

SELECTED DOCUMENTS OF THE KAMAKURA BAKUFU:  
DOCUMENT 14: YORITOMO SETTLES A DISPUTE OVER THE  
POSSESSION OF A JITŌ SHIKI, 1187  
DOCUMENT 24: THE BAKUFU CONFIRMS A WOMAN AS JĪTO, 1215  
DOCUMENT 138: THE SHUGO'S AUTHORITY IS DESCRIBED, 1199

### Introduction

With the defeat of the Taira in 1185 and his appointment as shogun by the imperial court in 1192, Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199) became Japan's *de facto* military and political leader. Although the Emperor in Kyoto retained prestige and legitimacy, Yoritomo and his shogunate (*bakufu*) in Kamakura established mechanisms for ruling Japan within the shell of the dysfunctional imperial state. The most important offices created by Yoritomo were the *jitō* (stewards) and *shugo* (military governors), vassals who were appointed to maintain order on estates and in regions across Japan.

### Selected Documents with Questions

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## Selected Documents of the Kamakura Bakufu

### Document 14:

#### YORITOMO SETTLES A DISPUTE OVER THE POSSESSION OF A JITŌ SHIKI, 1187

Ordered: To Taira Michitaka.

That the false claim of Bingo Provisional Governor [*gon no kami*] Takatsune is denied; and that the *jitō shiki* of Sonezaki and Sakai Befu's Yukitake Myō, within Kii District, Hizen Province, is confirmed.

Because of the dispute between Takatsune and Michitaka over the aforesaid places, the relative merits of the two parties have been investigated and judged, and Michitaka's case has been found justified. He shall forthwith be confirmed as *jitō*. However, as concerns the stipulated taxes [*shotō*] and the annual rice levy [*nengu*], [the *jitō*'s] authority, following precedent, shall be subject to the orders of the proprietor [*honjo no gechi*]. It is recorded in Michitaka's documentary evidence [*shōmon*] that originally these places were Heike lands. Therefore, in the pattern of confiscated holdings [*mokkan*], management should proceed accordingly. It is commanded thus. Residents shall know this and abide by it. Wherefore, this order.

3d year of Bunji [1187], 5th month, 9th day

**Document 24:**  
**THE BAKUFU CONFIRMS A WOMAN AS JITŌ, 1215**

The chancellery of the shogun's house orders: to the residents of three *gō* within Nitta Estate, Kōzuke Province; Iwamatsu, Shimo Imai, Tanaka.

In accord with the last will [*yuzurijō*] of the husband, Yoshikane, his widow shall forthwith be *jitō*.

The aforesaid person, in accordance with the will, is appointed to this *shiki*. As to the fixed annual tax and other services, these shall be paid in accordance with precedent. It is commanded thus. Wherefore, this order.

3d year of Kempō [1215], 3d month, 22d day

**Document 138.**  
**THE SHUGO'S AUTHORITY IS DESCRIBED, 1199**

*29th day:*

Koyama *saemon no jō* Tomomasa has been appointed to the *shugo* post of Harima Province. The housemen of this province are to obey Tomomasa, perform the imperial guard service, and in general show their loyalty. Tomomasa's authority is limited to rebels and murderers; he is not to interfere in provincial administration [*kokumu*] or judge the suites of the people. And he is not, under any pretext, to cause difficulties for the notables of this province. He has been apprised of these instructions.

**Questions:**

1. As outlined in these short documents, what were the duties of *jitō* and *shugo*? How were their powers circumscribed?
2. The second document describes the appointment of a woman as a *jitō*. Why do you think this was done? What does this tell you about the responsibilities of a *jitō* and the qualities which the *bakufu* looked for in the holders of these positions?
3. What sense do you get of Japanese society in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries from these documents? What insights do they give you into the operations of the Kamakura *bakufu*?