



Kana Shodo: Japanese Calligraphy

EAST 1200

Japanese Calligraphy

- shodo (書道) – “the way of writing”
- the foundation of Japanese calligraphy is in Chinese calligraphy
- Japanese has three writing systems/scripts/“alphabets”
 - Kanji (漢字)
 - words
 - Hiragana (ひらがな)
 - phonetic
 - Katakana (カタカナ)
 - foreign/onomatopoeic words
- 5th century: Japan began using Chinese characters
 - around the 8th century: hiragana katakana
 - around the 17th century: katakana developed





Kanji

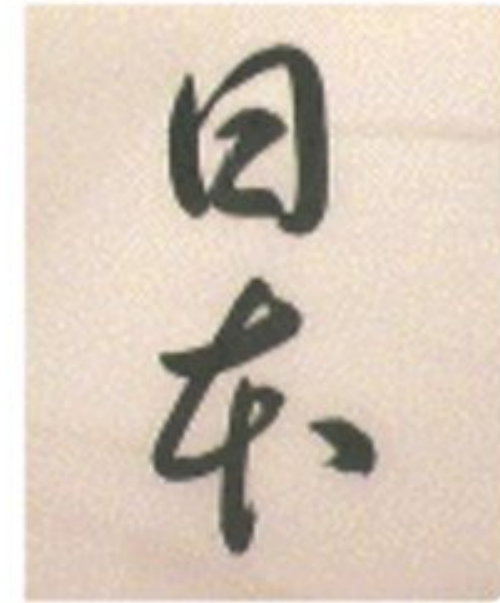
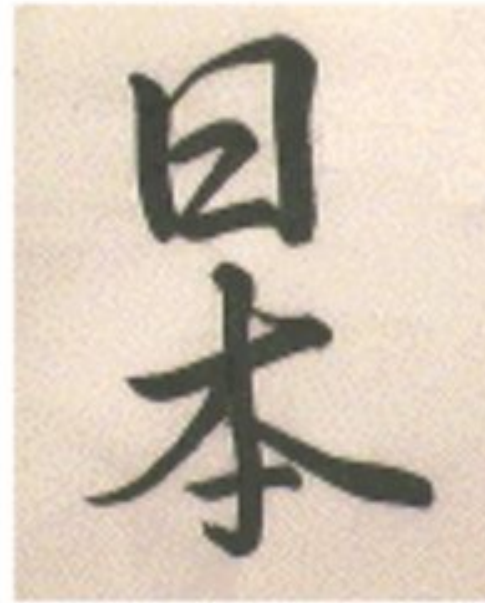
わらやまはなたさかあ
をりゆめひにちしきい
んるよまふぬつすくう
んれゝめへねてせけえ
ゝろゝもほのしそこお

Hiragana

ワ	ラ	ヤ	マ	ハ	ナ	タ	サ	カ	ア
ヲ	リ		ミ	ヒ	ニ	チ	シ	キ	イ
ン	ル	ユ	ム	フ	ヌ	ツ	ス	ク	ウ
	レ		メ	ヘ	ネ	テ	セ	ケ	エ
	ロ	ヨ	モ	ホ	ノ	ト	ソ	コ	オ

Katakana

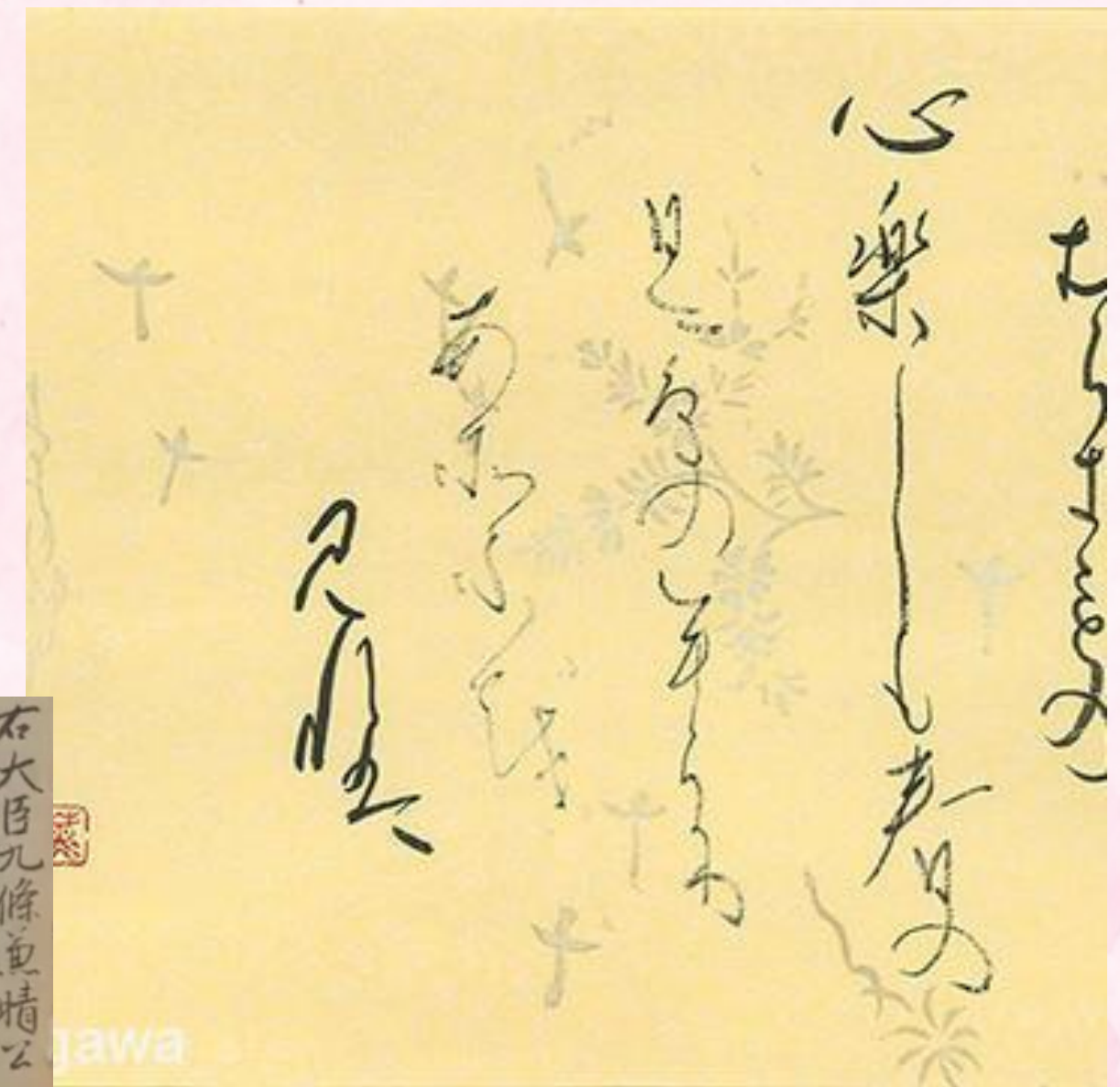
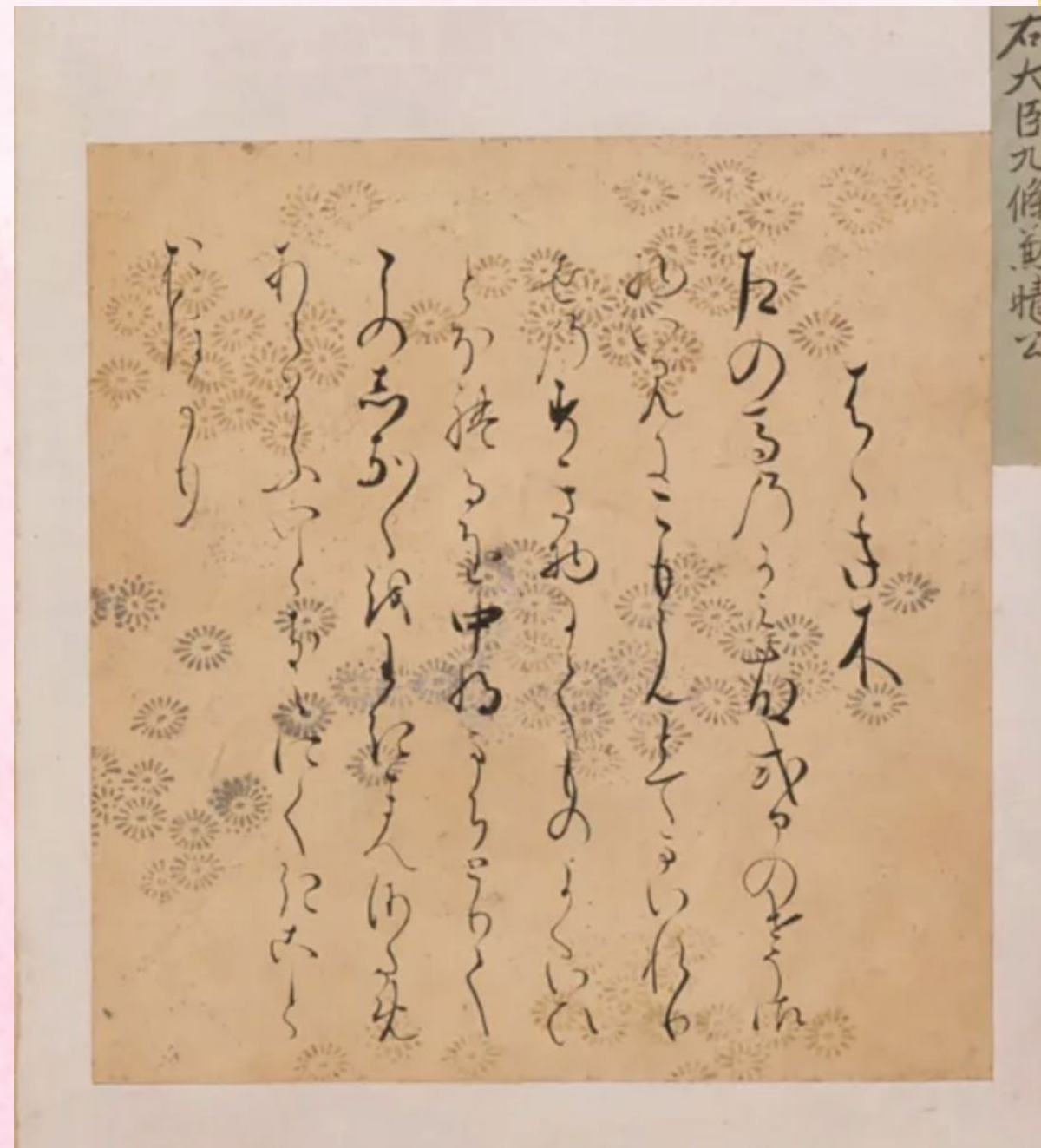
The Different Styles



Block style (kaisho) - semi cursive style (gyosho) - cursive style (sosho)

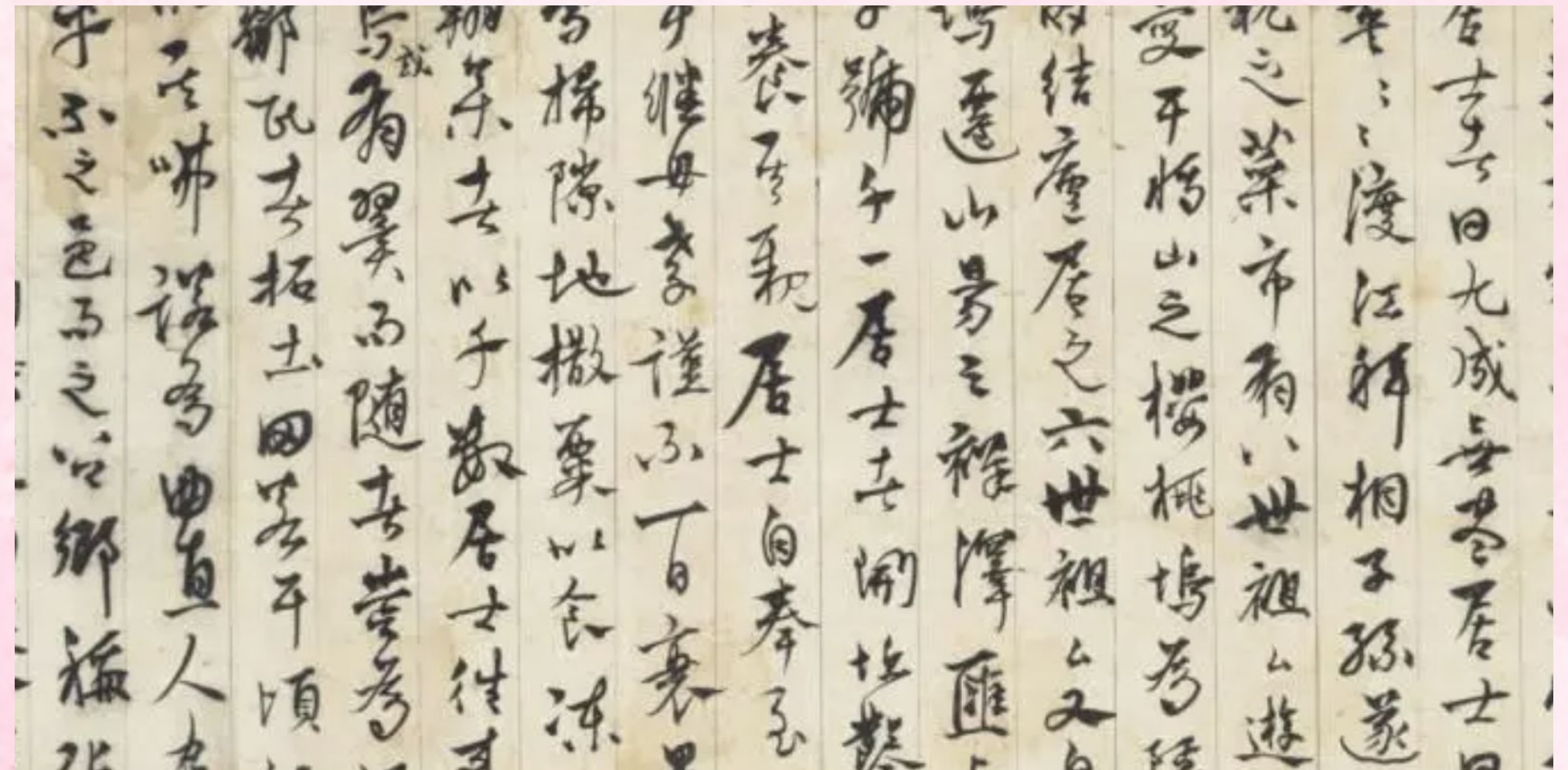
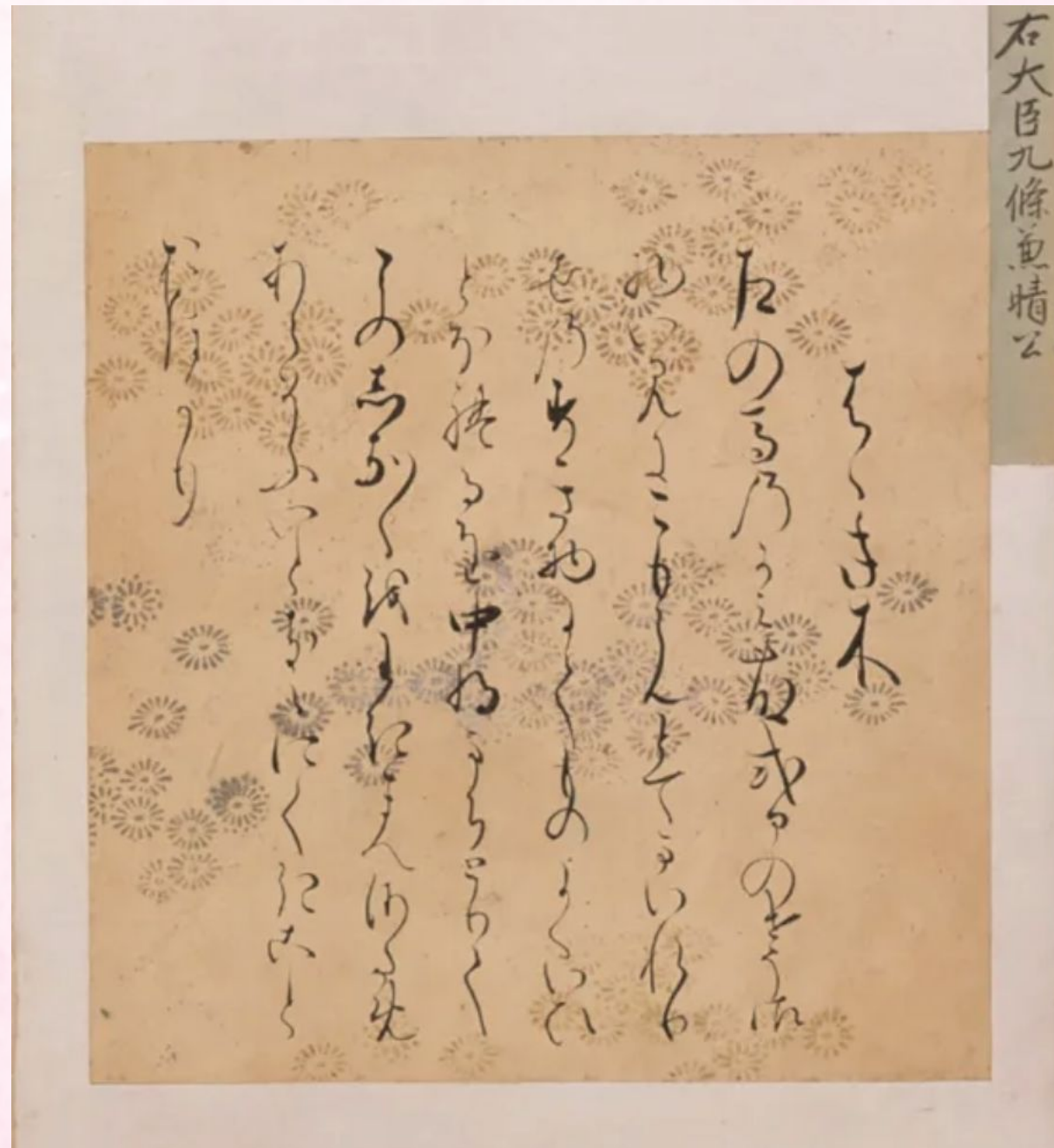
Kana Shodo

- kana shodo – onnade (女手)
 - women's script
 - founded around 9~10th century
 - primarily developed by upper class women
 - both genders used it, mostly by women
- Style
 - flowy
 - running



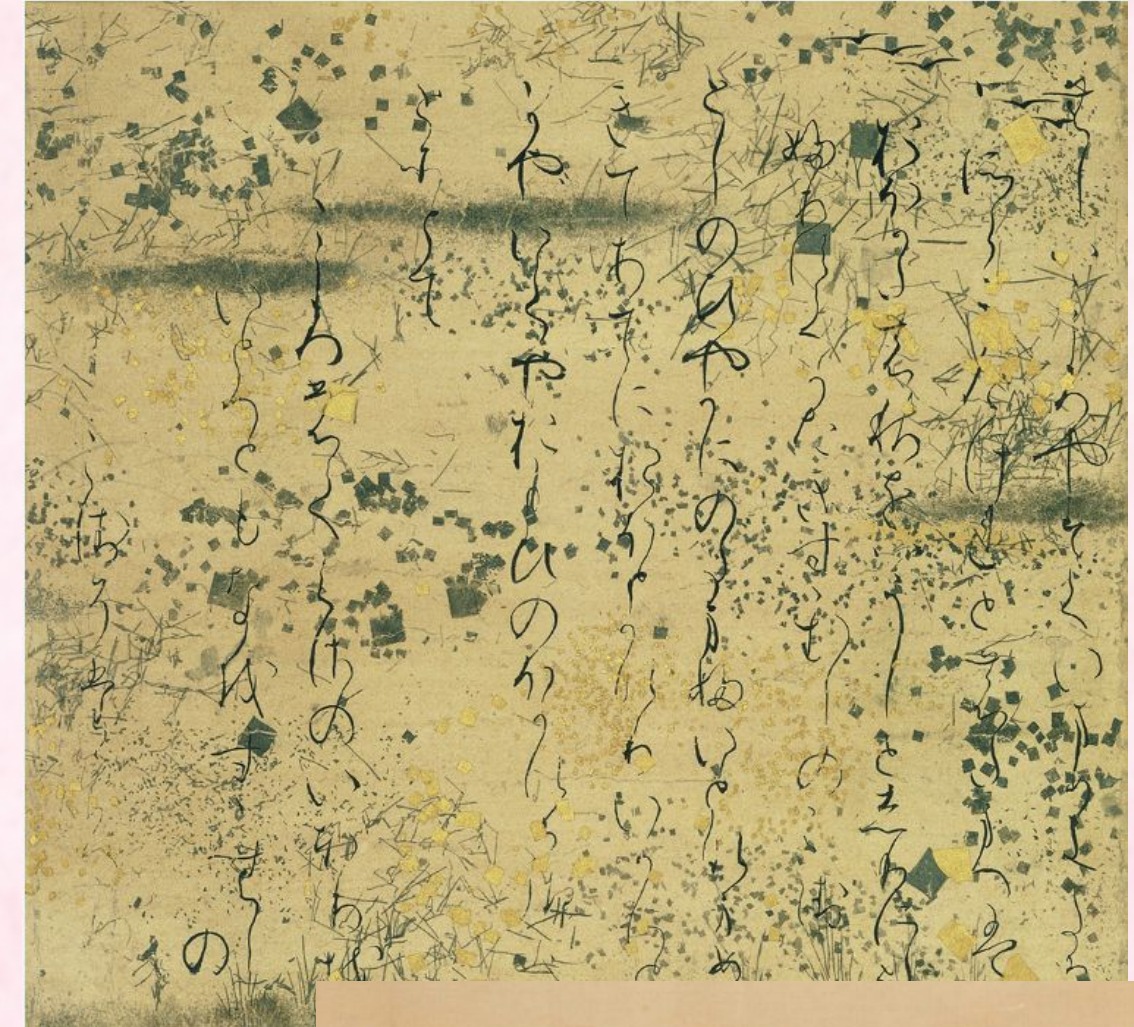
Kana Shodo Compared

“the characters in kana shodo are interconnected with each other to make it look more feminine and fluid.” - Kaoru Akagawa

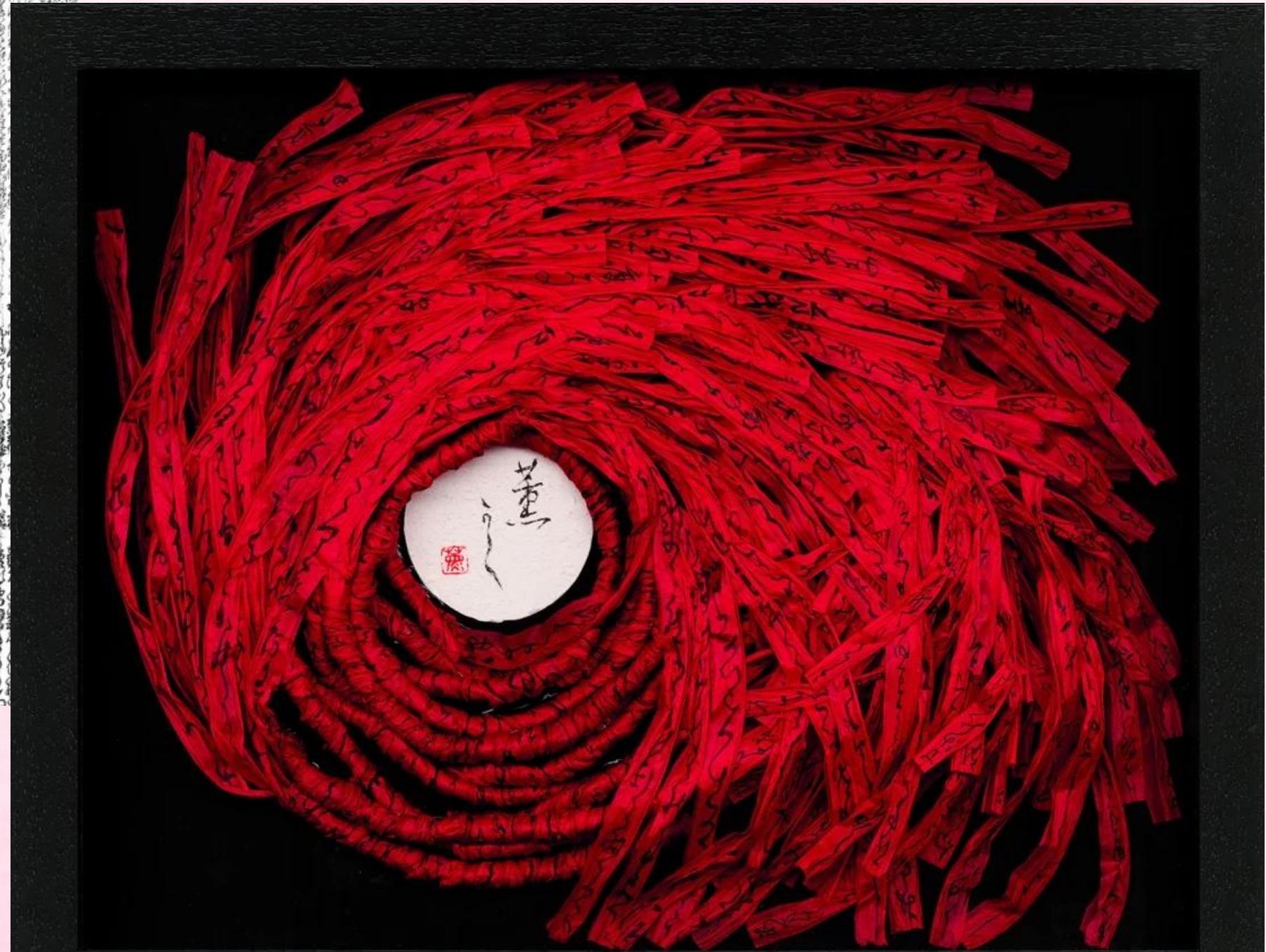
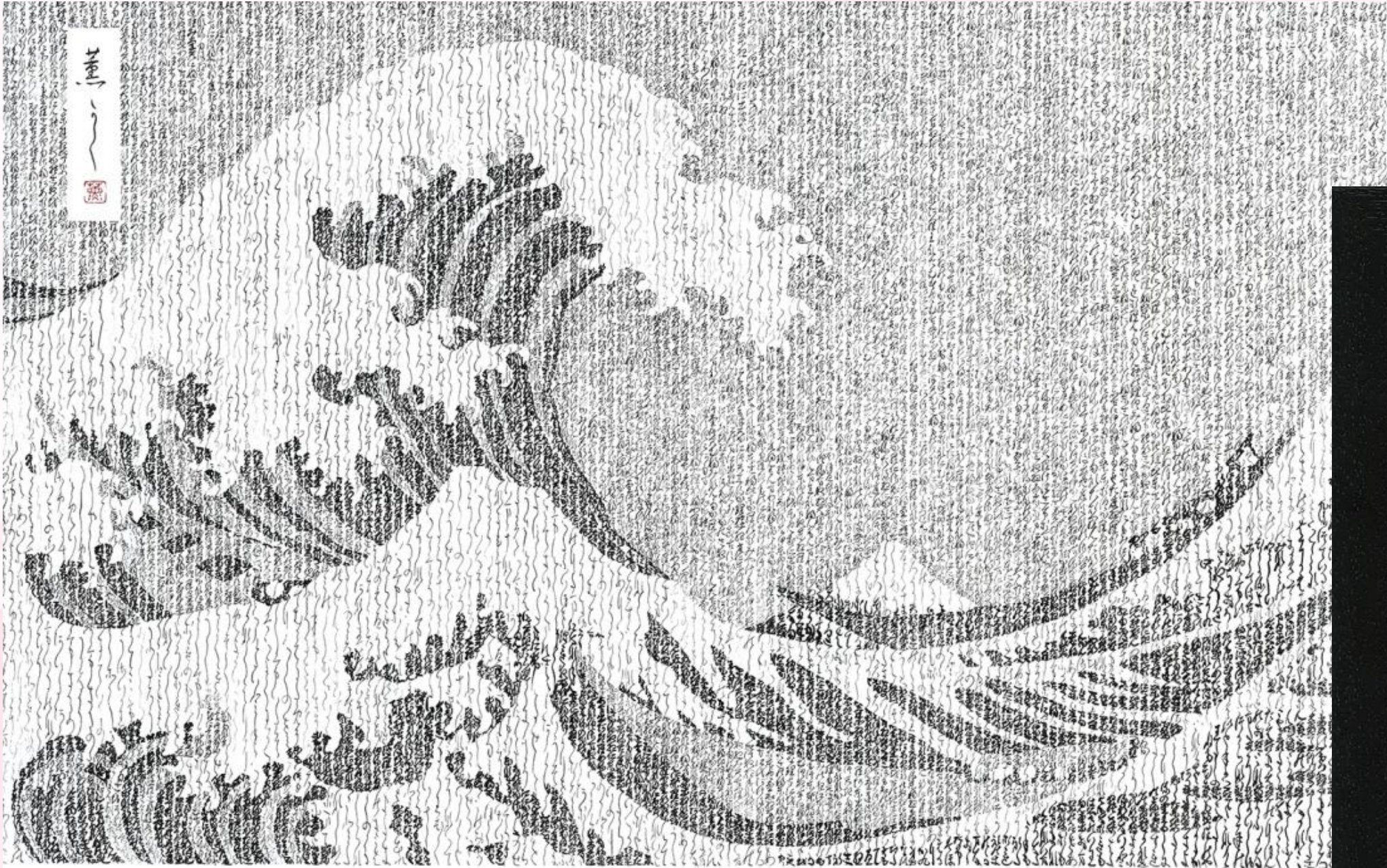


Kana Shodo Usage

- used for many purposes from letters to poetry
- notably used to write “The Tale of Genji” by Murasaki Shikibu
- in a patriarchal society, kana shodo was a way for women to voice their thoughts
 - women often not allowed to learn kanji
 - mostly upper class men knew how to write
 - 21/100 female poets in *Hyakunin Isshu*
- A disappearing style
 - 46/300 used today



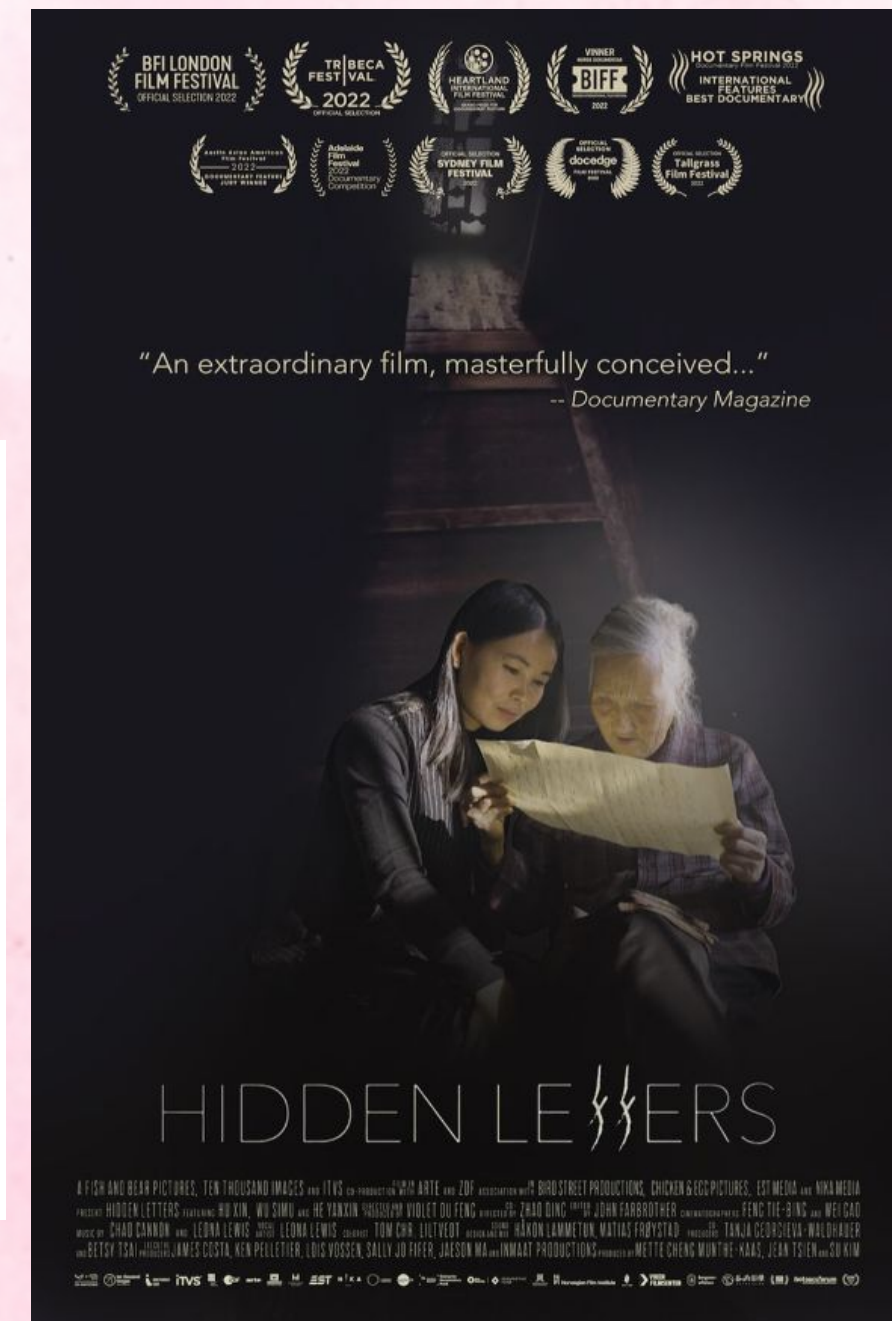
Kaoru Akagawa





Calligraphy as Women Empowerment: Nushu

- kana shodo - a way to write when there were barriers to learning kanji
- Nushu
 - a script created by women in China as a form of resistance
 - used by the Han, Yao, and Miao women in Hunan's Jiangyong County
 - centered on documenting, lifting, and sharing women's stories
- ***Calligraphy is more than just writing characters!***



Work Cited

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