An inheritance record of a Moroccan family

"Vellum" is synonymous to parchment which is high-quality paper made of calf skin or lamb skin. Like papyrus, it was used for writing since ancient times. The item shown here is a document written in Arabic on vellum.

Toyo Bunko has a collection of eight vellum documents. They were written between AH968-1238 (1561-1823) in the ancient town of Fez (Fas) in Morocco. These documents record transactions involving real-estate, including houses, orchards and farmland, and specify matters related to the inheritance of these properties.

The document on the right is one of the oldest in our collection. It is a record of ten sales transactions and others involving the house inheritance owned by a Moroccan merchant, Abū 'Abd Allāh, between the years AH957 and 961 (1550-1553).

In those days, the usual stationery in the Islamic world was paper made of flax, using manufacturing methods imported from China in the 8th century. However, when it came to documenting important affairs concerning family assets, it is believed that they used durable vellum in order to ensure the proper succession of property to their heirs. The fact that all these documents were kept carefully folded up supports this theory.

HARAYAMA Takahiro

Keywords: vellum, Arabic, document, inheritance

Description: Arabic Vellum Parchment Document (one of eight sheets, 92.0×63.0cm) from Fez, Morocco, written in AH968 (1561) or later.
The greatest encyclopedia of China

In 1403, Yongle (reign: 1402–24), the third emperor of the Ming dynasty, ordered a compilation of historical documents entitled Wenxian Dacheng (Great Collection of Documents). However, dissatisfied with the scale of the original work, he demanded that it be recompiled. The book was finally completed in 1408 and renamed Yongle Dadian. The hand-written work consisted of 22,877 chapters (juan) of entries with an index of 60 chapters; it was bound into 11,085 volumes and is known as the greatest compilation project undertaken by the Yongle Emperor.

Yongle Dadian is a reference book which contains materials up until the Ming dynasty. All relevant historical and literary documents were categorized by Chinese characters in phonetic order, using a system established in the Ming period character dictionary Hongwu Zhengyun (Correct rhymes of the Hongwu period). Considered to be the first and largest encyclopedia in the world, Yongle Dadian is greatly valued as a collection of many long-lost materials.

Toyo Bunko holds transcripts of the original made during the reign of Jiajing (1521-66), the 11th emperor of the Ming dynasty. The original was completely destroyed when the dynasty was overthrown in the late Ming period and only the transcripts survived. However, a large part of these were also lost amid the turmoil surrounding the Second Opium War (1856–60) and the Boxer Rebellion (1900–01). The English-French allies are said to have covered roads with transcripts of Yongle Dadian when they occupied Beijing during the Second Opium War in order to prevent cannons and tanks from getting caught in the mud.

Fewer than 800 chapters in 400 volumes remain in the world today. With 63 chapters in 34 volumes, Toyo Bunko possesses the largest collection of Yongle Dadian transcripts outside China.

SHINOZAKI Yoko
News of Nobunaga's death and the Incident at Honno-ji dispatched to Europe

The Reformation of 16th century Europe led the Catholic Church to take countermeasures against the rise of the Protestants. In 1540, Pope Paul III (reign: 1534–49) approved the Society of Jesus, which was founded by Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), and ordered them to immediately start missions in the East. Loyola established a correspondence system that required Jesuits to submit letters with reports about their missions every four months. The system was revised in 1565 after which reports were required annually instead of quarterly.

At first, the letters were read aloud at mealtimes in monasteries around Europe. Later, the interesting letters were published in various languages. One of these publications is shown on the right.

The author of this book, Luís Frois, was a Portuguese Jesuit in Japan. Frois proposed revisions to the letters and introduced innovations to the Gregorian calendar, its calculation and format. He also incorporated news of current events into the letters. This volume contains one letter and two annual reports from Japan written by Frois between 1583 and 1584, and eight letters from China written by other Jesuits. The book is very similar to what we call “newsletters” today.

In his letters, Frois reports the Incident at Honno-ji: the confusion in Azuchi after the sudden death of Oda Nobunaga (1534–82) and the destruction of the Azuchi seminary. He also reports about how the struggle for power among military chiefs after Nobunaga’s death was brought to an end by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–98), who presented himself as Nobunaga’s successor and ordered the construction of a castle in Osaka.

The letters and annual reports in this book differ from letters sent by other Jesuits, which tended to exaggerate the number of converts and express superficial, subjective views of Japan. Frois was a keen observer who gave concrete details and data about Japan. He provided significant information that cannot be found in any other sources.

Keywords: the Reformation, Luís Frois, the Incident at Honno-ji, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi

Description: Nuovi avvisi del Giapone con alcuni altri della Cina del LXXXIII, et LXXXIV, written by Luís Frois. Published in Venice in 1586. One volume, 16.2×11.3cm.
Romanized Japanese from the late 16th century

*Doctrina Christiana* is a text explaining Christian doctrine in Romanized Japanese. Composed of twelve sections, it is written in dialogue form as a series of conversations between master and pupil, with a summary of the ten basic teachings of the Society of Jesus and a Japanese vocabulary list in the back of the book.

At the end of the 16th century during the Azuchi-Momoya period, many missionaries of the Society of Jesus came to Japan to propagate Christianity. The Jesuits were particularly active in the Amakusa and Nagasaki regions of Kyushu. In Amakusa (now a district of Kumamoto Prefecture), many books on Christianity were published using Japan's first western-style printing press. These books are called "Amakusa-bon" or "Christian Publications."

However, in the 17th century, the Tokugawa Shogunate banned Christianity and severely oppressed its believers. Many Christian Publications were destroyed and only 30 copies are known to exist in the world today. *Doctrina Christiana* at Toyo Banko, the only copy of its kind in an excellent state of preservation, has been designated an important cultural property by the Japanese government.

It is a significant source for the study of the history of Christianity in Asia as well as the history of East-West cultural relations, printing and Japanese linguistics.

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Keywords: Christianity, the Society of Jesus, Amakusa, printing, Japanese language

Description: *Doctrina Christiana* (Nippon no Jesus no Companhia no Superior yori Christan ni soto no momo ni tagaimo mondo no goro ni xidai no vacchi tamnu DOCTRINA), compiled by the Society of Jesus of Japan and printed in Amakusa in 1592. One volume, 15.8x10.0cm. Designated an important cultural property in 1992.
The first map of Japan drawn by a European

This is a map of Japan drawn more than 400 years ago. It is thought to be the oldest geographical depiction of Japan in its entirety on a single map. It was drawn by Ludovic Teisera, a Portuguese Jesuit who served as a cartographer for the Spanish Royal Family.

With the Korean Peninsula shown as an island between Japan and China and Hokkaido missing from the Japanese Archipelago, there are notable discrepancies between this map and its modern counterparts. However, the Japanese islands of Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku are accurately charted.

Note the enlarged map at the bottom right. Encircled in red is present-day Shimane prefecture. It is described as “Argentifodinae” meaning “silver mine” in Latin, which indicates the world-famous Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine (designated as a World Heritage site in 2007).

From the late 16th through the 17th century, Japan was famous for its high-quality silver, which European countries and China sought to acquire. Portugal and Spain are even said to have sent fleets to Japan in search of Iwami silver.

Keywords: Jesuit, Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine, Portugal, Spain

Description: Teisera’s Map of Japan (Japoniae postre descriptio), drawn by Ludovic Teisera. Printed in Antwerp in 1595 using copperplate. One sheet, 50.8 x 62.0 cm.
The “Non-Flying” Dutch men: a quest for Asian richness

The book shown on the right is a navigation journal of two expeditions to the East Indies by Dutch merchants prior to the establishment of the Dutch East India Company.

The book contains many maps covering vast areas from Africa to Asia and exquisite illustrations depicting plants and animals from the Cape of Good Hope, Madagascar, India, China and Java as well as different ethnic groups and their customs. It also has an appendix of Javanese and Malay words with French translations at the back of the book.

The first expedition was led by Cornelius de Houtman. The fleet of four ships, which was backed by the merchants of Amsterdam, set sail in 1595 and returned in 1597. On this expedition, they discovered a route from Amsterdam to Banten in Java, Indonesia. The journal of this expedition was written by Willem Lodewijcksz, who was a crew member and a merchant on the Mauritius.

The second expedition was led by Jacob van Neck. The fleet of eight ships, including the Mauritius, set sail in March 1598. At the end of that year, they went around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa and arrived in Banten via the island of Mauritius, just like the first expedition. After being loaded with goods from the East Indies, part of the fleet returned to Amsterdam in May 1599. The rest of the fleet stopped off at Ambon and “the Spice Islands” of Maluku before returning in May 1600. Upon their return, the crew was heartily welcomed by their people and the merchants who had invested in the voyage. The merchants amassed immense wealth by trading the spices they acquired.

The success of these two expeditions accelerated the Dutch advance into the Far East. As the maritime superpower of the time, the Dutch controlled the trade routes to Asia, which enabled them to expand their monopoly. Holland was the only European country trading in Japan, which observed a national isolation policy during the Edo period. The Island of Java and the Maluku Islands later became the center of the Dutch colonial administration.

The Dutch East India Company was founded in 1602 in order to pursue further profits. Thereafter, the Dutch never freely explored the oceans again; instead, thousands of merchant vessels were sent to precise destinations in an effort to expand the nation’s trade empire.
Does the beginning of Japanese history ascend to the mythical age?

*Nihon Shoki* is a chronicle of Japanese history. Compiled in classical Chinese during the Nara period, it covers the time from Japan's mythical origins to the reign of Empress Jito (697), revealing incidents that occurred in and around the Imperial Family.

Where there is no clear record concerning the purpose and course of its compilation, we know that *Nihon Shoki* was finished in 720 under the editorial supervision of Prince Tonert (676–735).

Japan was going through a transition phase at the time. A unified nation was being established and diplomatic relations with foreign countries flourished. Prior to the Nara period, the title of the nation's ruler had changed from “Okimi” (king) to “Tenno” (emperor) and the name of the country had changed from “Wa” to “Nihon.” It was an age of awakening, when Japan recognized its identity as a people and a nation.

Approximately nine centuries later, Emperor Go-Yozei (reign: 1586–1611) ordered a revised publication of *Nihon Shoki* known as the Keicho Chokukan edition. To the right is one of the two volumes of *Jindai-kan* (The Chapters of the Mythical Ago) of this particular edition held by Toyo Bunko. Printed in large old-style wooden movable type, the text is quite legible.

Keywords: Nihon Shoki, Nihon
The Biography of Francis Xavier—a worldwide best-seller

The author of the Biography of Francis Xavier (entitled The Admirable Life of Francis Xavier in English) was a Roman missionary of the Society of Jesus; he was called Horatius Tursellinus in Latin but is better known by his Italian name, Orazio Torsellini. Torsellini taught at a collegio (a theological college) in Rome for many years before becoming the rector of a seminary in Florence in his later years. Known as a man of letters and a historian, he wrote many books including collections of sermons in Latin and Ristretto dell’historie del mondo (History of the World) in Italian. The biography of Francis Xavier was originally written in Latin, but the book eventually became so popular that it was translated and published in various European languages.

This is an edition rendered in Spanish from the Latin by Pedro Guzman. The frontispiece tells us that it was published in 1600 in Valladolid, Spain.

Valladolid is a historic city in the district of Castile and Leon in north-central Spain. In the 15th century, Valladolid was the capital of the Kingdom of Spain. It is well known as the birthplace of Philip II (1527–98), the King of Spain during the peak of its influence as a European power, and as the city where Christopher Columbus died. During the Age of Discovery, which began in the 15th century, the Europeans expanded their sphere of influence and spread Christianity around the world.

In addition to this Spanish version, Toyo Bunko has four other editions of Xavier’s biography.

Keywords: Francis Xavier, Christianity, Society of Jesus, Valladolid, the Age of Discovery
Receiving the blessings of God through music and singing

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, “Sacraments are outward signs of inward grace, a sacred and mysterious sign or ceremony, ordained by Christ, by which grace is conveyed to our souls.” The pages shown on the right provide a glimpse of manuals used by priests when ministering these rites.

*Manuale ad Sacramenta Ecclesiae Ministranda* is the first Catholic liturgical and ceremonial text ever printed in Japan. It is significant in understanding how the sacraments of the Catholic Church were administered to its believers. The book, composed of musical notations and prayers, tells us that words and chants played a key role in the administration of each sacrament.

When Christian missionaries arrived in Japan, they soon recognized that the Japanese had high cultural values and a strong sense of morality. They believed that the use of publications would accelerate the expansion of the Christian faith in Japan. The timely arrival of Japan’s first western-style printing press, which was brought from Europe by the Tensho embassy in 1590, provided a solution to the urgent need to publish liturgical books for Japanese followers.

*Manuale ad Sacramenta Ecclesiae Ministranda* on the right is one of the extant volumes of “Christian Publications” published by the Jesuit mission press in Nagasaki using the first printing press. Printed in red and black, it is the first bicolored book in the history of Japanese printing as well as the first book to introduce Gregorian chants on five-line staff scores with neumatic notation.

One of its major characteristics is that it is printed in simple Roman type, which is considerably easier to read than the highly decorative Gothic type of the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, Italian humanists promoted the use of Roman type in an attempt to revive the style of handwriting used in ancient Roman inscriptions and it emerged as the most popular font by the mid-15th century. It also became the model printing type among the printers in Venice and the prototype of the Roman alphabet we use today.

Sakurai Tora

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Keywords: Christian Publications, sacrament, chants, Nagasaki, Roman type
William Adams, a key player in the establishment of England’s first trading post in Japan

After the establishment of the British East India Company in 1600, England started envisioning commerce with Japan. In 1613, Captain John Saris (1550–1643) was appointed to go to Japan with a personal letter from King James I in a fleet of three ships manned with 262 men.

After arriving in Japan, Saris contacted William Adams (1564–1620), also known by his Japanese name Miura Anjin, who is believed to be the first Englishman to reach Japan. Saris asked Adams to assist him in negotiating trade privileges, since Adams was in a prestigious position in the Tokugawa Shogunate as a direct retainer of the retired shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). With considerable support from Adams, Saris was able to meet Ieyasu and his son, the acting shogun Hideyori, and present them with the letter from King James I. As a result, Saris was successful in receiving Ieyasu’s personal reply to the King and a trade permit.

Saris established an English trading post in Hirado, Kyushu, before his departure for England. He appointed Richard Cocks (1566–1624) as director, Adams as advisor and gave his workers detailed instructions on trade operations.

The document held by Toyo Bunko is the original hand-written diary of John Saris. It is a navigation journal of his voyage to Japan from the day he left North Downs (Dover in Kent County, South East England) on April 18, 1611, until the day he returned to Plymouth (Devon County, South West England) on September 27, 1614.

The diary is considered a valuable resource for studying early diplomatic relations between Japan and England as well as for understanding how Japan was seen through the eyes of an Englishman in the 17th century.
Hon'ami Koetsu, the magnificent art director

Tsurezuregusa is a collection of Japanese essays written by a Buddhist monk named Yoshida Kenko (1283–1352) in the early 14th century. The book takes its title from the opening phrase of the preface passage in which he states his purpose and reason for writing essays: "Tsurezurenaru nama ni..." (To while away the idle hours).

The volume at Toyo Bunko is the second of two volumes dealing with the aesthetics of cherry blossoms and the moon. The publication of this volume was directed by Hon'ami Koetsu (1558–1637), a renowned artist and calligrapher of the Edo period. He wrote the block copy before it went into printing. It is evident that part of the text was hand written by Koetsu himself.

At the beginning of the Edo period, Koetsu and his fellow artisans established an art village at Takagamine in Kyoto where they devoted themselves to a wide range of creative activities from pottery, calligraphy and painting to publishing, landscape gardening and creating Noh masks. With the cooperation of Suminokura Soan (1571–1632), a wealthy merchant and art connoisseur from Saga in the suburbs of Kyoto, they published books known as the "Saga-bon" edition. Those personally designed and engraved by Koetsu are known as "Koetsu-bon." Embellished with his aesthetical design and craftmanship, they are still prized today.

Keywords: Yoshida Kenko, Tsurezuregusa, Koetsu-bon
Hyakunin Isshu (alternate title Ogura Hyakunin Isshu) is an anthology of 100 tanka poems by 100 prominent poets. Compiled by Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241), a famous poet of the early Kamakura period, the anthology includes poems from across several centuries, starting from the time of the Man'yōshū (Nara period) and continuing up through the time of its compilation.

As Hyakunin Isshu contained poetry of various eras by poets of different social statuses, readers were able to relate to its familiar themes and lucid style. By the Edo period, it was not just a technical book for the art of tanka poetry; it had become so popular that it was even used as a textbook for calligraphy. It was also made into a card game played on New Year’s Day called “uta karuta,” a tradition that has been passed down to this day.

The volume at Toyo Bunko is known as the “Koetsu-bon,” the only extant Koetsu edition of Hyakunin Isshu. It is a volume from a series of books called “Sagabon” published in Saga, Kyoto, in the early Edo period, under the supervision of the renowned artist Hon’ami Koetsu (1558–1637).

Printed in wooden movable type, the lettering in cursive style was done by Koetsu himself. Thick, premium-quality washi paper in a variety of colors, textured with a blend of mica, is used for this exclusive volume. Presumed to be specially bound as an expensive gift, its artistic value is priceless.

Keywords: Fujiwara no Teika, tanka poetry, uta karuta, Hon’ami Koetsu

Description: Hyakunin Isshu, compiled by Fujiwara no Teika. Koetsu Edition (one volume; 23.5×17.5cm), printed in Kyoto (1615–1624), using old-style wooden movable type.