

Where did they come from?

Japanese Administrative Divisions

日本の地方公共団体

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Target Audience

- Anyone seeking koseki family registers from Japanese municipal offices
- For background on how to request koseki, please refer to 3-part series from RootsTech 2022

(<https://www.familysearch.org/rootstech/series/how-to-request-japanese-koseki-family-registers>)

Why are Japanese administrative divisions so important?

- To request koseki family registers, you must do two things:
 - PROVE your relationship to the issei immigrant ancestor
 - IDENTIFY where your issei immigrant ancestor was from
 - 本籍地 (honsekichi – “permanent residence”)
 - Rural areas (common) – at a minimum, village name
 - Urban areas (rare) – (near) complete address

Inability to identify honsekichi is the biggest obstacle for requesting koseki family registers

Challenges of Japanese Administrative Divisions

- Unfamiliarity outside of Japan
- Limited English-language documentation
- Significant changes have occurred since the time of emigration
 - Administrative mergers and annexations
 - Urban development and redevelopment
 - War destruction
 - Natural disasters

Pre-Meiji Background

- The Meiji Restoration (明治維新) in 1868 was a major historical dividing point in Japan
- Prior to Meiji Restoration, local Japanese divisions were feudal domains, castle towns, and “natural villages”
- Key component of the Meiji Restoration was the policy of 廃藩置県 (haihanchiken – “abolition of feudal domains and establishment of prefectures”) promulgated in 1871 with feudal lords returning their authority to the Meiji Emperor

日本の地方公共団体 (Japanese Administrative Divisions)

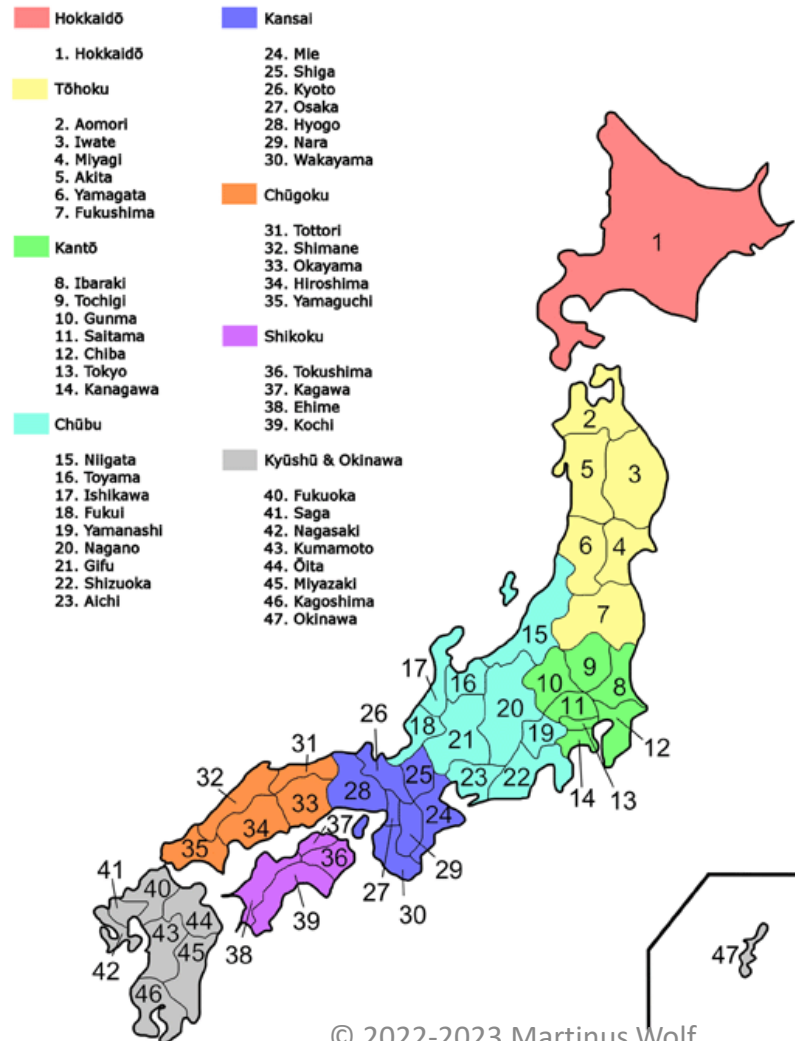
- 県 (ken – prefecture)

Prefectures (都道府県)

- Roughly state/province equivalents
- 42 rural prefectures (県 “ken”) on the three main islands of 本州 (Honshū), 九州 (Kyūshū), and 四国 (Shikoku) in 1869
- 3 urban prefectures (府 “fu”) (Tōkyō, Ōsaka, and Kyōto) in 1869
- Okinawa-ken (沖縄県) added in 1879 – previously tributary state to both Japan and China
- Hokkaidō (北海道) added after World War II – large-scale settlement by Japan started after Meiji Restoration
- Urban prefecture of Tōkyō (東京府 Tōkyō-fu) was changed to the Tōkyō Metropolis (東京都 Tōkyō-to) in July 1943
- Current day total of 47 prefectures

日本の都道府県 (Japanese Prefectures)

Regions and Prefectures of Japan



日本の都道府県 (Japanese Prefectures)

1. 北海道 (Hokkaidō)
2. 青森県 (Aomori-ken)
3. 岩手県 (Iwate-ken)
4. 宮城県 (Miyagi-ken)
5. 秋田県 (Akita-ken)
6. 山形県 (Yamagata-ken)
7. 福島県 (Fukushima-ken)
8. 茨城県 (Ibaraki-ken)
9. 栃木県 (Tochigi-ken)
10. 群馬県 (Gunma-ken)
11. 埼玉県 (Saitama-ken)
12. 千葉県 (Chiba-ken)
13. 東京都 (Tōkyō-to)
14. 神奈川県 (Kanagawa-ken)
15. 新潟県 (Niigata-ken)
16. 富山県 (Toyama-ken)
17. 石川県 (Ishikawa-ken)
18. 福井県 (Fukui-ken)
19. 山梨県 (Yamanashi-ken)
20. 長野県 (Nagano-ken)
21. 岐阜県 (Gifu-ken)
22. 静岡県 (Shizuoka-ken)
23. 愛知県 (Aichi-ken)

日本の都道府県 (Japanese Prefectures)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 24. 三重県 (Mie-ken) | 36. 徳島県 (Tokushima-ken) |
| 25. 滋賀県 (Shiga-ken) | 37. 香川県 (Kagawa-ken) |
| 26. 京都府 (Kyōto-fu) | 38. 愛媛県 (Ehime-ken) |
| 27. 大阪府 (Ōsaka-fu) | 39. 高知県 (Kōchi-ken) |
| 28. 兵庫県 (Hyōgo-ken) | 40. 福岡県 (Fukuoka-ken) |
| 29. 奈良県 (Nara-ken) | 41. 佐賀県 (Saga-ken) |
| 30. 和歌山県 (Wakayama-ken) | 42. 長崎県 (Nagasaki-ken) |
| 31. 鳥取県 (Tottori-ken) | 43. 熊本県 (Kumamoto-ken) |
| 32. 島根県 (Shimane-ken) | 44. 大分県 (Ōita-ken) |
| 33. 岡山県 (Okayama-ken) | 45. 宮崎県 (Miyazaki-ken) |
| 34. 広島(廣島)県 (Hiroshima-ken) | 46. 鹿児島県 (Kagoshima-ken) |
| 35. 山口県 (Yamaguchi-ken) | 47. 沖縄県 (Okinawa-ken) |

Rural Administrative Divisions

- MUCH more common for koseki family registers requests

田舎の地方公共団体 (Rural Japanese Administrative Divisions)

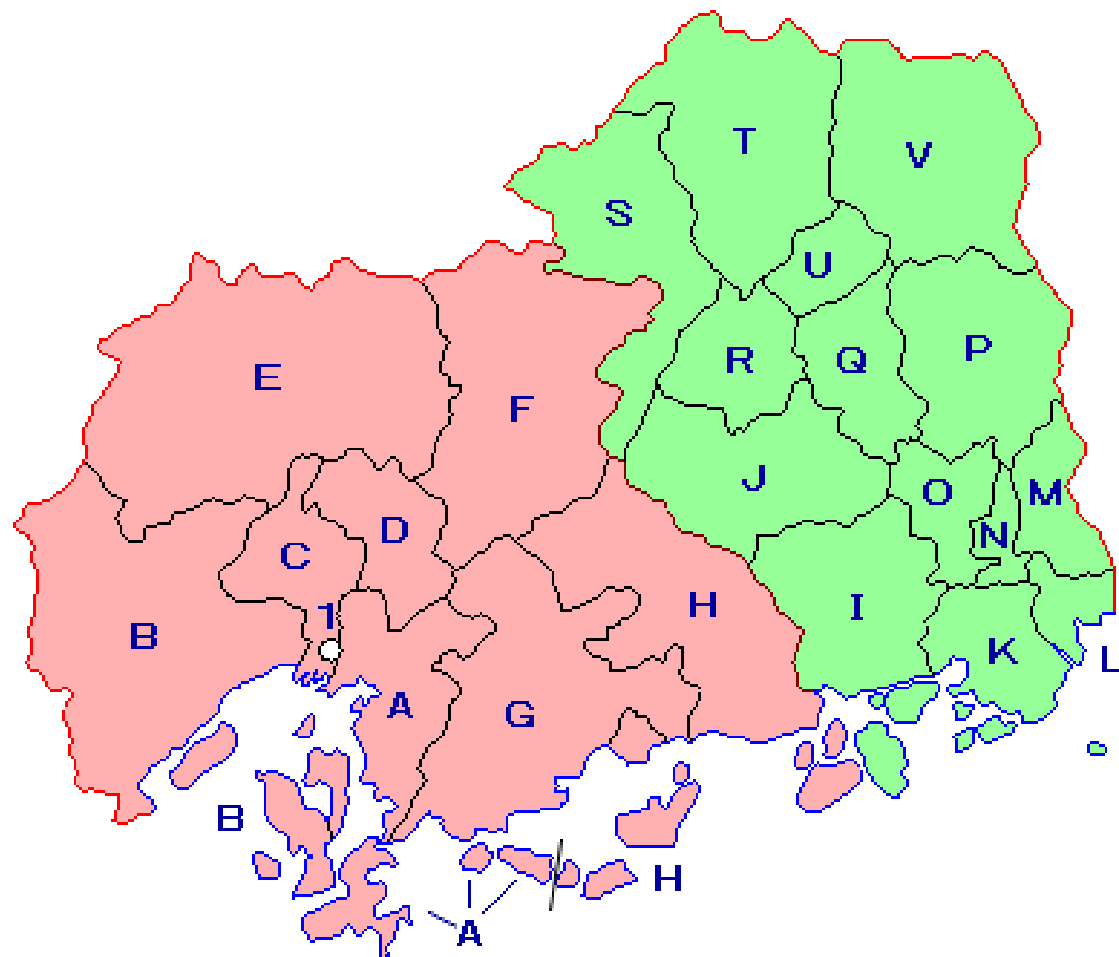
- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 郡 (gun – district)

Districts (郡)

- Next level below prefectures are districts (郡 gun)
- Many district names were existent at the time of 延喜式 (*Engishiki* – a book of laws and customs compiled 905-927)
- Initially established as political subdivisions; now mainly in postal addresses
- Districts only include villages and towns; cities are specifically excluded
- Since many immigrants left Japan over a century ago, most honsekichi will include a district
- Emigration from urbanized cities was limited

広島県の郡

(Districts in Hiroshima Prefecture – 1889)



Districts in Hiroshima Prefecture (1889)

Previous 安芸国 (Aki Province)

- A. 安芸郡 (Aki-gun)
- B. 佐伯郡 (Saeki-gun)
- C. 沼田郡 (Numata-gun)
- D. 高宮郡 (Takamiya-gun)
- E. 山県郡 (Yamagata-gun)
- F. 高田郡 (Takata-gun)
- G. 賀茂郡 (Kamo-gun)
- H. 豊田郡 (Toyota-gun)

Previous 備後国 (Bingo Province)

- I. 御調郡 (Mitsugi-gun)
- J. 世羅郡 (Sera-gun)

K. 沼隈郡 (Numakuma-gun)

L. 深津郡 (Fukatsu-gun)

M. 安那郡 (Yasuna-gun)

N. 品治郡 (Honji-gun)

O. 芦田郡 (Ashida-gun)

P. 神石郡 (Jinseki-gun)

Q. 甲奴郡 (Kōnu-gun)

R. 三谿郡 (Mitani-gun)

S. 三次郡 (Miyoshi-gun)

T. 恵蘇郡 (Eso-gun)

U. 三上郡 (Mikami-gun)

V. 奴可郡 (Nuka-gun)

田舎の地方公共団体 (Rural Japanese Administrative Divisions)

- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 郡 (gun – district)
 - 町 (machi/chō – town)
 - 村 (mura/son – village)

Towns and Villages (町村)

- Most emigration came from towns and villages – in some cases >50% village population
- 町村制 (Chōsonsei – “Municipal System”) promulgated in 1889 which established modern towns and villages throughout Japan
- In 1889, total of 15,820 towns and villages in 804 districts; as of 2021, only 743 towns and 183 villages
- Two readings for 町 (kanji for “town”) – “-machi” or “-chō”
- Two readings for 村 (kanji for “village”) – “-mura” or “-son”
- Many emigration-era towns and villages have been annexed or merged into current day cities – check <http://www.mykoseki.com/find-my-koseki/> to find crosswalk

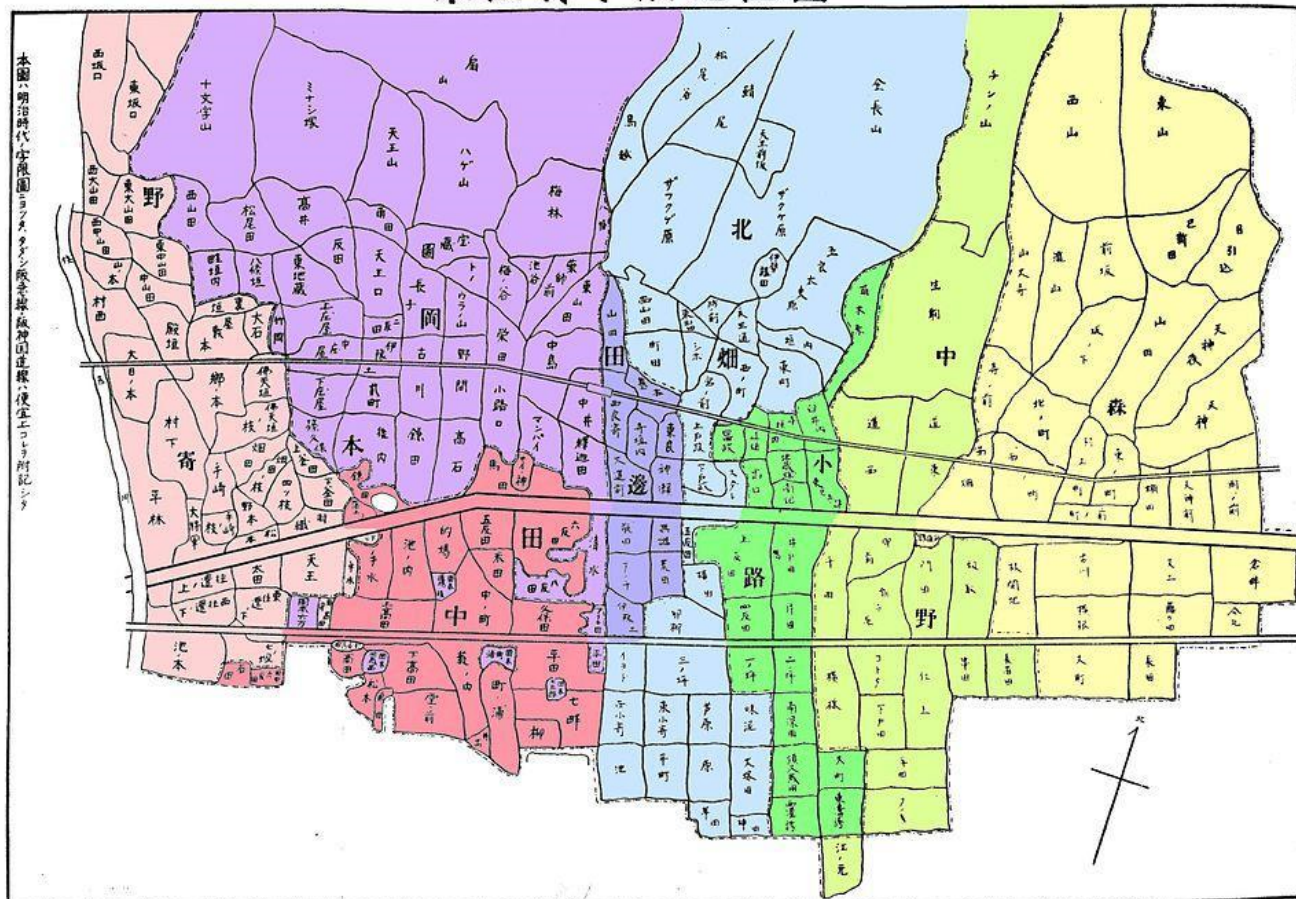
田舎の地方公共団体 (Rural Japanese Administrative Divisions)

- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 郡 (gun – district)
 - 町 (machi/chō – town)
 - 村 (mura/son – village)
 - 大字/区 (ōaza/ku – village section) (often pre-1889 “natural” villages)
 - 字/小字 (aza/koaza – smaller village section)
 - 番地/番屋敷/番戸/番邸
(banchi/banyashiki/banko/bantei – house or lot number)

本山村の大字

(Village Subsections in Motoyama Village)

本山村字別地區圖



本山村の大字

(Village Subsections in Motoyama Village)

- Meiji era map of 兵庫県武庫郡本山村 (Hyōgo-ken, Muko-gun, Motoyama-mura)
- Now part of 神戸市東灘区 (Kōbe-shi, Higashinada-ku) after annexation in 1950
- Still considered rural at time of mass emigration
- Consisted of eight village sections 大字 (ōaza); from right to left:
 - 森 (Mori) – yellow
 - 中野 (Nakano) – light green
 - 小路 (Shōji) – green
 - 北畑 (Kitahata) – light blue
 - 田邊 (田辺) (Tanabe) – blue
 - 岡本 (Okamoto) – purple
 - 田中 (Tanaka) – red
 - 野寄 (Noyori) – pink
- The ōaza are further subdivided into 字 (aza)

田舎の本籍地の構成 (Rural Honsekichi Structure)

- A県 B郡 C村/町 大字D 字E F番地
- (A-ken, B-gun, C-mura/-chō, ōaza D, aza E, F-banchi)
- 山口県大島郡屋代村大字西屋代字狸岡37番地
- Yamaguchi-ken, Ōshima-gun, Yashiro-son, Ōaza-Nishiyashiro, Aza-Tanukioka, 37-banchi

田舎の本籍地の構成 (Rural Honsekichi Structure)

- In general, elements A県 B郡 C村/町 (A-ken, B-gun, C-mura/chō) is a sufficient honsekichi for most rural koseki submittals – one exception is locally common surname
- More detailed elements 大字D 字E F番地 (ōaza D, aza E, F-banchi) should be provided if available
- Koseki requests will not be rejected for confusing -machi/-chō and -mura/-son suffixes

Urban Administrative Divisions

- Uncommon for koseki family registers requests
- Significant exception is for post-WWII emigration
- Can be challenging because immigration officials would often accept city names (“Fukuoka” or “Hiroshima” or “Osaka”)

都会の地方公共団体 (Urban Japanese Administrative Divisions)

- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 市 (shi – city)

Cities (市)

- During period of mass emigration, very little emigration came from urban cities – because of modernization and urbanization, economic conditions were likely better than in rural areas
- 市制 (Shisei – “City System”) also promulgated in 1889 which established first modern cities in Japan
- In 1889, only 39 cities; expanded to 101 cities at end of the Taishō Era (1926); currently 792 cities
- Cities from the City System were much smaller than current day cities – roughly corresponding to urban centers

市制の市

(Cities from the City System – 1889)

赤間関市 (Akamagaseki-shi)*

秋田市 (Akita-shi)

福井市 (Fukui-shi)

福岡市 (Fukuoka-shi)

岐阜市 (Gifu-shi)

姫路市 (Himeji-shi)

弘前市 (Hirosaki-shi)

広島市 (Hiroshima-shi)

鹿児島市 (Kagoshima-shi)

金沢市 (Kanazawa-shi)

神戸市 (Kōbe-shi)

高知市 (Kōchi-shi)

甲府市 (Kōfu-shi)

熊本市 (Kumamoto-shi)

久留米市 (Kurume-shi)

京都市 (Kyōto-shi)

松江市 (Matsue-shi)

松山市 (Matsuyama-shi)

水戸市 (Mito-shi)

盛岡市 (Morioka-shi)

*Changed to 下関市 (Shimonoseki-shi)
in 1902

市制の市

(Cities from the City System – 1889)

長崎市 (Nagasaki-shi)
名古屋市 (Nagoya-shi)
新潟市 (Niigata-shi)
岡山市 (Okayama-shi)
大阪市 (Ōsaka-shi)
佐賀市 (Saga-shi)
仙台市 (Sendai-shi)
静岡市 (Shizuoka-shi)
高岡市 (Takaoka-shi)
徳島市 (Tokushima-shi)

東京市 (Tōkyō-shi) †
鳥取市 (Tottori-shi)
富山市 (Toyama-shi)
津市 (Tsu-shi)
和歌山市 (Wakayama-shi)
山形市 (Yamagata-shi)
横浜市 (Yokohama-shi)
米沢市 (Yonezawa-shi)
† Abolished in 1943 with the
establishment of the Tōkyō Metropolis

都会の地方公共団体 (Urban Japanese Administrative Divisions)

- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 市 (shi – city)
 - 区 (ku – municipal ward)

Municipal Wards (区)

- At promulgation of City System in 1889, three largest cities further subdivided into municipal wards
 - 東京市 (Tōkyō-shi – 15 wards)
 - 大阪市 (Ōsaka-shi – 4 wards)
 - 京都市 (Kyōto-shi – 2 wards)
- Before World War II, three additional cities
 - 名古屋市 (Nagoya-shi – 4 wards) in 1908
 - 横浜市 (Yokohama-shi – 5 wards) in 1927
 - 神戸市 (Kōbe-shi – 2 wards) in 1931
- Pre-WWII municipal ward boundaries different than current municipal ward boundaries

現在の政令指定都市 (Current Designated Cities with Municipal Wards)

千葉市 (Chiba-shi)
福岡市 (Fukuoka-shi)
浜松市 (Hamamatsu-shi)
広島市 (Hiroshima-shi)
川崎市 (Kawasaki-shi)
北九州市 (Kitakyūshū-shi)
神戸市 (Kōbe-shi)
熊本市 (Kumamoto-shi)
京都市 (Kyōto-shi)
名古屋市 (Nagoya-shi)

新潟市 (Niigata-shi)
岡山市 (Okayama-shi)
大阪市 (Ōsaka-shi)
さいたま市 (Saitama-shi)
相模原市 (Sagamihara-shi)
堺市 (Sakai-shi)
札幌市 (Sapporo-shi)
仙台市 (Sendai-shi)
静岡市 (Shizuoka-shi)
横浜市 (Yokohama-shi)

東京の特別区

Special Wards of Tōkyō

- In July 1943, the urban prefecture of Tōkyō (東京府 Tōkyō-fu) was changed to the Tōkyō Metropolis (東京都 Tōkyō-to) in July 1943
- At the same time, Tōkyō City (15 municipal wards) was replaced by Special Wards.
- Currently 23 Special Wards
- Essentially equivalent to cities

都会の地方公共団体 (Urban Japanese Administrative Divisions)

- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 市 (shi – city)
 - 区 (ku – municipal ward)
 - 町 (machi/chō – neighborhood)

Neighborhood (町)

- Cities or wards divided into neighborhoods (町 -machi/-chō)
- Confusing because same character as for rural towns
 - If 町 character used with 市 (“shi” – city), then indicates neighborhood
 - If 町 character used with 郡 (“gun” – district), then indicates town
- Neighborhoods not always indicated with 町 character – for example, 銀座 (Ginza)

都会の地方公共団体 (Urban Japanese Administrative Divisions)

- 県 (ken – prefecture)
 - 市 (shi – city)
 - 区 (ku – municipal ward)
 - 町 (machi/chō – neighborhood)
 - 丁目 (chōme - block)
 - 番地 (banchi)

Blocks (丁目) and House/Lot Numbers (番地)

- Neighborhoods are then divided into blocks; sometimes 丁目 (-chōme) are used, but not always
- Final level is individual house/lot number (番地 – banchi)
- More recently apartment buildings and numbers are also used

都会の本籍地の構成 (Urban Honsekichi Structure)

- U県 V市 W区 X町 Y丁目 Z番地
- (U-ken, V-shi, W-ku, X-chō, Y-chōme, Z-banchi)

ō

- 大阪府大阪市北区西梅ヶ枝町864番地
- Ōsaka-fu, Ōsaka-shi, Kita-ku, Nishiumegae-chō, 864-banchi

Summary

- For rural koseki submittals, the honsekichi address must be down to the town/village level
- For urban koseki submittal, a (near) complete honsekichi address is needed

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