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御書活法集卷之三

五言古詩

五言古詩

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Komonjo



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The Better Part of Valor: Documents of the Migata

The Better Part of Valor: Documents of the Kumagai

Sea Lords: Documents (komonjo) of the Ōuchi and the Kōno

From Documents to History

Acknowledgements

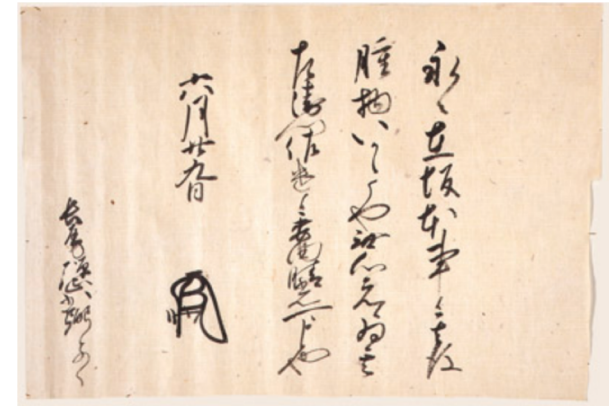
Documents, or *komonjo*, were treasured in medieval Japan, for they were replete with legal and social meaning. They could be used to uphold rights to the land, but possession of these records also revealed social status. Warriors, nobles, and commoners carefully preserved and copied these pieces of paper because of their legal and social meaning.

Preservation proved easier than one would think, for these documents are created from mulberry fibers, dissolved in water and collected and dried in fine mesh. This paper is soft, and does not yellow or turn brittle. It may be burned, or consumed by wood-eating insects, but otherwise they were virtually indestructible. The significance of these records too meant that warriors, courtiers, and monks first rescued these documents, which were preserved in boxes or, as some scrolls revealed, stored at a warrior's sleeping quarters.

This paper proved intrinsically valuable, and one warrior lamented the fact that his paper-maker had absconded. The imperial court took to recycling documents, dissolving old papers and making documents anew which took on a charcoal color because of the ink residue. These documents, called *shukushi*, were issued only by chamberlains for emperors or retired emperors, and were prestigious vehicles for conveying land rights, or court appointments. Numerous examples appear in the Awazu collection, each document of a slightly different color depending on the paper recycled.

Many court documents evidence particular peculiarities. The format is such that they are structured as reports of the emperor's spoken words, conveyed through either a chamberlain, in which case they are known as a *kuzen an*, or copy of a spoken statement, which is used to convey promotions, or for that matter, a *nyōbō hōsho*, or court lady's communiqué.

Details about the size and style of documents reflect much about the status of the issuer and the recipient. Those in authority could dispatch large documents



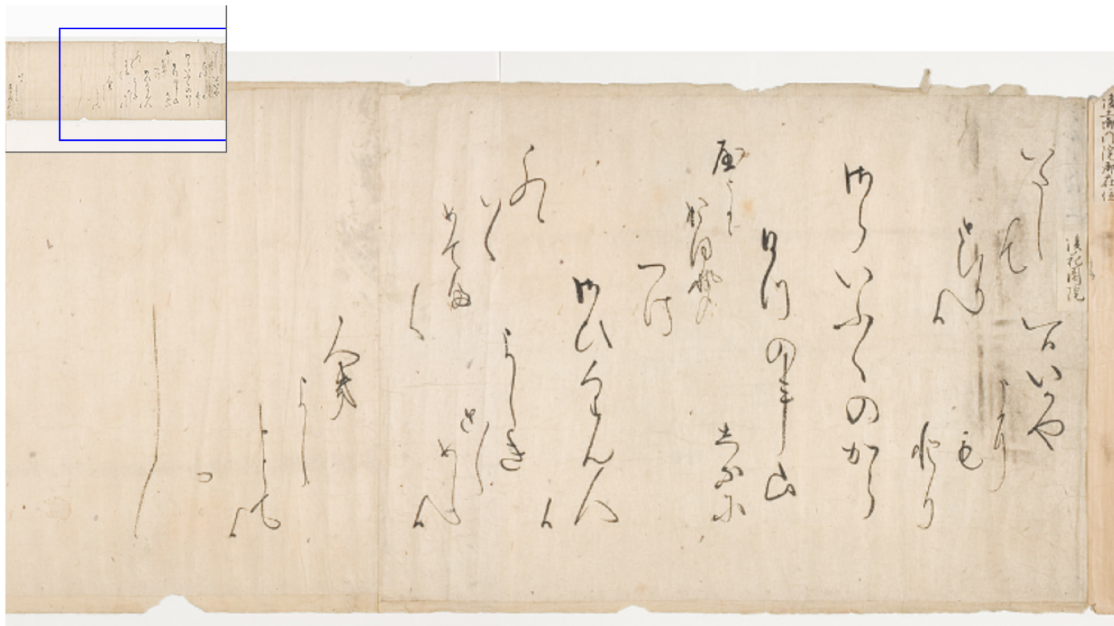
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Hanazono asks Takakura Nagatsugu to have Kiyonori bring them to the palace.

Document and initial elements read quickly Document and initial elements read slowly

Hide Annotations



後花園上皇女房奉書
〔端裏銘〕
文明二
「院仰七廿二」
「後花園院」
いたし 間いか
候て やうに
まいり も
候 とり
御らいふくのか

後花園上皇女房奉書 (Go-Hanazono)

komonjo.princeton.edu/awazu-01/

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(Label on the back of document)

Bunmei 2

The command of the Retired Emperor. Seventh month, Twenty-second day

Go-Hanazono-in

We have heard that your retainer went to Yamashina and rescued the storage chest (karabitsu) with the ceremonial/enthronement robes. It would be most excellent if you would have him bring them to the palace. Speak of this to your retainer.

Sincerely yours,

Kirifū (piece cut from the document), sumibiki (ink mark)

Takakura Nagatsugu, Acting Middle Counsellor

To Tō no saishō dono

後花園上皇女房奉書(端裏銘)

文明二

「院仰七廿二」

「後花園院」

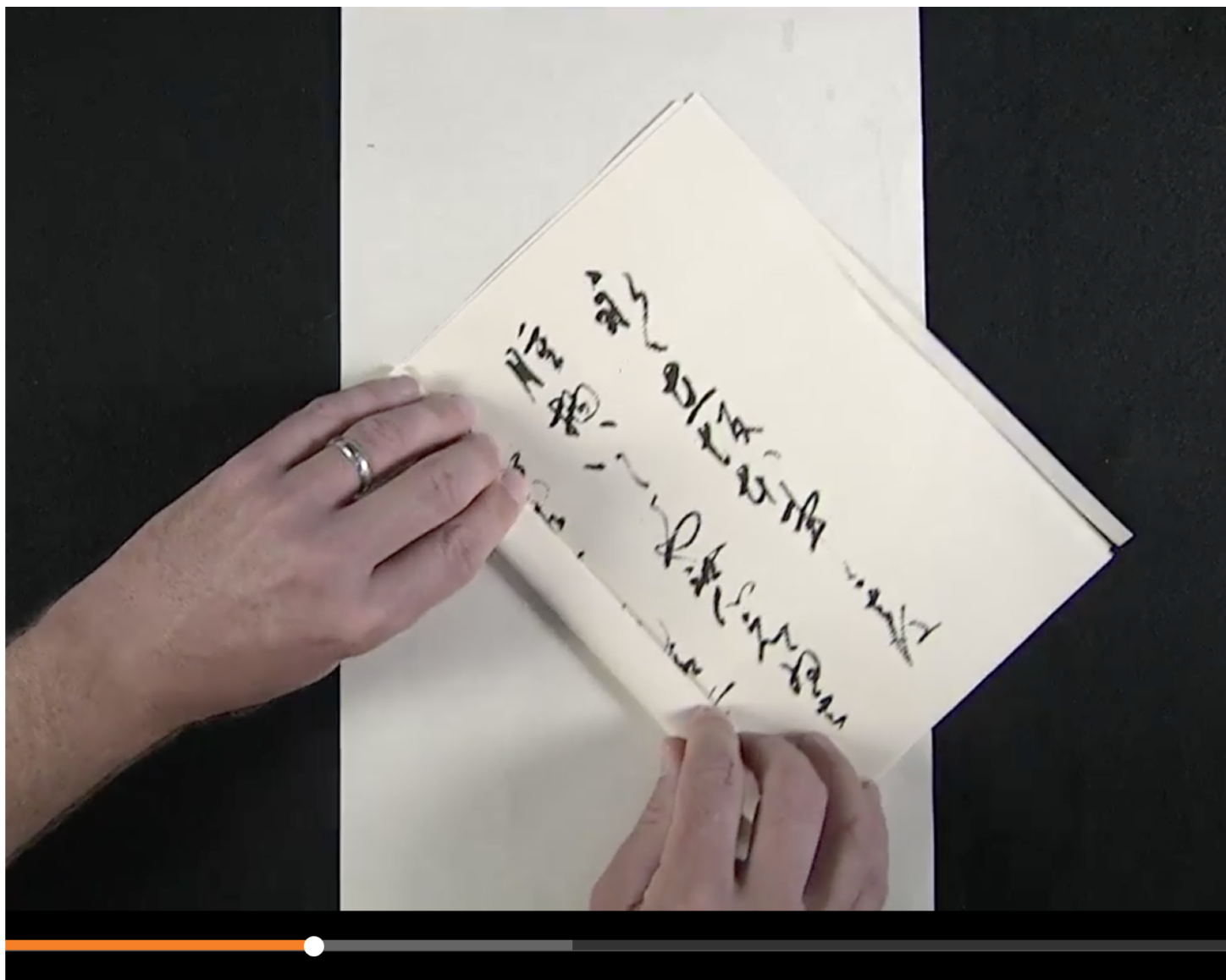
御らいふくのからひつの事山しなに

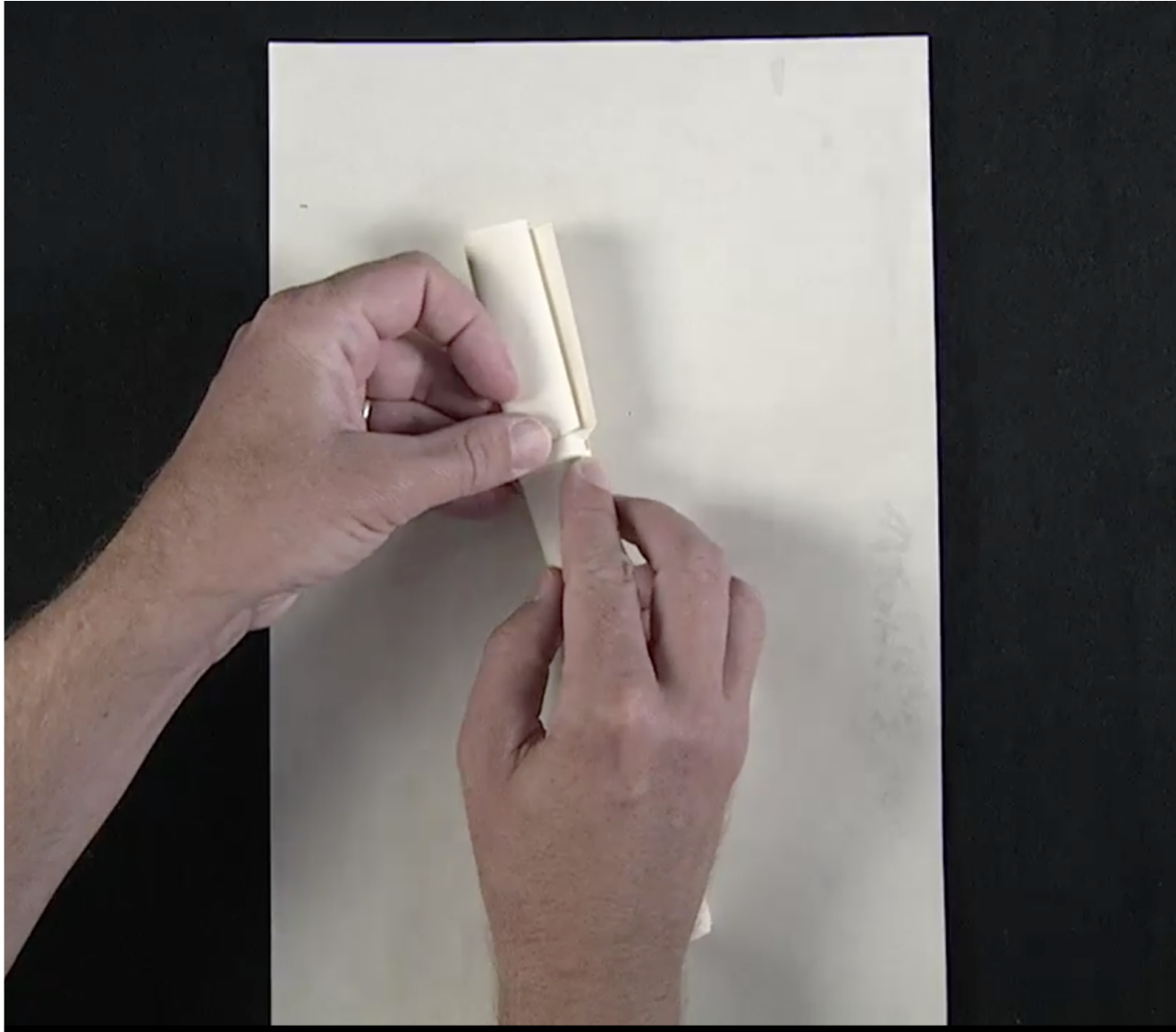
御ハくわん人候上しき

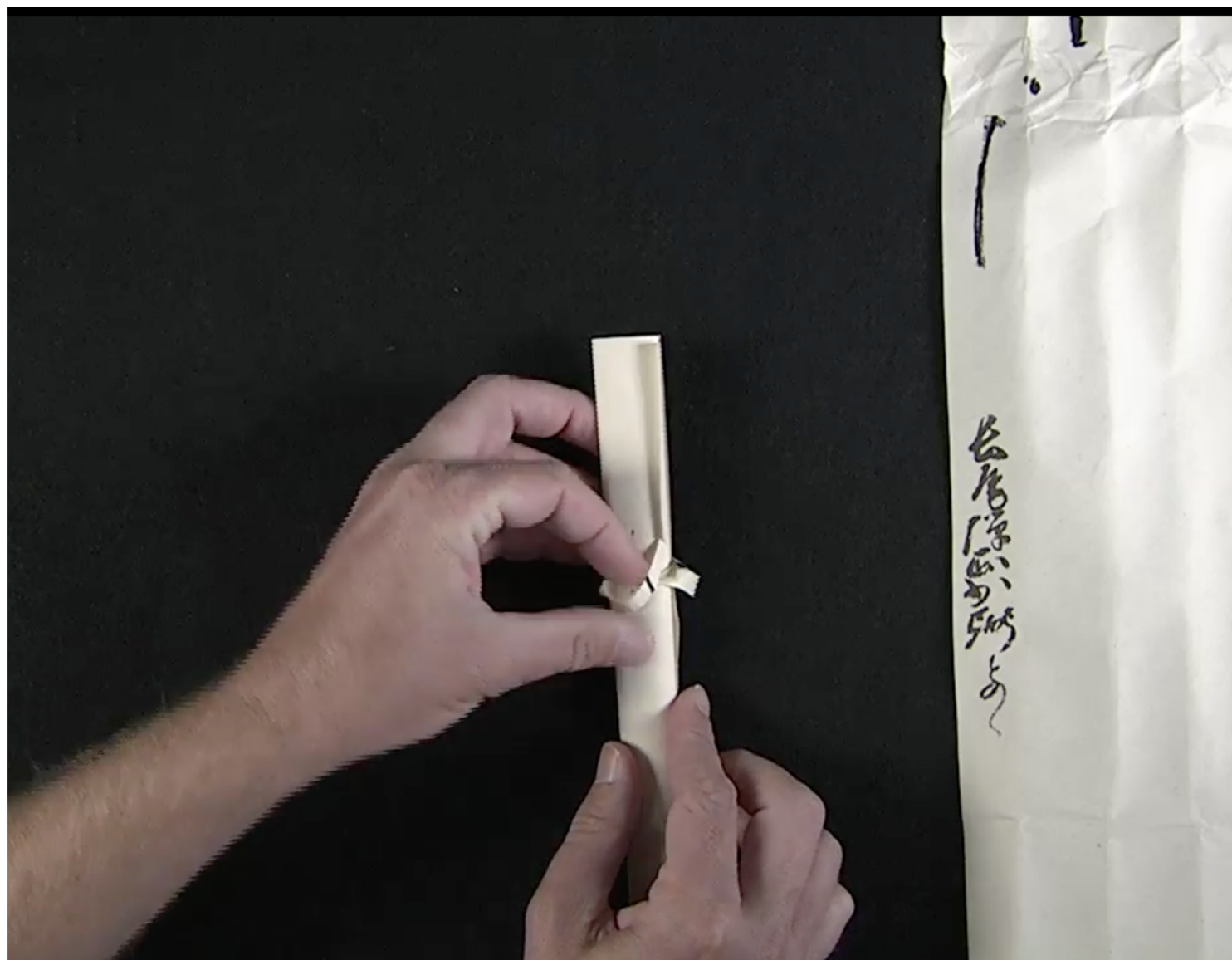
永く立坂が事、
腫物、いゝか、
左、右、
下、上、

六月廿九日
月

長谷川、
下、上、









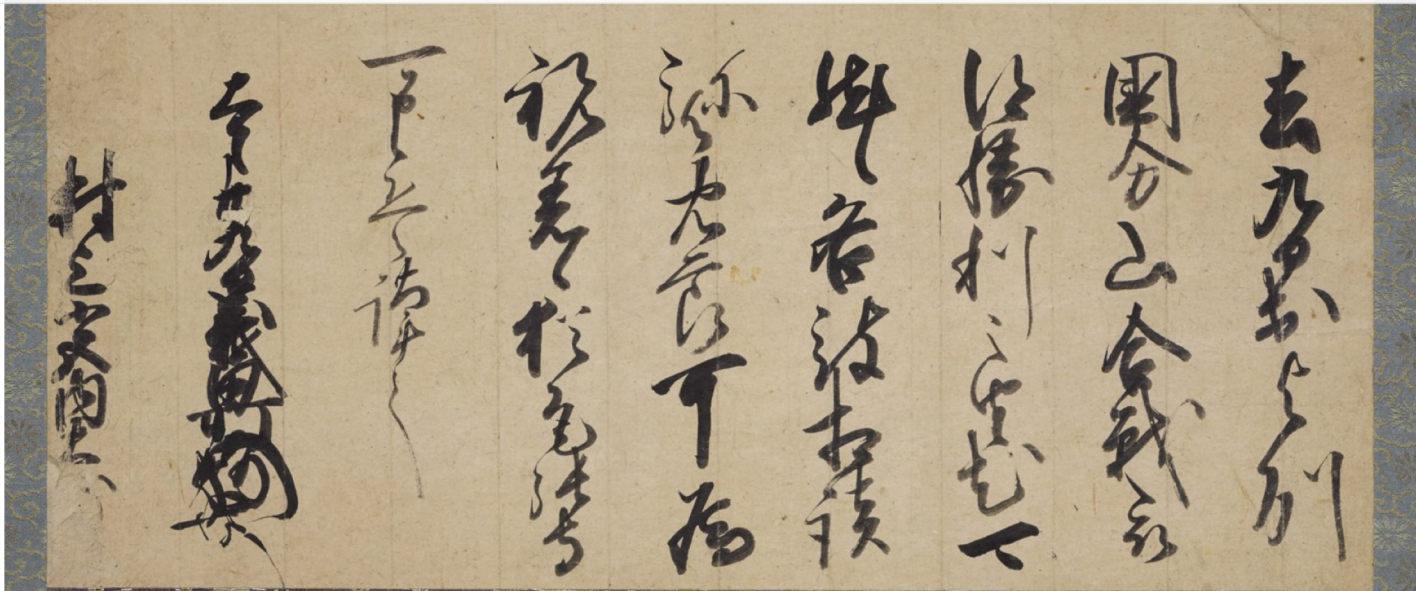


去乃與之別
因心之念誠意
以接外之忠也
坤者故曰積
誠大者可以
初美之於德
下之德
今其義也

村三史圖

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Description

