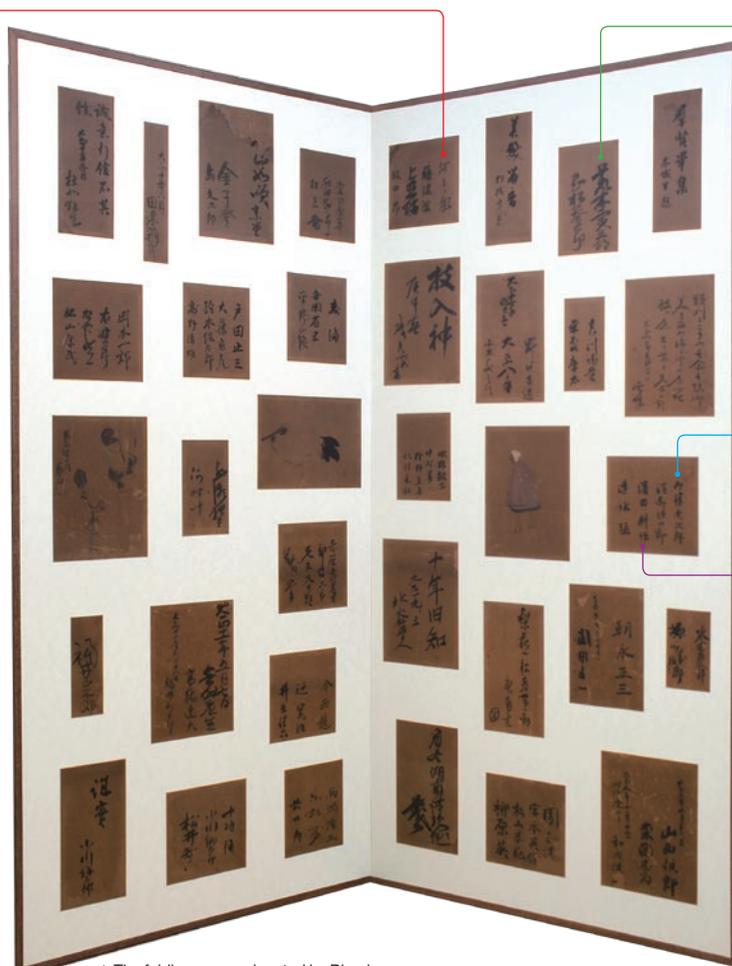


Behind the Folding Screen: Memories of Kyoto University Professors

Near the east side of Kyoto University's Yoshida-South Campus, there is a barbershop called Biryuken which was established in 1899, two years after the foundation of Kyoto Imperial University, and which has been in business for 114 years. In the shop, there is a folding screen adorned with autographs of famous Kyoto University professors. The diverse and dignified styles of handwriting seem to embody the dynamism of the university's guiding principle of "academic freedom."



▲ The folding screen donated by Biryuken



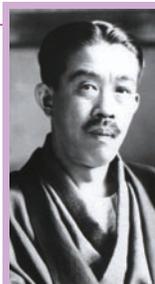
Torasaburo Araki
(1866–1942),
Medical Scientist

Professor in the Medical College of Kyoto Imperial University. After serving as the Dean of the Medical College, he became the university's seventh (and first publicly elected) president.



Torajiro Naito
(1866–1934),
Oriental Historian

Professor in the Department of East Asian History in the College of Letters of Kyoto Imperial University. He founded the Kyoto School of Sinology with his colleagues, Naoki Kano and Jitsuzo Kuwabara. He was referred to as a "treasure of the university."



Kosaku Hamada
(1881–1938),
Archeologist

After serving as the first professor in the Department of Archeology of Kyoto Imperial University, he was elected as the university's eleventh president in 1937. He was the founder of the Kyoto School of Japanese Archeology, and contributed to the development of archeological research in Japan.



Hajime Kawakami (1879–1946),
Marxist Economist

After resigning from his professorship at Kyoto Imperial University, he joined the Communist Party of Japan. He was a close friend of the Biryuken barbershop's first owner.

114 Years of Research and Haircuts

In December 2011, a folding screen was donated to the Kyoto University Archives by the owner of the Biryuken barbershop. The screen consists of two panels, each of which is approximately 164 cm high and 79 cm wide. On the screen are pasted thirty-five autograph paperboards, as well as several paintings and poems. The seventy-four personal names identified on the folding screen include the names of forty-nine professors, four administrative staff members, six graduates of Kyoto Imperial University, and four teaching staff members of the Third Higher School.

The Pioneering Professors of Kyoto University's Early Years

Among the names of many prominent professors found on the folding screen, the following are worthy of particular note:

- **Two former presidents:**

Torasaburo Araki (Faculty of Medicine) and **Kosaku Hamada** (Faculty of Letters)

- **Torajiro Naito** (Oriental History, Faculty of Letters)

- **Kitaro Nishida** (Philosophy, Faculty of Letters)

- **Hajime Kawakami** (Marxian Economics, Faculty of Economics)

- **Toshinojo Mizuno** (Electromagnetism, Faculty of Science)

- **Akira Fujinami** (Pathology, Faculty of Medicine)

- **Buntaro Adachi** (Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine)

- **Sakuro Tanabe** (Faculty of Engineering), designer and architect of the Lake Biwa Canal

- **Shozo Tomonaga** (Faculty of Engineering), mechanical engineering expert, uncle of Nobel laureate Sin-Itiro Tomonaga

What Were the Professors Thinking During the Reforms of the 1920s?

When were these autographs written? There are nine autographs with dates, which were written in 1920, 1921, and 1922. Among the forty-nine professors who signed the screen, most were working at the university around the same period, so it is likely that most of the autographs were written around that time.

Much as universities are undergoing radical changes today, the early 1920s were also an era of reform for Kyoto University. In December 1918, in the wake of World War I, the government promulgated the University Order, which allowed local public and private institutions to claim university status. At the same time, Prime Minister Takashi Hara's cabinet initiated a large-scale expansion of higher education institutions.

Against this background, Kyoto University implemented a series of institutional reforms that form the basis of its current system: it discontinued graduation ceremonies in 1919^{*1}, changed its month of enrollment from September to April in 1921, and adopted its first system of mandatory retirement at the age of 60 in 1923. The university also established several new faculties, including the Faculty of Economics in 1919 and the Faculty of Agriculture in 1923.

There is a good chance that the professors who had their hair cut at Biryuken and left their names on the folding screen may have played their own role in those reforms. As we look at the signatures today, we can only imagine those exciting times.

^{*1} The reason for the discontinuance of graduation ceremonies was to discourage students from thinking that graduation marked the end of learning. The University of Tokyo also discontinued graduation ceremonies during the same period. Graduation ceremonies were resumed at Kyoto University in 1927.

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WEB kua1.archives.kyoto-u.ac.jp/ja/english.html

