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Title	The Usage of Sentences Mixing Regular-Script Kanji and Hiragana in the Latter Part of the Edo Period
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Citation	グローバル日本研究クラスター報告書. 2018, 1, p. 170-180
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/68062
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The Usage of Sentences Mixing Regular-Script *Kanji* and *Hiragana* in the Latter Part of the Edo Period

YUKIO HISADA*

1. Introduction

The Japanese writing system has three character types: *kanji*, *hiragana*, and *katakana*. In the present day, it is natural that sentences are written by mixing *kanji* and *hiragana*. *Katakana* is used primarily to express foreign words, onomatopoeia, and names of animals and plants. However, in the Meiji period, *katakana* was used more widely than it is in the present day. This is evident in sentences mixing *kanji* and *katakana*.

Over time, the style of *kanji* used in the Japanese language has changed, evolving from semi-cursive-script *kanji* (行書, *gyōsho*) to regular-script *kanji* (楷書, *kaisho*). While semi-cursive-script *kanji* was for daily use, regular-script *kanji* was used only in academic books. During the Edo period, Japanese sentences were typically written using a mix of *kanji* and *kana*: semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana*, and regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*.

Although Japanese used both styles of *kanji* and combinations of *kanji* and *kana*, in the present day, Japanese is typically written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. Thus, from the Edo to the Meiji period, the Japanese writing system changed significantly in terms of the style of *kanji* and the combination of *kanji* and *kana* used. These major changes can be explained by the influence of the printing press in the Meiji period. However, there were books written in the style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* during the Edo period. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether this style used in the latter part of the Edo period influenced the style used in the Meiji period.

This article provides a survey of books containing sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*, from the perspectives of their contents, publishers, and printing methods. Based on these attributes, I will clarify the characteristics of the books published in the latter part of the Edo period. This is important when examining the changes that occurred in the Japanese writing system from the Edo to the Meiji period.

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2. Manuscripts and printing during the Edo period

During the Edo period, commercial publishing developed and many books were printed. This social change made books available to people of every class. This social change also drew the attention of book publishers, because they needed to make books legible for all readers and accessible. Moreover, these changes deeply affected the method of manufacturing books, which shifted from handwriting to woodblock printing. When books were handwritten, much time was needed to produce a single book and thus efficiency was very important. However, when books were printed via woodblock printing, the legibility of the books became more important than efficiency alone. Yada Tsutomu pointed out that the marks used to ease reading and understanding in handwritten books (i.e., sonant or punctuation marks) came to be used as basic elements of the act of writing in itself during the print era.[1] For book publishers considering the need for greater legibility to reach a wider range of readers, a particular writing style was required.

Sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana* were easier to understand than sentences written only in *kana*. This is because *kanji* helps to clarify the meaning of sentences by preventing the misunderstanding of homonyms, in contrast to sentences written only in *kana*. However, sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana* contain characters that were difficult for readers who could not read *kanji*. For these readers, providing *kana* above the *kanji* aided their reading comprehension. Even if the *kanji* itself was not readable, readers could understand the meaning of the words by reading the *kana* above the *kanji*. In other words, sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana* were more suitable for printing because this style was accessible to different levels of readers.

For these reasons, in print, sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana* were ideal. However, in handwriting, it was typical that people wrote *sōrō* sentences: sentences ending with the copula *sōrō* (候文, *sōrō-bun*). *Sōrō* sentences were used in letters written during the Edo and Meiji periods. Therefore, many people wrote and read *sōrō* sentences in letters, while they read

[1] Yada Tsutomu 矢田勉, *Kokugo Moji Hyōkishi no Kenkyū* 国語文字・表記史の研究, Kyūko Shoin 汲古書院, 2012, pp. 507–525. First printing "Insatsu Jidai ni okeru Kokugo Shokishi no Genri" 印刷時代における国語書記史の原理. In *Tōkyō Daigaku Kokugokenkyūshitsu Sōsetsu Hyakushūkinen Kokugokenyū Ronshū* 東京大学国語研究室創設百周年記念 国語研究論集, Kyūko Shoin 汲古書院, 1998, pp. 567–585.

sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana* in printed books. In other words, commercial printing divided people into those who could only read sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana* and those who could read and write sentences mixing *kanji* and *kana.*

During the Edo period, it was normal to have both styles in handwriting and in printed books. Moreover, the following relationship can be found in manuscripts and printed books. At the beginning, printed books were influenced by manuscripts; but before long, printed books affected manuscripts by their overwhelming production capacity. In other words, there was a demand for printed books to resemble manuscripts. However, soon the situation reversed and people began to value handwriting that was like printed material. In the latter part of the Edo period, with the maturation of publishing culture, printed books influenced handwritten books. This article examines printed books.

3. Culture of publication and writing during the Edo period

During the Edo period, there were many forms of printing genre and style. For example, academic books written in the style of Chinese texts translated into Japanese (漢文訓読, *kanbun-kundoku*) were written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*. Meanwhile, light literature (戯作, *gesaku*) and collections of "exemplary letters" (往来物, *ōraimono*) were written in sentences mixing semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. In addition, literary printing had its own format such as a style of handwriting used in books on *jōruri* and a printing plate characteristic of illustrated storybooks with yellow covers (黄表紙, *kibyōshi*). These books can be identified simply by the appearance of their printed pages, without even reading their contents. In other words, the style of printing, such as handwriting and illustrations, reflected the book's respective genre. During the Edo period, there were several expressive modes of writing based on established styles and forms. Different modes of writing targeted different readers. This is a distinctive feature of commercial publishing in the Edo period.

It is important to understand the aspects of style and genre in order to evaluate the actual conditions of writing in the Edo period. Thus, it is useful to review previous research on books written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.

There were books written in the style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. Among them, *Keiten'yoshi* (経典余師) (Figure 1)[2] received attention early on because it was the first book that employed sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* in order to read Chinese classics in Japanese (書き下し文, *kakikudashi-bun*). This book was published in 1786, in the latter part of the Edo period, for students who wanted to read Chinese classics in Japanese. Suzuki Toshiyuki has researched *Keiten'yoshi* and similar books and has pointed out that many books of a similar format were produced because *Keiten'yoshi* was so well received.[3] As a result, many Japanese readers learned to read regular-script *kanji* and publishers sold books written in the style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.

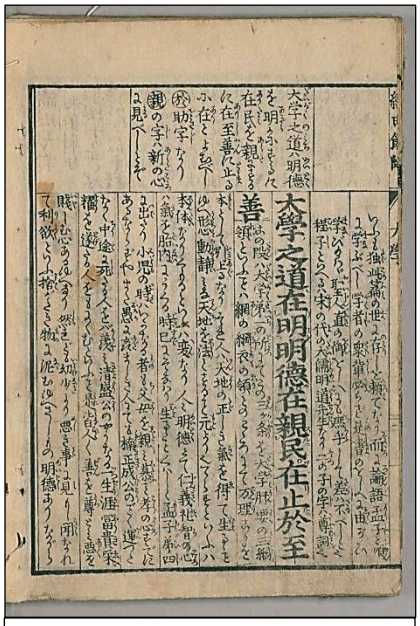
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Figure 1: *Keiten'yoshi* (1v)

The Chinese classics were academic works, so it was natural that regular-script *kanji* was used. *Keiten'yoshi* was written for lower-class samurai. These cases suggest that sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* may have been used in academic books when publishers assumed that the readers were not scholars. Therefore, it is necessary to research the genres written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*.

4. Content of the books

The writing styles used in books published in the Edo period were deeply connected to the books' contents. Thus, this section will begin its analysis by focusing on the contents of the books published during this period.

[2] National Diet Library Digital Collection (Call No: 特 1-1903).
[3] Suzuki Toshiyuki 鈴木俊幸, *Edo no Dokushonetsu:Jigakusuru Dokusha to Shoseki Ryūtsū* 江戸の読書熱－自学する読者と書籍流通, Heibonsha 平凡社, 2007, pp. 145–244.

4-1. Buddhist scriptures

Buddhism was imported to Japan from India via China. Thus, in Japan, it was natural that Buddhist scriptures were written in either a classical Chinese style or sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*.

Buddhist scriptures have a long publishing history in Japan because of the important cultural role Buddhism has played in the country. Many Buddhist scriptures were published in the early Edo period when commercial publishing first developed. Many Buddhist scriptures were also sold with the purpose of spreading Buddhist teachings; therefore, Buddhist scriptures were printed not only for priests but also for ordinary people. They were generally written in either a classical Chinese style or sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*. However, roughly before the 19th century, sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were used in published Buddhist scriptures. For example, *Hōjō Yorokobi Gusa* (放生歓喜草), printed in 1816, and *Sanjō Wasan Kankishō* (三帖和讃歓喜鈔), printed in 1836. Also, medical books written in regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* appeared earlier; however, this will be further explored later in this article.

Buddhist scriptures characteristically used sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* when they were reprinted. For example, *Anzai Hōshi Ōjōki* (安西法師往生記) was first printed in 1712, and then reprinted in 1815, 1840, and 1848. Although this book was printed in sentences mixing semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana* in the 1815 edition, later it was printed in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* in the 1848 edition.[4] This case suggests that sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were required at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate.

4-2. Medical science and herbal medicine books

In Japan, knowledge of medical science was imported from China. Thus, the transfer of medical knowledge to Japan was similar to the transfer of Buddhism. In the Edo period, medical books were also sold because there were few doctors. These medical books were written in everyday language, rather than in technical language, to make their contents accessible to regular people who did not have access to doctors. In this historical context, medical books written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were sold as

[4] I was unable to access the 1840 reprint of *Anzai Hōshi Ōjōki* (安西法師往生記), so it is possible that it was printed in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.

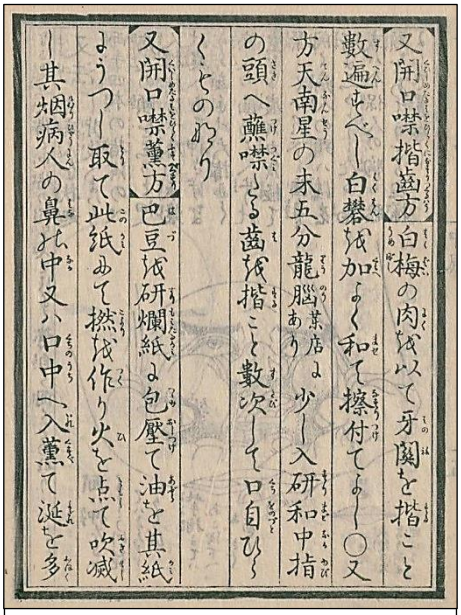

Figure 2: *Kōkeisai Kyūhō* (5v)

earlier as the late 18th century. For example, Taki Motonori wrote *Kōkeisai Kyūhō* (広恵済急方) in 1790 (Figure 2)[5] and Nasu Tsunenori wrote *Honchō Idan* (本朝医談) in 1822.

Taki Motonori was the son of Taki Mototaka, who was the shogun's doctor, and was deeply involved in medical education, and *Kōkeisai kyūhō* was printed for ordinary people. It merits attention that sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were used in this book, because *Fukyū ruihō* (普救類方) was printed in sentences mixing semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana* for ordinary people in 1729 by the Tokugawa shogunate. It seems that there was a shift in consciousness regarding writing style during those sixty years.

Herbalism and Chinese medicine were imported from China, and were dealt with similarly. Herbal medicine books were written in either classical Chinese style or with sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*. In the latter part of the Edo period, sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were used. Kitano Akiyoshi wrote *Akino Nanakusakō* (秋野七草考) in 1812 and Asao Taneo wrote *Shinsen Koshōkō* (新撰胡椒考) in 1837.

4-3. Reading books (読本, *yomihon*)

Reading books (読本, *yomihon*) comprised a genre of light literature published in the latter part of the Edo period, which needs to be distinguished from the academic books mentioned above. Reading books are divided into two classes by year of publication: the early period and the late period. In addition, this distinction is consistent with the publication area: Kamigata and Edo. In the late period, sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were used. Although the reading books of the late period are classified as light literature, these books were sold in distribution channels separate from other light literature. Reading books of the

[5] National Diet Library Digital Collection (Call No: 特 1-308).

late period were sold in distribution channels that primarily handled academic books. While other types of light literature were written in sentences mixing semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana*, reading books were written in regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.

Santō Kyōden wrote *Chūshin Suikoden* (忠臣水滸伝) in 1799, which was the first reading book published in the late period. This book was written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. Santō Kyōden also wrote *Honchō Suibodai Zenden* (本朝酔菩提全伝) in 1809 and *Sōchōki* (双蝶記) in 1813 in this style. However, in 1803, Santō Kyōden wrote *Fukushū Kidan Asakanonuma* (復讐奇談安積沼) and *Mukashigatari Inazuma Byōshi* (昔話稲妻表紙) in sentences mixing semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. In addition, Kyokutei Bakin wrote reading books in the late period using sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. Bakin also wrote *Sangoku Ichiya Monogatari* (三国一夜物語) in 1806 in this style. These two authors had a significant influence on later reading books in terms of the writing style that they used in their books. For example, *Dokuyō Shingo* (独揺新語) and *Noji no Tamagawa* (野路の玉川) were both written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.

However, it is important to understand that not every book belonging to these three genres of printed books was written in this style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. To the best of my knowledge, most books belonging to the three genres show a tendency for this style.

In some other genres, sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were also used. For example, *Sanpō Kyūseki Tsūkō* (算法求積通考) and *Edo Daisetsuyō Kaidaigura* (江戸大節用海内蔵) were written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. The former is a book about Japanese mathematics (算法書, *sanpō-sho*), and the latter is a type of dictionary (節用集, *setsuyō-shū*).

5. Publishers

Next, in this section, the publishers during this period will be discussed. During the Edo period, publishers sold books belonging to specific genres. Thus, it is also useful to analyze printed books from the perspective of publishers to reveal the features of the books that they published.

5-1. Kashiwaraya Seiemon (柏原屋清右衛門)

Kashiwaraya Seiemon was a publisher located in Osaka. It was founded in the late 1600s, and stayed in business until the end of the Tokugawa shogunate. The most famous books it published include *Hayabiki Setsuyō-shū* (早引節用集) and *Shibukawa-ban Otogizōshi* (渋川版御伽草子). This publisher obtained the copyright for the sales and reprinting of the books it published. For example, Kashiwaraya Seiemon published *Idō Nichiyō Kōmoku* (医道日用綱目) and *Chūya Chōhōki* (昼夜調法記), which had been published before by other publishers.

Books written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* were published by Kashiwaraya Seiemon during the 1700s, which is earlier than the scope of this article. However, Kashiwaraya Seiemon cannot be overlooked, as it was a bookstore that published books written in this writing style. For example, *Shōni Ryōji Chōhōki* (小児療治重宝記) was printed in 1715 and *Kakanpu Ryakusetsu* (火浣布略説) was printed in 1765. However, it was not only Kashiwaraya Seiemon that printed *Kakanpu Ryakusetsu*. Therefore, strictly speaking, it is possible that *Kakanpu Ryakusetsu* was sold by publishers other than Kashiwaraya Seiemon. In addition, Kashiwaraya Seiemon published *Wakan Rōei-shū* (和漢朗詠集) with other publishers in *Keiten'yoshi* style in 1807.[6]

5-2. Ibuki-no-ya (気吹舎)

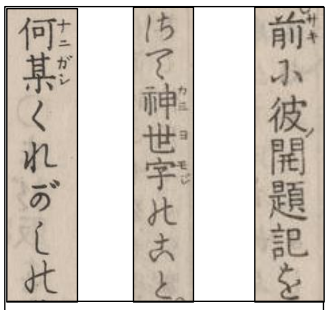

Figure 3: Examples of Ibuki-no-ya's *hiragana*.

Ibuki-no-ya was an organization of disciples of Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843), rather than a publisher.[7] Ibuki-no-ya published books written by Hirata Atsutane. Atsutane was a scholar of Japanese classics and became a disciple of Motoori Norinaga; but this was after Norinaga had died. Yada Tsutomu pointed out that books printed by Ibuki-no-ya employed the style of mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.[8] For example, *Tama no Mihashira* (霊能真柱) was printed in 1812 and *Kan'na Hifumi no Den* (神字日文伝) was printed in 1819.

[6] This was pointed out by Suzuki Toshiyuki in 2007.

[7] See the following study for more information on Ibuki-no-ya publishing: Yoshida Asako 吉田麻子, *Chi no Kyōmei: Hirata Atsutane wo Meguru Shomotu no Shakaishi* 知の共鳴－平田篤胤をめぐる書物の社会史, Perikansha ぺりかん社, 2012.

[8] Yada Tsutomu, op. cit., pp. 641–660.

Books printed by Ibuki-no-ya have distinctive features specific to the usage of *hiragana*. During the Edo period, it was natural that *hiragana* was written in a cursive style. However, the *hiragana* used in these books is similar to that used in the present day (Figure 3).[9] Yada stated that these features were influenced by *Kojikiden* (古事記伝). Norinaga wrote *Kojikiden* and it was printed from 1790 to 1822. While *Kojikiden* was the only book written in that style by Norinaga, Ibuki-no-ya published many books written in the same style. Ibuki-no-ya employed this style as their format when they published books written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. Thus, books published by Ibuki-no-ya in this style were not related to their contents.

6. Printing method

Finally, in this section the different printing methods used will be discussed. During the Edo period, woodblock printing was a common publishing method, and the books mentioned in this article are of woodblock print. However, printing using individual pieces of wood, or movable wood type, was used more in the latter part of the Edo period, or after the Tenmei and Kansei years (天明・寛政期) in the late 1700s. Printing type made from wood was primarily used for books written in either classical Chinese style or sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*. However, there are several books written in the style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. It is important to understand the actual conditions of the books printed by woodblock to discern the relationship of the books printed with the printing press in the Meiji period and books printed in the Edo period.

6-1. Wood type printing

During the Edo period, wood type printing was not a common publishing method because it was not suitable for mass printing and reprinting. In contrast, woodblocks could be used many times even though they were subject to wear and tear. However, wood type printing required the page to be reset every time a book was printed, so wood type printing was inferior to woodblock printing. During the Edo period, when commercial publishing developed, woodblock printing became the most popular publishing method, and the woodblocks owned by the publishers constituted a kind of copyright.

[9] *Kan'na Hifumi no Den*, National Diet Library Digital Collection (Call No: 837-18).

Printing using wood type was suitable for limited printing, especially after the Tenmei and Kansei years. In 1790, the Tokugawa shogunate prohibited learning any type of Confucianism other than Neo-Confucianism. This policy caused the subjects of learning and the demand for books to change. The scale of this demand was suitable for wood type printing. Books printed using wood type were mostly written in either classical Chinese style or sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*. However, toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, there were few books written in the style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. Suzuki Hiromitsu pointed out that *Batbiya-Shinbun* (バタビヤ新聞) and *Hoheiseiritsu* (歩兵制律) were written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* and printed using wood type.[10] Suzuki stated that these books were written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* because their contents were new, so the new writing style was more suitable for their contents.

However, it is not clear whether wood type printing in the latter part of the Edo period influenced the printing press used in the Meiji period. In a study of the history of publication, Komiyama Hiroshi and Fukawa Mitsuo examined the printing press,[11] but their study did not address the continuity of wood type printing. Thus, concerning the continuity of writing style, further research is needed.

7. Conclusion

In this article, I analyzed books written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana* from three perspectives: the contents of the books, the publishers, and the printing methods used. There were two typical styles of writing in the Edo period: sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*, and sentences mixing semi-cursive-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. However, the books I mentioned in this article were written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*.

[10] Suzuki Hiromitsu 鈴木広光, *Nihongo Katsuji Insatsushi* 日本語活字印刷史, Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai 名古屋大学出版会, 2015, pp. 218–263. First printing "Kaika no Kishimi: Yōranki no Nihongo Taipogurafi" 開化の軋み－揺籃期の日本語タイポグラフィ, *Bungaku* 文学, Vol.12, No. 3, 2011.

[11] For example, Fukawa Mitsuo et al. 府川充男他, *Kumihan: Taipogurafi no Kairō* 組版－タイポグラフィの回廊, Hakujunsha 白順社, 2007; Komiyama Hiroshi 小宮山博史, Fukawa Mitsuo 府川充男, and Koike Kazuo 小池和夫, *Shinsei Katsuji Chūdokusha Tokuhon: Hanmen Kōshō Katsuji Shotaishi Yūran* 真性活字中毒者読本－版面考證 活字書体史遊覧, Kashiwa Shobō 柏書房, 2001.

Concerning the books' contents, Buddhist scriptures, medical books, herbal medicine books, and reading books (*yomihon*) tended to be written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. These books had academic content and were sold in the same distribution channels.

Regarding the publishers, Kashiwaraya Seiemon and Ibuki-no-ya tended to publish books written in sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*. However, the situations of these two publishers were different. Kashiwaraya Seiemon published the same books as other publishers; therefore, Kashiwaraya Seiemon may not have intentionally chosen to use this style. Meanwhile, Ibuki-no-ya published its own books, so Ibuki-no-ya used this style of its own accord. Ibuki-no-ya was not a commercial publisher, so it may be said that Ibuki-no-ya selected this style out of preference.

Regarding the printing method, books printed using wood type printing were mostly written in either classical Chinese style or with sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *katakana*. However, toward the end of the Tokugawa shogunate, there were few books written in the style of sentences mixing regular-script *kanji* and *hiragana*, and these books contained new contents. These new contents were more suited to this writing style.

This style represented the most common style used during the Meiji period. In this article, I did not discuss books published during the Meiji period. Therefore, more research is needed to explore which factors influenced the actual conditions of writing and publishing during the Meiji period.