Goble, “Visions of an Emperor,” pp. 128–130, 134–137.

78 1324.9.24 Go-Daigo tennō rinji. This document, not included in the *Kamakura ibun*, is translated in its entirety in Goble, *Kenmu: Go-Daigo's Revolution*, pp. 68–69. A convenient published version of the Japanese text may be found in Murata Masashi, *Fūchinroku, Murata Masashi chosakushū*, vol. 7, pp. 57–59. Technically, this document is not a *rinji* but rather a *kokubumi*. It was written and transmitted by one of Go-Daigo's most trusted secretariats, Yoshida Sadafusa, and was personally delivered by Madenokōji Nobufusa.

79 Helen C. McCullough, trans., *The Taiheiki*, p. 26. For a variation, stating that he grew faint, a tumor appeared in his throat, and one week later he died coughing blood, see the *Jingū chōkokanbon* version of the *Taiheiki*, maki 1, “Kokubumi no tsukai tatsu koto,” pp. 20–21.

80 See, for example, Tsuchida, trans., *The Tale of the Heike*, vol. 2, “The Death of Noritsune,” p. 678. A number of accounts exist about the mysterious properties of the regalia. Smoke emitted from their box when the insane emperor Reizei tried to view them, and the sacred

sword was sheathed as of its own accord. See *Zoku kojidan*, p. 344. The *Fukego*, written by Fujiwara Tadazane (1121–79) attributes this very episode to the emperor Yōzei. See Gotō Akio et al., eds., *Gōdanshō, Chūgaishō, Fukego*, pp. 442, 585.

81 Ōchō 1 (1311).7.7 Fushimi jōkō inzen an (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1927).

82 For one representative description of the violent attacks, see Engyō 3 (1310).11 Kitano Tenmangūji shikan ra ge an, (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1903) and Engyō 4 (1311).4 Kitano Tenmangūji shikan ra rensho mōshijō an (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1913). For resisters characterized as “enemies of the gods,” see Ōchō 1 (1311).7.7 Fushimi jōkō inzen an (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1927). For the throwing of the edict into the mud, see Engyō 3 (1310).11 Kitano Tenmangūji shikan ra ge an (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1903). This appears to have been a particularly vile offense, variously described as “extremely evil” (*mōaku*) or “an unprecedented and unspeakable outrage” (*kidai no rōzeki gongo dōdan*). See the Engyō 3 (1310).9.20 Kitano Tenmangūji kumonjo Taizen ukebumi an (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1901) and Engyō 3 (1310).11.4 Fushimi jōkō inzen an (*KI hoi*, 4:ho 1902). Other examples of throwing edicts in the mud may be found in Shōō 5 (1292).8 Kakusō mōshijō (*KI*, 23:17994) and in Mori, *Kamakura jidai no chōbaku kankei*, note 31, p. 417.

83 For more on the late Kamakura rise of a sense of judicial right, see Thomas Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth Century Japan*, pp. 194–212.

84 *Shokugenshō*, found most conveniently in Shiroyama Yoshitarō, *Shokugenshō no kisoteki kenkyū*, pp. 240–241. Chikafusa, who twice served in this post, stated that to disobey this was as great a crime as disobeying an imperial edict. This has been noted by Hashimoto Hatsuko, “Chūsei no kebiishi chō kankei monjo ni tsuite,” pp. 3–5. For Chikafusa’s appointment to this post, see *Kebiishi bunin*, vol. 2, pp. 377, 379, 390–391.

85 Indeed, I remember, in conversation from 1993 or 1994, how Jeff, when pushed as how best to describe the Kamakura era in light of the fact that he perceived the fourteenth century to be transformative, described the age not as the dual polity but as “Heian II.”

86 Jeffrey Mass, “Documents, Translation and History,” in *Antiquity and Anachronism in Japanese History*, p. 156.

FRACTIOUS FLOWS