

FLAGS OF HIGHER SCHOOLS IN IMPERIAL JAPAN

(*KYUSEI KOTO GAKKO*) 1894-1950

Akira Kumagai

The Old Higher Schools 1894—1950

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Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to have this opportunity of speaking to you about the Flags of Higher Schools in Imperial Japan.

I have two purposes: first, to introduce old Japanese higher schools (which exist no more) and their flags, and second, to explain some characteristics of Japanese flags through these school flags.

Before starting, let me ask you just one thing.

The lights are slightly dimmed so that you may see both the screen and the papers distributed.

You have two types of papers: a stapled 9 page illustration booklet and 3 larger appendixes like these.

I should be grateful if you could refer to the corresponding pages when I ask.

I apologize for any inconvenience caused.

The Old Higher Schools in Imperial Japan

General

(Slides 3, 4)

Before the end of WWII in 1945, when the Empire of Japan collapsed, Japan had excellent educational institutions for distinguished boys from 18 to 21 years old, called *Koto Gakko*, now called old Higher Schools.

The students were highly valued as an intellectual elite, and as future leaders of Imperial Japan. They successfully passed the barriers of most difficult examinations, and then enjoyed a most pleasant and fruitful school life for three years.

(Appendices I, II & III)

There were only 38 higher schools, and the graduates were admitted to Imperial Universities virtually with no examination.

(Slide 5)

Most of them were boarding schools. Students cultivated enduring friendship through community life at dormitories. They passionately loved their schools and, naturally, school flags to praise the schools.

All of them were closed by 1950, nearly sixty years ago.

Now, even in Japan, people know very little about these old schools.

(Slide 6)

The old boys, the youngest ones of whom are now nearly eighty, still love their schools very much, and come together with their school flags to sing their Dormitory Songs (*Ryoka*).

Location

(Slide 7) (Page 1)

Most Higher Schools enjoyed splendid location, and were warmly received by local people. Four of them were in former overseas territories.

Their Flags and Emblems

(Appendices I, II, & III)

Please refer to Appendix I (flags) , II (emblems) and III.

All flags have the emblems on the centre. The emblem is most important, and their meanings are explained in Appendix III.

Characteristics of Japanese Flags and Higher School Ones

1. Plain Fields

(Slide 8) (Page 2)

Most Japanese flags have no basic divisions, horizontal, vertical, etc.

The overall design of the field is regarded as relatively unimportant. Instead, the emblem, badge or “symbol mark” is of utmost importance. Usually, the emblem is placed on the centre of the field.

2. Meaningful Emblems

(Slides 8, 9) (Pages 2 & 3)

The Higher School Emblems were the symbol of the pride of schoolboys. They were extremely meaningful, symbolizing ideals, praising splendid locations, telling philosophical

lessons, and so on. Sometimes they were enigmatic! (Slide 10)

For example,

Fourth H.S. — The polestar. It does not move and means steadfastness, and the school motto “Rise above the world”.

Sixth H.S. — A firefly (central disc) and snow (surrounding circle) imply diligence. A legend says that a poor boy gathered fireflies in the summer, and made use of snow reflection in the winter to get light for study.

3. The Shape - Nobori (Slide 11) (Page 4)

“*Nobori*” is a big, vertically long banner. There are two types of *Nobori*, Schwenkel loops type (*Chi-tsuki*) and Streamer type (*Nagare*).

Only the streamer type banners were used by schoolboys at interschool matches to cheer the team. The streamers were preferred, as they looked more dynamic and stirring.

4. White Bands (*Hakusen*) - Stripes on the Flag

(Slide 12) (Page 5)

You will notice horizontal stripes on many higher school flags. Such stripes may rarely be seen on other flags.

These white bands were a prestigious symbol for higher school

boys. They were attached to the cap badge around the cap. The numbers of bands were two or three.

As ornament of *Nobori* they were extremely suitable.

With stripes, the banners bore a strong resemblance to the *Nobori* used by *Samurai* warriors at battles.

5. The colour - Monochrome

Strangely, no school had regulations about flag colours.

Any colour could be used. However, some old schools had definite colours by tradition, white for the First Higher, red for the Third, and so on. (Page 4, Lower Right)

Most of them were monochrome, usually a black emblem on a white field, or a white emblem on a red field.

This indifference toward colours has probably arisen from the Japanese heraldic family crest, the *mon*.

Every Japanese family has its own *mon*.

A *mon* is monochrome, just black and white. Japanese ancestors probably preferred simplicity and identity to charm of colours.

6. Influence of *Mon*

(1) Various Ways of Drawing *Mon*

(Slide 13)(Page 6)

Ironically it can be said that a *mon* has no colour but is colourful. With just black and white, a *mon* creates a wonderful world of beauty and simplicity. One of the

reasons why this is possible is the variety of *mon* drawing methods.

There are five ways of drawing mon: plain (line drawing), white on black, black on white, black on white disc and shaded.

For school flags, just two ways, black on white and white on colour were enough. But, if one wishes, one can draw the emblem in more different ways.

(2) Similarities Between *Mon* and School Emblems

(Slide 14) (Page 7)

The Designers of school emblems did not explain the reason why they drew them in that way. One may fairly guess that they were influenced by *mon*.

Let me show you some examples which show the similarities between *mon* and emblems.

To some extent, this will explain the characteristics of Japanese emblems, badges, symbol marks, etc. which are simple, both in design and in colour.

(3) Subject Items

If one classifies subject items of school emblems in categories, plants are the most in number (57%).

Among others, cherry blossoms, oaks, chrysanthemums, pines were favoured.

There were no fierce beasts or birds like lions or eagles. This plant-favouritism can also be noticed in *mon*.

Out of the ten most popular *mons*, nine are plant *mons*.

Assumedly, Japanese people love delicate and gentle

things rather than heroic and strong ones.

(7) Ceremonial Flags (*Koki*)

(Page 8, 9)

Every school had a flag of another type. It was called *Koki*, a more formal and ceremonial indoor flag.

Koki represented the glory of the school, and was held in high respect.

Usually, *Koki* were gorgeous, beautifully embroidered in gold thread on colourful silk cloth, both obverse and reverse, and fringed.

(1) Design and Colour

(Slides 15, 17)

Both the colours and emblems were not always similar to those of ordinary flags.

For example, *Koki* of the First Higher had the letter “Country(國)” surrounded by oak and olive leaves and was called “*Gokokuki*” (the flag which protects the country). Its ground colour was not white but bright red.

(2) Flag Fastenings

Koki had some special features rarely seen in the flags of other countries, flag fastenings and finials, for example.

To fasten the flag to a staff, some *koki* used *chi* (Schwenkel loops), such as the First Higher, some used three chain-rings, such as the Second and Fourth Higher, and some used two or three leather triangles with eyelets (Fifth H.S., Matsumoto H.S., Himeji H.S.). None of these fastening methods are very popular in other

countries.

(3) Finials (Slides 16, 18) (Page 9)

Koki usually employed the “three-face” (or three side finials) by which emblems can be seen from three directions. (Third, Fifth, Matsumoto H.S., for example). See the finial from above, and you find a curved triangle. Each side shows the emblem.

The Regimental Colours of the Imperial Japanese Army (*Rentaiki*) also had three-side chrysanthemum finials which symbolized the Emperor. The chrysanthemum is the Emperor’s *Mon*.

This type of three-side finial may be extremely rare in other countries.

(Lights up, please.)

At the end of my lecture, I would like to show you some real articles.

1. Handflags

(1) These are the flags of the First and the Fourth Highers.

It was really a spectacular sight, you may imagine, that scores and hundreds of boys waved and swung such flags with all their might!

(2) Second Higher

A smaller type flag more convenient to wave vigorously.

2. Nobori (Streamer type)

This is a miniature *Nobori*. The name of the school is written with the emblem and stripes. As I told you, the Japanese flags usually have plain fields and space. On the space (or blank), sometimes, names are written. You will see a Sun Disk Flag (*Hinomaru*) with many signatures on the white blank around the Sun at *Yasukuni Shrine* tomorrow.

3. School cap with white bands (Hakusen)

Fifth Higher

4. Kumagai's *Mon*

I said each Japanese family has its *mon*. This is mine, the Kumagai's.

Well, let me close my presentation about the the flags of higher schools in Imperial Japan and some characteristics of Japanese flags in general.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

Now, I have the pleasure of introducing the next speaker, Mr. Peter Orenski of the United States. He is speaking to you about "Controversial Indian Symbols on U.S. State Flags."

FLAGS OF HIGHER SCHOOLS
IN IMPERIAL JAPAN
(*KYUSEI KOTO GAKKO*)1894-1950

Japanese Vexillological Association
AKIRA KUMAGAI

23rd INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF VEXILLOLOGY
YOKOHAMA - 2009





(ICV 23 Presentation, Page Numbers in Blue Colour)

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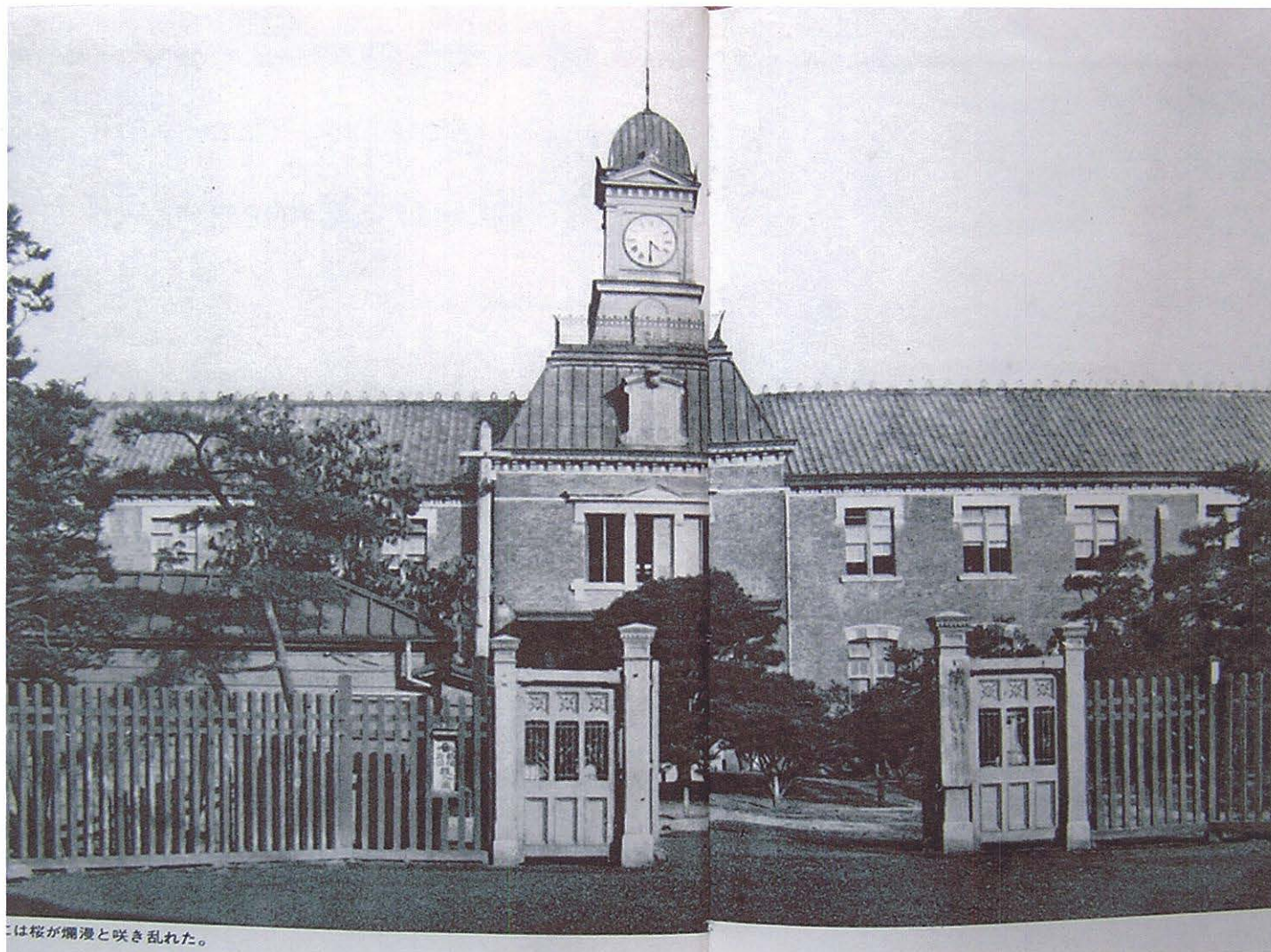
The Old Higher Schools 1894-1950

General	3, 4, 5, 6
Location	7
Their flags and Emblems	Appendices I, II

Characteristics of Japanese Flags and Higher School Ones

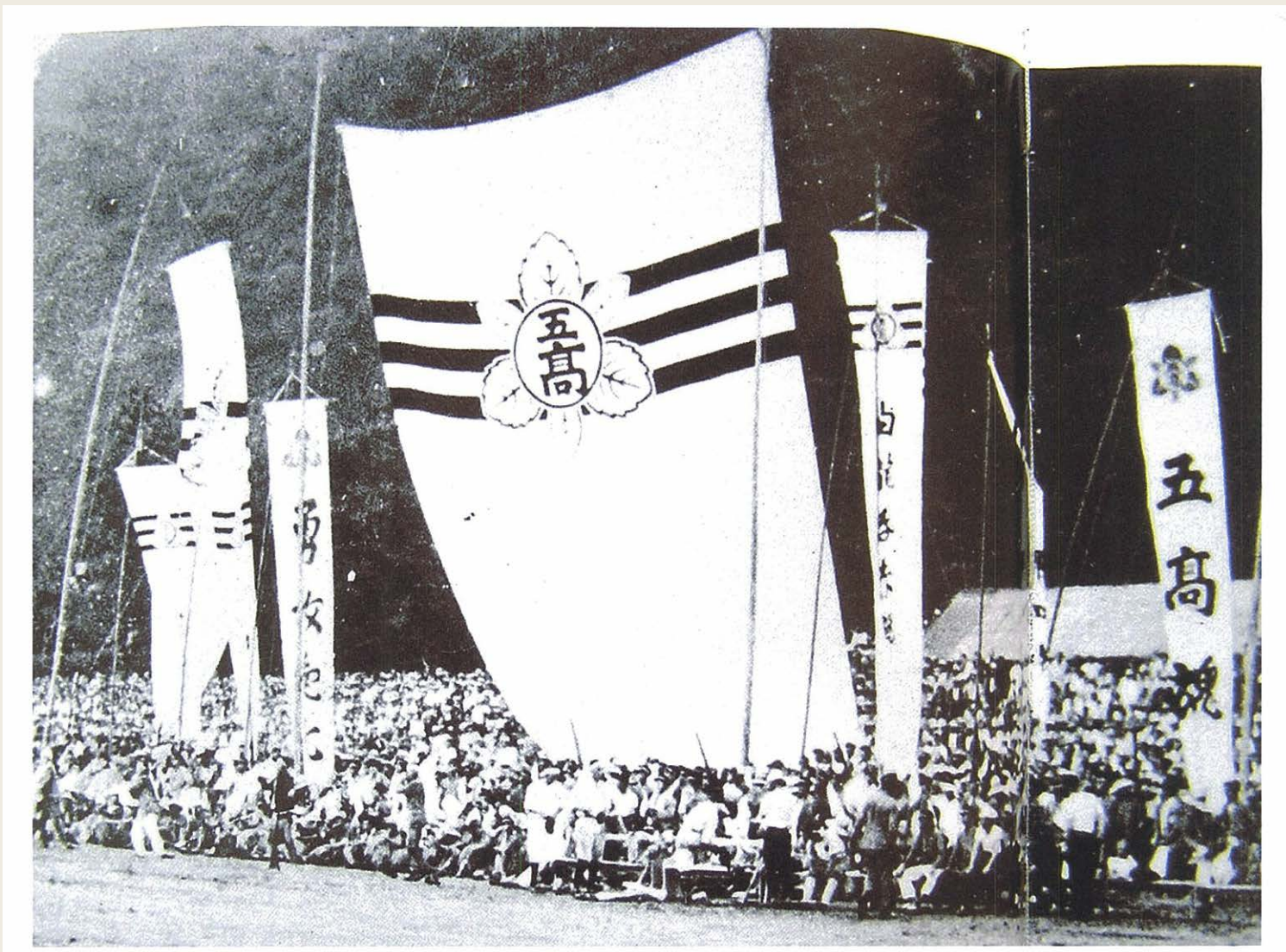
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Appendix I (1-2)	19-20
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は桜が爛漫と咲き乱れた。

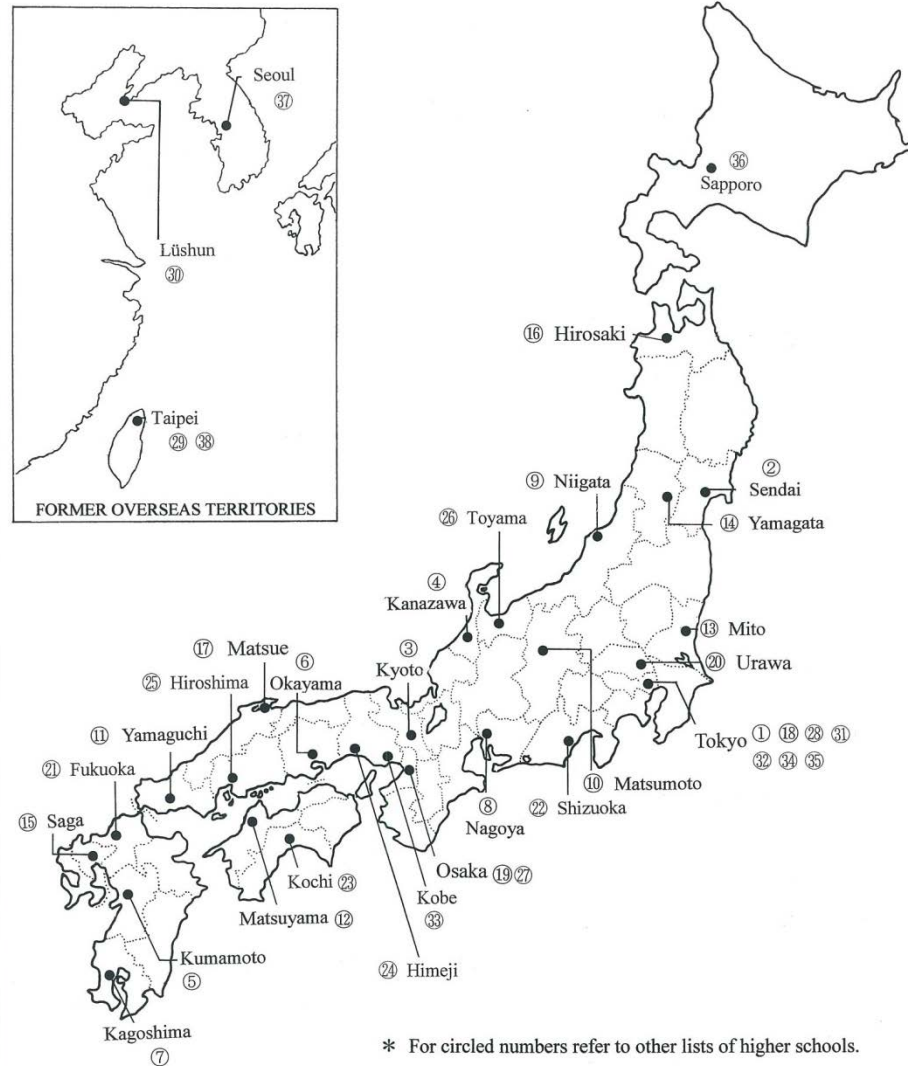








LOCATIONS OF HIGHER SCHOOLS IN IMPERIAL JAPAN



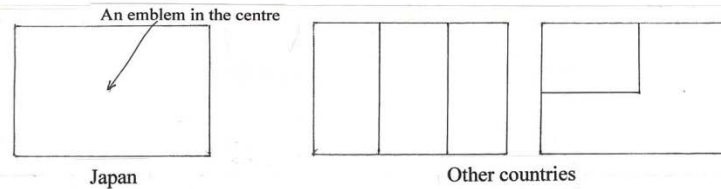
* For circled numbers refer to other lists of higher schools.



CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE FLAGS AND HIGHER SCHOOL ONES

1. Plain Fields

The fields were relatively unimportant, with no basic divisions or charges. An emblem (or a badge) was placed in the centre of this plain field.



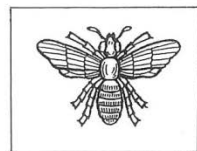
2. Meaningful Emblems

Higher school emblems were very meaningful, e.g. ideal-symbolizing, school motto-showing, locality-emphasizing, philosophical and enigmatic!

(1) Ideal-Symbolizing & Motto- showing



First H.S. — Oak (Mars) & Olive (Minerva)
meant Strength & Wisdom as well as
Physical Training & Intellectual Learning.



Second H.S. — A Bee symbolized Industry,
Diligence and Noble Ambitions.

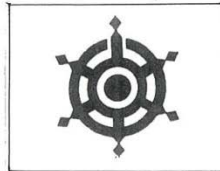


(2) Locality-Emphasizing



Himeji H.S. — The heron meant the Castle of *Himeji*, called “White Heron Castle,” symbol of *Himeji*.

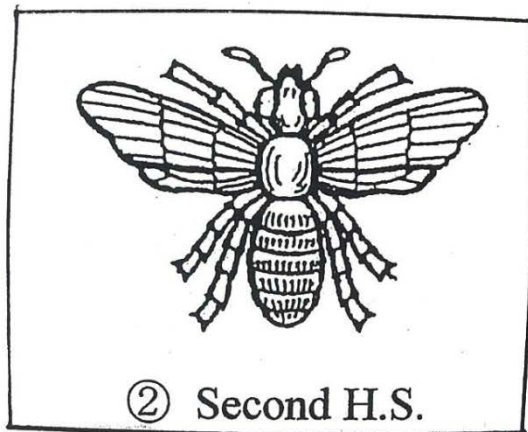
(3) Philosophical & Enigmatic!



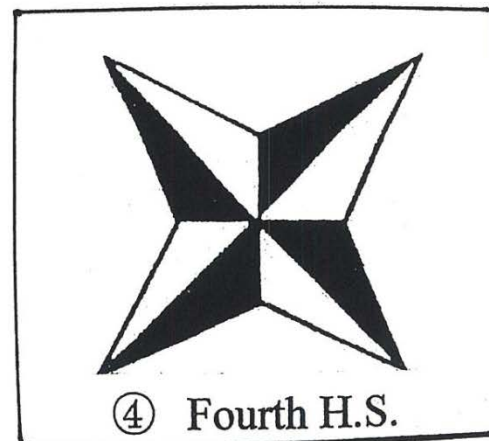
Sixth H.S. — A Firefly (central disc) and Snow (surrounding circle) imply diligence. A Chinese legend says that diligent boys, in order to get reading light for study, gathered fireflies in the summer and made use of snow reflection through windows in the winter.



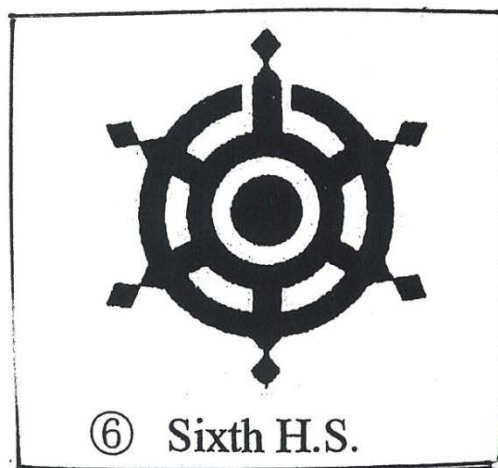
Seikei H.S. — A Silent Peach, its Fruit and Leaves. A Chinese proverb says that a peach fruit is so attractive that the path to reach there will be spontaneous made with no effort, or word, at all. (A great man attracts others even with complete silence.)



② Second H.S.



④ Fourth H.S.



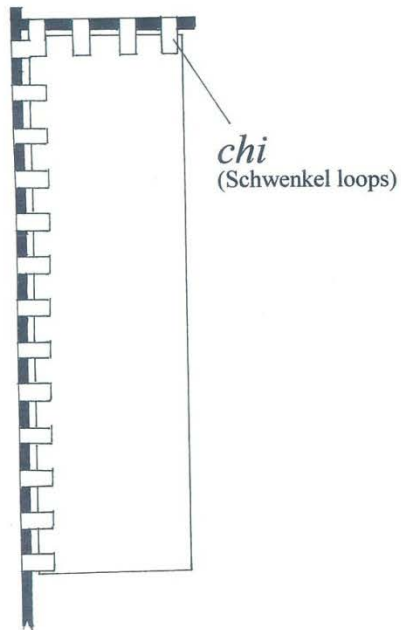
⑥ Sixth H.S.



③④ Seikei H.S.

“NOBORI” BANNERS

Not Used



(1) *Chi-tzuki* Type

Fastened by *chi* around two sides of the flag

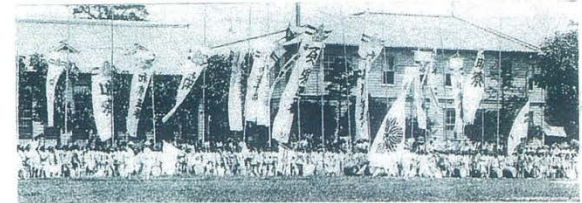
Used



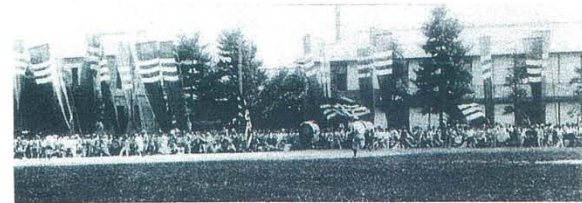
(2) *Nagare* Type
(Streamer, Pennant)

The flag hangs by its top edge.

A Baseball Match (First H.S. vs. Third H.S.)



(First H.S.)



(Third H.S.)

HANDFLAGS



(First H.S.)



(Third H.S.)



WHITE BANDS (*HAKUSEN*)

Hakusen (White Bands, or Stripes) were a prestigious symbol for higher school boys. They were attached to the cap badge around the cap.

The numbers of bands were two or three, for course classification at first, and for school identification later.

The stripes were used as ornaments of the school flags.

2 stripes-----28 schools

3 stripes----- 7 schools

No stripe----- 3 schools (2 of them occasionally admitted *Hakusen*.)



(Fifth H.S.)



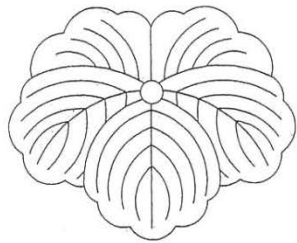
(Seventh H.S. Zoshikan)





VARIOUS WAYS OF DRAWING *MON* (Monochrome)

Tsuta (Ivy)-mon



Sugaki
(Plain)



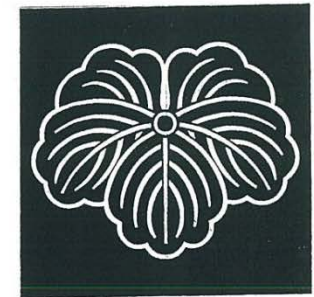
Somenuki
(White on Black)



Jinuki
(Black on White)

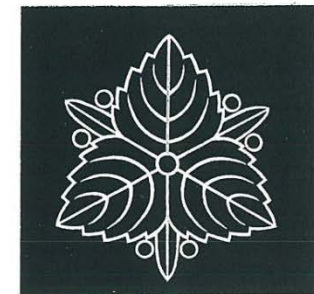
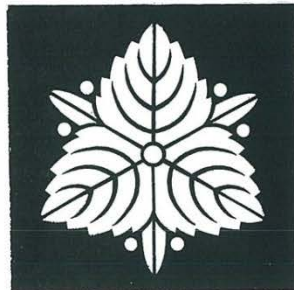


Kokumochi-jinuki
(Black on White Disc)



Kage
(Shade)

Hakuyo-sho (Oak & Olive-Emblem, First Higher School)



Drawn by Akira Kumagai



(Mon)

(School Emblems)



Mitsugashiwa



First H.S.



Yamaguchi H.S.



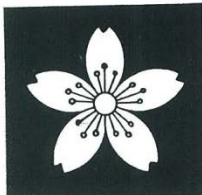
Hosowa-ni-kikunoha



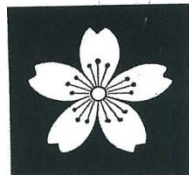
Saga H.S.



Tokyo H.S.



Yamato-sakura



Gakushuin



Furitsu H.S.



Maru-ni-hashiki-momo



Seikei H.S.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MON AND SCHOOL EMBLEMS



“Gokokuki” (First H.S.)



Fifth H.S.



Second H.S.



Fourth H.S.



Matsumoto H.S.



Himeji H.S.

CEREMONIAL FLAGS (*KOKI*)

Besides ordinary flags each school had its ceremonial flag (*koki*).

Koki represented the glory of the school and was held in high respect.

Usually *Koki* were gorgeous, beautifully embroidered in gold (or silver) thread on colourful silk cloth, both obverse and reverse, and fringed.

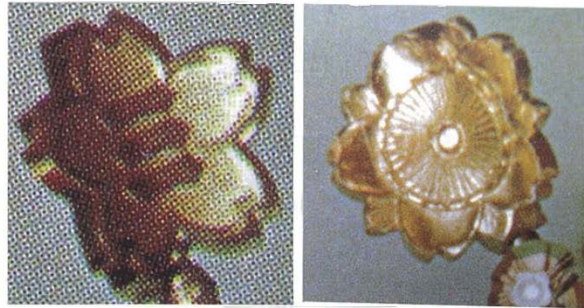
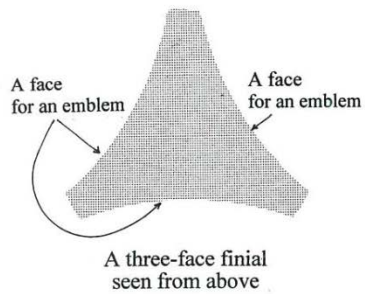
Both their colours and emblems were not always similar to those of ordinary flags.

For example, *Koki* of the First H.S. had the letter “Country(國)” surrounded by oak and olive leaves and was called “*Gokokuki*” (the flag which protects the country). Its ground colour was not white as ordinary school flags but bright red (*kurenai*).

FLAG FASTENINGS

Koki, as some other Japanese flags, had special features rarely seen in foreign flags, flag fastenings and finials, for example.

To fasten the flag to a stave some *koki* used *chi* (Schwenkel loops) as the First Higher, some used three chain-rings as the Second and Fourth Higher, and some used two or three leather triangles with eyelets (Fifth H.S., Matsumoto H.S., Himeji H.S.). None of these methods are very popular in other countries.



Third H.S.



Fifth H.S.



Matsumoto H.S.



“*Rentaiki*” (IJA)

FINIALS

Koki usually employed the “three-face” finials by which emblems, or related designs, can be seen from three directions. Three flat emblems constituted one solid finial (Third, Fifth, Matsumoto H.S., for example).

The Regimental Colours of the Imperial Japanese Army (*Rentaiki*) had three-face chrysanthemum finials which symbolized the Emperor.

This type of finials may be extremely rare , if any, in other countries.







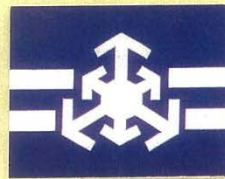
FLAGS OF HIGHER SCHOOLS IN IMPERIAL JAPAN

APPENDIX I

Drawn by Akira Kumagai



① First H.S.



⑨ Niigata H.S.



⑰ Matsue H.S.



⑳ Hiroshima H.S.



㉓ Konan H.S.



② Second H.S.



⑩ Matsumoto H.S.



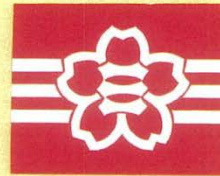
⑱ Tokyo H.S.



㉔ Toyama H.S.



㉒ Seikei H.S.



③ Third H.S.



⑪ Yamaguchi H.S.



⑱ Osaka H.S.



㉗ Naniwa H.S.



㉔ Seijo H.S.



④ Fourth H.S.



⑫ Matsuyama H.S.



㉘ Urawa H.S.



㉚ Furitsu H.S.



㉖ PC, Hokkaido I.U.

【Notes】
H.S.=Higher School
PC=Preparatory Course
I.U.=Imperial University



⑤ Fifth H.S.



⑬ Mito H.S.



⑳ Fukuoka H.S.



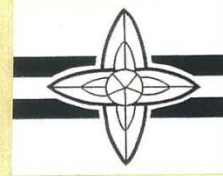
㉑ Taihoku H.S.



㉗ PC, Keijo I.U.



⑥ Sixth H.S.



⑭ Yamagata H.S.



㉒ Shizuoka H.S.



㉓ Ryojun H.S.



㉘ PC, Taihoku I.U.



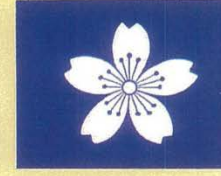
⑦ Seventh H.S. Zoshikan



⑮ Saga H.S.



㉔ Kochi H.S.



㉕ Gakushuin



⑧ Eighth H.S.



⑯ Hirosaki H.S.



㉖ Himeji H.S.



㉙ Musashi H.S.

【Notes】

H.S. = Higher School

PC = Preparatory Course

I.U. = Imperial University



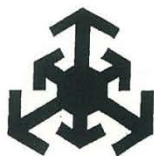
EMBLEMS OF HIGHER SCHOOLS IN IMPERIAL JAPAN

APPENDIX II

Drawn by Akira Kumagai



① First H.S.
(Tokyo)



⑨ Niigata H.S.



⑰ Matsue H.S.



⑳ Hiroshima H.S.



㉓ Konan H.S.
(Kobe)



② Second H.S.
(Sendai)



⑩ Matsumoto H.S.



⑱ Tokyo H.S.



㉔ Toyama H.S.



㉔ Seikei H.S.
(Tokyo)



③ Third H.S.
(Kyoto)



⑪ Yamaguchi H.S.



⑱ Osaka H.S.



㉗ Naniwa H.S.
(Osaka)



㉕ Seijo H.S.
(Tokyo)



④ Fourth H.S.
(Kanazawa)



⑫ Matsuyama H.S.



㉘ Urawa H.S.



㉙ Furitsu H.S.
(Tokyo)



㉚ PC, Hokkaido I.U.
(Sapporo)

【Notes】

H.S. = Higher School

PC=Preparatory Course

I.U.=Imperial University

(---)=Location

高=High, Higher School



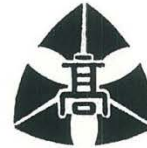
⑤ Fifth H.S.
(Kumamoto)



⑬ Mito H.S.



⑳ Fukuoka H.S.



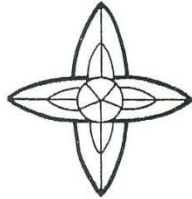
㉔ Taihoku H.S.
(Taipei)



㉟ PC, Keijo I.U.
(Seoul)



⑥ Sixth H.S.
(Okayama)



⑭ Yamagata H.S.



㉒ Shizuoka H.S.



⑳ Ryojun H.S.
(Lüshun)



㉟ PC, Taihoku I.U.
(Taipei)



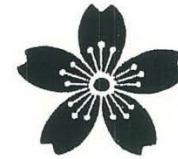
⑦ Seventh H.S. Zoshikan
(Kagoshima)



⑮ Saga H.S.



㉓ Kochi H.S.



㉠ Gakushuin
(Tokyo)



⑧ Eighth H.S.
(Nagoya)



⑯ Hirosaki H.S.



㉔ Himeji H.S.



㉡ Musashi H.S.
(Tokyo)

【Notes】

H.S.=Higher School






PC=Preparatory Course

I.U.=Imperial University

(---)=Location

高=High, Higher School



No.	H.S. Name	Est.	Design	Meaning
①	First	1894		Mars (Strength) and Minerva (Wisdom)
②	Second	do.		Industry
③	Third	do.		Japan, Third
④	Fourth	do.		Firmness, Fourth
⑤	Fifth	do.		Same as the First H.S.
⑥	Sixth	1900		Diligence
⑦	Seventh	1901		Name of the Castle "Tsurumaru-jo"
⑧	Eighth	1908		Symbol of the Shrine "Atsuta"
⑨	Niigata	1919		Snowy Niigata
⑩	Matsumoto	do.		Pine (Matsu-[moto]) & Sun's Rays
⑪	Yamaguchi	do.		Oak & Crest in shape of "Yama-guchi"
⑫	Matsuyama	do.		Pine (Matsu-[yama]) & Japan
⑬	Mito	1920		Mito
⑭	Yamagata	do.		Flower Symbol of the Local Mountain
⑮	Saga	do.		Nobility
⑯	Hirosaki	do.		Ambition
⑰	Matsue	do.		Pine (Matsu-[e]), Seventeenth H.S.

APPENDIX III

MEANINGS OF HIGHER SCHOOL EMBLEMS, ETC.



18	Tokyo	1921		Chrysanthemum Leaf	Fortitude
19	Osaka	do.		Laurel Wreath	Ambition
20	Urawa	do.		Chrysanthemum	Nobility
21	Fukuoka	do.		Nine Swords & Plum Flower	Symbol, "Temmangu" Shrine
22	Shizuoka	1922		Flower of "Fuji-Bara"	Local Flower of Mt. Fuji Area
23	Kochi	do.		Laurel Leaves	Glory, Ideal
24	Himeji	1923		Heron (Sagi)	Name of the Castle "White Heron"
25	Hiroshima	do.		Three Bamboo Leaves (<i>Misasa</i>)	Name of the Local River
26	Toyama	do.		<i>Mt. Tsurugi</i>	<i>Mt. Tsurugi</i> was in front of the School.
27	Naniwa	1926		Violent Waves	<i>Naniwa</i> (Violent Waves) means <i>Osaka</i> .
28	Furitsu	1929		Cherry Blossom & Rising Sun	Spirit of Japan
29	Taihoku	1922		Palm Leaves	Taiwan
30	Ryojun	1940		Cherry Blossom & Leaves	" <i>Hakko Ichiu</i> ," A WWII Slogan
31	Gakushuin	—		Cherry Blossom	Japan
32	Musashi	1922		White Pheasants	Legendary Symbol of <i>Kanto</i> Area
33	Konan	1923		Helmet Crest	Crest means nearby <i>Rokko</i> Mts.
34	Seikei	1925		Peach Fruit & Leaves	Silent Appeal (Chinese Proverb)
35	Seijo	1926		Letters "Seijo"	—
36	PC, Hokkaido I.U.	1918		Polar Star & Cherry Wreath	Hokkaido
37	PC, Keijo I.U.	1924		Zelkova Leaves	Korea
38	PC, Taihoku I.U.	1941		<i>Kochoran</i> (Butterfly Orchid)	Taiwan