

Kamons and Coats of Arms

Nobuhiko Tsunefuka

Various products that surround us in our daily life proudly display their trademarks and product logos. There is an increasing amount of fresh food products such as fruits and vegetables that now carry stickers indicating the region they came from or with pictures of the persons who grew them. These trademarks and logos function as important guides for consumers in selecting products by creating a feeling of brand familiarity and confidence even if the name of a company is not actually known. Conversely, there are numerous examples of companies who have lost this brand confidence that was carefully built up over many years, in the blink of an eye due to some defective process or deceptive practice. There have been many news stories about the discovery of mass quantities of counterfeit products produced domestically or imported. For these reasons, corporate personnel responsible for branding strategies must work to expose counterfeits and improve brand strength, and the number of companies and established firms that are striving to protect copyrights and improve corporate image are increasing.

- For information about trademarks, see:

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%95%86%E6%A8%99>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trademark>

- For more about logos, see:

http://itmark.jp/logo/14_energy.html

- For an example of brand strategy, see:

<http://www.hitachi.co.jp/about/corporate/brand/index.html>

- For an example of the copyright page of an established Japanese sweets company, see:

<http://www.toraya-group.co.jp/siteinformation/copyright.html>

The *kamon* is a traditional family crest used in Japan to distinguish an individual or family lineage. The *kamon* dates back to the Heian Period when members of the Royal Court and other nobility would inscribe a personal marking on their furnishings, ox carts, and similar items. Just as the Japanese have believed since ancient times that there are nearly an infinite number of gods residing in nature, many *kamon* designs feature characteristics derived from nature, with over 20,000 types of designs in total.

During the Kamakura Period, a time of constant civil war, *kamons* were inscribed on the helmets and armor of samurai so that allies could be easily discerned, and the *kamon* served as a symbol of loyalty and unity among groups of underlings.

The Shogunate policies enacted during the Edo Period allowed general use of *kamons*, except for the chrysanthemum crest of the royal family and the hollyhock crest of the Tokugawa family, resulting in an explosive growth of *kamons* among common citizens.

• For more about *kamons*, see:

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AE%B6%E7%B4%8B>

<http://www.harimaya.com/kamon/network.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mon_\(badge\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mon_(badge))



Example of a *kamon*: Gohichi Kirika



Example of a coat of arms:
Full Achievement of Arms of the British Royal Family

Similarly, in Western Europe, identifying marks, called a coat of arms, were displayed on shields to distinguish individuals during the Crusades and other wars of the period. Also, when helmeted knights competed in horseback riding competitions, such as jousts, the coat of arms was necessary to identify the contestants. Its use spread from nobility to members of upper classes in the 12th century, and the 13th century saw middle and lower-class nobility also displaying a coat of arms. Additionally, various circles and associations adopted a coat of arms as a symbol of authority. The coat of arms consists of a central shield design with supporters on both sides, a helmet, helmet ornament, pedestal, and similar elements, each having a particular significance in the “full achievement of arms”. The coat of arms plays an important role in identifying the genealogy of family lineages in western European countries and for this reason it is legally forbidden to create a coat of arms similar to an existing one. In order to prevent such problems, coats of arms are officially administered so that when disputes arise, they are brought before an administrative body, known as the Heralds’ College, for judgment, although this body currently only exists in England.

• For more about Coats of Arms, see:

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%B4%8B%E7%AB%A0>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms

- For more about heraldry, see:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraldry>
<http://ww2.enjoy.ne.jp/~tteraoka/heraldry/heraldry1.htm>

- For a collection of links about heraldry, see:

<http://www.panix.com/~wlinden/heraldry.shtml>

- For more about the Heralds' College, see:

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%B4%8B%E7%AB%A0%E9%99%A2>
<http://www.college-of-arms.gov.uk/>

- For examples of Coats of Arms of clubs, see:

http://www.lionsclubs.org/JA/content/resources_logos_art.shtml
<http://www.footballcrests.com/clubs/kingborough-lions-united-sc>

All information technology devices sold in Japan are required to display the VCCI mark indicating that it conforms to VCCI technical requirements. The VCCI takes measures to increase recognition of the VCCI mark among the general public by placing illuminated billboards in train stations, and running ads and articles in newspapers. Nonetheless, because the number of consumers who understand the quality assurance meaning of the mark is still limited, it is necessary to continue pursuing public relations activities that ensure consumers that they can feel assured when purchasing information technology devices bearing the VCCI mark.

- For more regarding the VCCI mark, see:

<http://www.pref.ehime.jp/ecc/mark/house/house09.htm>
http://www.vcci.or.jp/vcci_e/member/katsudo/houkoku/katsudo06_10.html
http://www.gmcompliance.com/marks/vcci_mark.html

- For more about VCCI ad campaigns, see:

http://www.vcci.or.jp/member/katsudo/houkoku/katsudo06_08503.pdf
http://www.vcci.or.jp/vcci_e/member/katsudo/houkoku/katsudo06_08503.pdf



Nobuhiko Tsunefuka

1943	Born in Tokyo
1968	Graduated Osaka University School of Engineering Science
To 1984	Engaged in development of IT equipment at Hitachi Ltd.'s Taga Plant
1991 onward	Engaged in electromagnetic environment related education at Hitachi Technical College
1999 onward	Planning Manager at Hitachi Technical Research Institute
2006 onward	Ability InterBusiness Solutions, Inc. Tokyo Branch