

# OBON 2015

*Returning personal items to their families.*  
個人の遺留品をご遺族の元へ



EVERYONE HAS A FAMILY  
誰でも一人一人に家族がいます

**OBON 2015** wishes you a  
Merry Christmas,  
but even more important....  
a very Special New Year.

If you've had a good year and feel like helping...  
please remember OBON 2015 is a 501(c)3...  
all contributions are tax deductible.  
[contact@OBON2015.com](mailto:contact@OBON2015.com) for more information.

*Thank you for your generous heart*

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# “CHALLENGING CHARACTERS”

**OBON 2015** is blessed to work closely with extraordinary scholars who analyze each *Yosegaki Hinomaru* to find clues that lead to the original family. Occasionally our researchers come up against details that are exceptionally challenging. A hinomaru recently sent to **OBON 2015** (see below) is a perfect example.



This hinomaru contained two dominate characters which appeared to be written in such a extreme cursive style that **OBON 2015** scholars couldn't decide up from down.



The surrounding fonts could be easily read, which suggested this was the correct perspective to view the characters.



However, the direction of the brush strokes suggested the the characters were written to be read from this perspective.

This writing was neither Hiragana nor Katakana, and it certainly was not Kanji either. Fortunately, one **OBON 2015** researcher had knowledge about this unusual writing style. We could hardly believe that in order to understand this particular font we had to first learn about a remarkable Japanese scholar who lived 1200 years ago.

(continued.....)

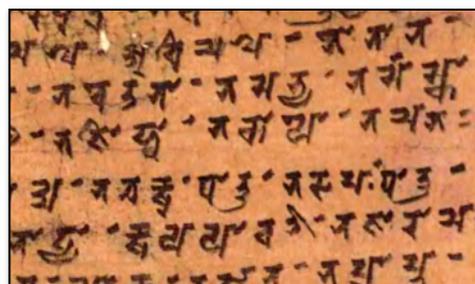
# “CHALLENGING CHARACTERS”

In the year 774 A.D., on the island on Shikoku, a child was born to a prominent family who would eventually become the famous monk known by the name **KUKAI**.



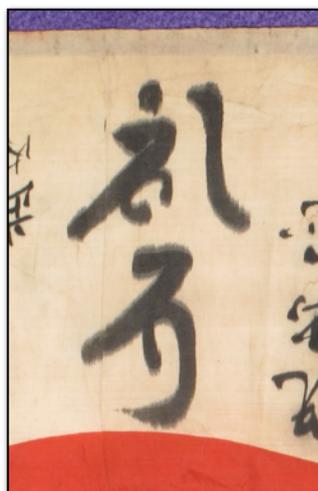
While in his early 20's Kukai's study of Buddhism was interrupted after he discovered the Mahavairocana Sutra. Since this came untranslated directly from India, he traveled to China in 804 A.D. to study the Siddham alphabet so he could read this important text.

As the story goes, Kukai quickly mastered the Siddham text, (example right) then returned to Japan to teach what he had learned. At that time all Japanese priests wrote with Kanji characters borrowed from the Chinese, but now Kukai would change that. His exposure to other languages and his unique education would lead to the development of a new style of writing



Kukai began to isolate characters from the Siddham alphabet and assign them phonetic sounds. His writing (left) shows the evolution of many characters.

Kukai's genius (along with the work of many other scholars) would result in the creation of the Japanese Hiragana (right) and Katakana which is used throughout Japan even today.



The two characters on this flag have been identified as Siddham text which is still used by the Shingon Buddhist priests of Japan.

The upper character “SUM” possibly refers to “VIKARALA” one of the 12 heavenly generals who serve as a protective deity. The lower character “BA” could translate as *protecting the western direction*.

Taken together “SUM BA” was possibly a prayer calling on the powers of the deity Vikarala to protect this soldier during his efforts to prevent an invasion of their homeland coming from the east.

# THE FAMILY GOES TO WAR



Group portraits of young men leaving home typically include family members or classmates, and occasionally co-workers, neighbors and friends. The odd mix of people who assembled for this photograph do not provide many clues as to who they might be.

The men are dressed in western suits and military uniforms while the women are dressed in a variety of styles. In front we see one woman in a traditional kimono with geta on her feet while next to her a young woman with a fashionable hair style is dressed in a stylish skirts, blouse, shoes and socks. Some women appear to wear school uniforms.

The people are unknown, but the *Yosegaki Hinomaru* they created is plainly seen tied across the young man's heart.

This historic portrait was kindly acquired by Kent & Noriko Plume, then donated to the OBON 2015 archives. All personal materials donated to OBON 2015 will be returned to Japan for future generations to assess and study.

# The Scholar's Corner

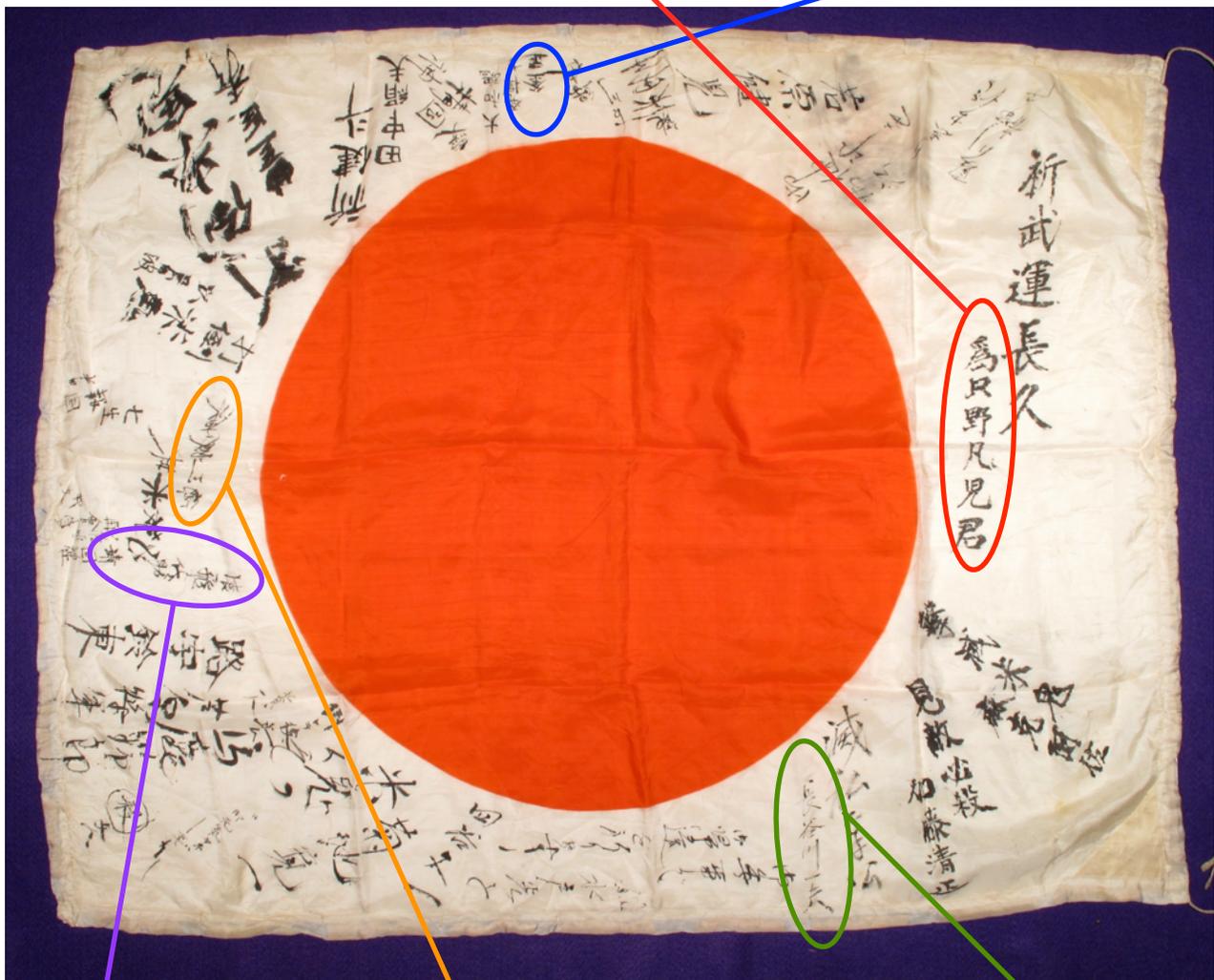
OBON 2015 scholars examine every item sent to us and thoroughly research the details for clues that lead to the original family. Occasionally we are surprised by what is discovered. Recently we received a *Yosegaki Hinomaru* containing the names of impossible people.

It will never be known whether this unique *Yosegaki Hinomaru* was created to add humor to some soldier's life, or whether it was a post-war forgery, created for the purpose of selling to an unsuspecting member of the occupational force.



This flag is dedicated to **Mr. TADANO BONJI**, however that is the fictional name of a cartoon character (above right) who appeared in daily newspapers back in 1933. Later the Tadano Bonji character was made into movies.

"Kamatari" is possibly in reference to Kamatari Fujiwara who happened to be the comical actor that played the Tadano Bonji character in many movies.



**Sarutobi Sasuke**, is a fictitious *NINJA* who appears in literature

**TOKUGAWA Ieyasu** was the first Shogun of the Edo era.

**Kazuo Hasegawa** was a famous Japanese actor

# Contact OBON 2015

**We wish you a Happy New Year.**

**Please remember;**

**OBON 2015 is a 501(c)3 organization.**

**Contributions are *now* tax deductible.**

**Your support makes our work possible.**

**please write: "[contact@OBON2015.com](mailto:contact@OBON2015.com)"**

*Thank you for your generous support.*

**If you have a flag, or know someone who does, please contact OBON 2015. We will gladly answer any questions and fully explain our process. It will give us great pleasure to research the flag in your possession and return it to its proper family.**

**OBON 2015**

P.O. Box 282

Astoria, Oregon 97103

[contact@OBON2015.com](mailto:contact@OBON2015.com)

