

### The calligraphy in the JMA Hall

There is a framed work of calligraphy in the third-floor hall of the JMA Building, dating from the Japanese era, *Showa 2*, meaning the year 1927. It was written by Dr. Shimpei Goto, who was both a statesman and medical doctor. Despite the significance of its message, the meaning of this calligraphy has become vague in recent years.

The calligraphy consists of five Chinese characters written in one horizontal line, and one must read from right to left like in old times. The first two letters, 福 and 星, mean the “star of happiness,” referring to Jupiter. In Chinese legend, Jupiter, depicted as a black-haired rich man in ancient official clothing, is the star of happiness. The middle letter, 開, is a verb, meaning to open something or that something is to start. The last two letters, 寿 and 域, mean longevity and community in a literal sense. However, here, together they mean the world with a good health system. So, this piece seems to be suggesting the spirit or special personality of some kind will or may open a happy society with a good health system.

Now, let me look into the background of what this calligraphic piece is trying to tell us.

Dr. Shimpei Goto (1857–1929) was a politician and medical doctor of the early 20th century, right in the period of rash opening of the country and modernization of Japan. After he graduated from medical school, he joined the administration while practicing medicine. He then assumed dozens of important positions in the government, including the post of president of the National Railway Department of Japan. He also served as a civil administrator of Taiwan assigned to found Taipei Medical University to establish modern medicine in Taiwan, which was governed by Japan in that era. He also served as a minister in the Cabinet of Japan on several occasions.

In his early career, Dr. Goto studied hygiene politics in Berlin University. He also learned general hygiene under Dr. Robert Koch in 1890.

Once, Dr. Shibazaburo Kitasato (1853–1931), who had already succeeded in his important research on *tetanus bacillus*, introduced Dr. Goto to the Nobel prize-winning bacteriologist, Dr.



Koch. After returning from Germany, Dr. Kitasato established the National Institute for Infection in Japan and continued his research on bacteriology. There, his followers called him “der Donner” (meaning thunder), which may reflect his zeal for work. Dr. Kitasato later became the first president of the Japan Medical Association in 1916, which was legally recognized in 1923, and served in this post until 1931. His standpoint, one foot as a scientist and the other as an activist to save Japan and Japanese people in poverty, seemed to be very influential in establishing the philosophy of the JMA.

In the latter part of his career, Dr. Goto was continuously engaged in recovery plans for Tokyo Metropolis after the calamity of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, as the mayor of Tokyo and the minister of internal affairs.

Dr. Goto presented the calligraphic work to Dr. Kitasato in 1927.

Both Dr. Goto and Dr. Kitasato studied modern medicine in Japan and Germany. Moreover, both of them had a good education in writing and reading Chinese-style poems, and devoted themselves to works in Japan and other Asian regions, making global contributions. Considering all the hardship Dr. Goto went through in his life, this piece might represent his message to realize a happy society with a good health system for the people of Japan and the world as well. This wish must have been shared by the two prominent doctors in their later years.

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