

Looking Back on This Year

To wrap up the year, all of us joined in to carefully clean and polish our armour and swords.

After wiping down each piece with great care, we gently set them back on display—our armours almost seemed to smile.



We look forward to welcoming our guests again from the New Year.

Year-end message

Thank you for your special favour with Daimyo and 'YAMATODAMASHII', our newsletters in 2025. We wish you the very best for the year 2026. We all at Daimyo wish you the very best for the year 2025. We look forward to working with you in the New Year.

The end of the year tradition! Daimyo's Haiku, a Japanese poem of seventeen syllables in 5-7-5 syllabic form.

Our Company on the Run At the year's end, even our company finds itself running about—borrowing an umbrella.

This verse reflects how the year-end rush spares no one, regardless of status. I imagined our company hurrying through the rain, much like the origin of shiwasi, when even respected masters were said to dash around busily.

How about this Yamatodamashii? We need your opinions and feedbacks more. We are waiting for them!

Please write as 'Sub: reply to the newsletter' and send it to us



Homepage : <https://daimyou-armor.com/>

The 3rd floor, 2-1, Kurihara-cho, Onomichi-shi, Hiroshima, Japan

Mail Address : daimyou51@go6.enjoy.ne.jp

TEL : +81 (0)848 29 3936 FAX : +81 (0)848 29 3937

有限公司

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Daimyo Company Co., Ltd.



We deliver

大和魂

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The Philosophy of Daimyou Ltd.

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Under our slogan of 'We deliver the YAMATODAMASHII', the Daimyo Ltd offers information about the Japanese history and antique goods and aims at guiding our customers to the old Japanese world by fulfilling our customers demands to antique gears.



Hello, this is Akemi Nakahori. The year is coming to an end—how have you all been? In December, we welcome Touji, the winter solstice, a meaningful turning point in the year. It is the day with the shortest daylight and the longest night. In Japan, this day has long been cherished as a time to celebrate the sun's rebirth and the return of good fortune.

— The Day When the Sun's Power Returns —

一陽来復 'Ichiyō Raifuku'
the return of the sun,
and the return of good fortune.

As winter solstice marks the moment when the sun's strength is at its weakest and then begins to rise again, this gave birth to the idea that after misfortune, good fortune will surely follow.



In Japanese, pumpkin can also be written as '南瓜 (Nankin)'.

The syllable 'n' is the last sound of the Japanese syllabary, and it symbolises completion, fulfilment and the closing of a cycle. Because 'n' appears twice in Na' n' ki' n', pumpkin has long been regarded as a food that brings double good fortune. Its golden colour is also reminiscent of the sun. Since the winter solstice is the day with the shortest sunlight, eating pumpkin—symbolic of the sun's return—was believed to help take in renewed yang energy and invite the sun's power back.

In winter, when fresh vegetables were scarce, pumpkin, which keeps well, was a valuable source of nutrition. It is excellent for preventing colds and maintaining strength. For this reason, people used to say: 'Eat pumpkin on the winter solstice, and you won't catch a cold.' I was surprised to learn how much meaning lies behind the customs of taking a Yuzu bath and eating pumpkin on the winter solstice. Both were prayers for good health and protection. It reminded me of the simmered pumpkin my grandmother used to make. Her pumpkin dished showed her care of for my family. They made me a warm mind.

The winter solstice in 2025 will fall on Monday, December 22nd. In the midst of our busy modern lives, the winter solstice offers a perfect moment to pause. Why not take a warm bath scented with yuzu, and gently restore both body and mind? As you unwind from the past year's fatigue, may you welcome the New Year feeling refreshed and renewed.



THANK you!

Yuzu Bath

As a symbolic turning point for shifting one's fortune and cleansing the body, a tradition emerged of bathing with fragrant Yuzu on the winter solstice.

Its strong scent was believed to ward off evil spirits. Yuzu is also said to promote circulation, improve warmth retention, and enhance the skin. People would take a Yuzu bath as a prayer for good health, so they could stay warm and avoid catching colds during the cold season.

There is also a playful word association: Yuzu was linked to the phrase 'yūzū ga kiku'—meaning 'to be flexible' or 'to go smoothly.'



From the bottom of my heart, I wish that 2026 will be a year filled with smiles, happiness, and good fortune for each and every one of you.

Hello, this is Takako Shimatani.
After those long, scorching days of summer in Japan, winter seems to have arrived all at once. I hope you've been keeping well and not feeling unwell. In this issue, I'd like to talk about the Horagai the conch shell trumpet.



Since when in Japan?

The Horagai was first used in Japan during the Nara period, brought over by people from the Asian continent as a ritual instrument in Buddhism. Later, it came to be used by Yamabushi (mountain ascetic monks) during their training in the mountains, as well as in temple ceremonies and esoteric rites such as prayers and incantations.

When did it start being used in warfare?

From the late Heian Period through the Kamakura Period, religious organisations gradually became militarised in order to oppose the political authorities, such as the Imperial Court and the Shogunate. Armed Yamabushi began to take part in battles while offering prayers for victory. In time, the Horagai came to be used not only in rituals, but also as a practical tool for signalling troop movements and communication on the battlefield.

Furthermore...

During the Nanbokuchō Period, in the midst of fierce battles, mountain-based religious groups and temple forces increasingly took sides in conflicts across the country. Yamabushi, who were well versed in the terrain and mountain paths, made even greater use of the Horagai for sending messages and signals in mountain warfare, as well as for prayers and rituals. In mountain regions and during the sieges of castles, voices and drums often did not carry far, whereas the sound of the Horagai could resonate over long distances, making it extremely practical and effective. From the Nanbokuchō Period onward, the use of the Horagai as a military signalling instrument became firmly established.

When did its use become more systematised?

In the Sengoku Period, Daimyō Warlords began to bring Yamabushi into their service as military advisors and ritual specialists. This led to the formation of specialised units known as 'Horagai-sh,' or conch-shell corps. Famous generals such as Takeda Shingen and Uesugi Kenshin, in particular, organised military systems that were closely tied to their religious beliefs, and the Horagai was firmly established as a means of military communication with different calls used for 'advance,' 'retreat,' 'assembly,' and so on.

Takeda Shingen's Conch-Shell Corps

The members of the Horagai-sh were stationed 'near the war banners', 'at command posts', and 'on hills along the front lines'. In response to Shingen's orders, they would sound different, specific calls on their conch shells.

When was it blown? How were the sounds distinguished?

Situation / When?	Meaning / Purpose	What did it sound like?
Signal to depart for battle	Blown before setting out or when beginning to move	'Boooooo... bop bop bop, boooooo...'+ drum beats
Signal to advance / charge	Blown before advancing or launching an attack	'Boooo... bobobobobo...'
Signal to retreat / withdraw	Blown to conduct an orderly retreat and avoid confusion	'Bop... bop... booo...'
Signal to assemble / regroup	Blown to reposition troops, reorganise command, or regroup	'Boo... boo... boo...'
Signal of victory (victory cry)	Blown to announce victory and raise morale	'Boooooo!' (a long, resounding call)



Furthermore, Takeda Shingen, as symbolised by his famous banner bearing the phrase 'Furinkazan/風林火山' ('Swift as the wind, silent as the forest, fierce as fire, immovable as a mountain'), understood warfare as a combination of 'strategy and faith'. For him, the Horagai was not merely a signalling device; it also carried spiritual and psychological roles 'invoking the protection of the gods and Buddhas', 'calming the soldiers' fear', and 'intimidating the enemy'.

How did you find it? Over time, the conch shell evolved from a tool of religious ritual, to an instrument of warrior monks in battle, and finally into a standard implement in the war camps of samurai lords. Thus, the sound of the Horagai became firmly established as a 'signal of war.' I was amazed to learn that it wasn't just a simple 'time to march!' blast, but that its sounds were finely distinguished in meaning depending on the situation. It reminded me how important it is to convey the right message clearly to one's comrades, no matter the circumstances or setting. In the same way, I hope to continue choosing my words and ways of communication with great care, so that my messages will truly bring joy to you.



Hanaemon's

I am going to make you back in times!

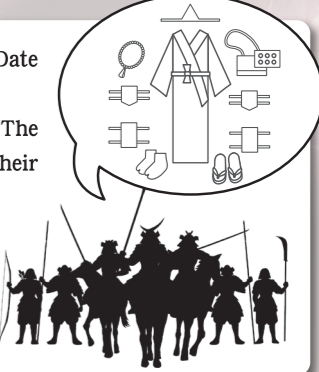
In the previous issue, I introduced the No.2 retainer of the Kyushu region. This time, I turn to the Tohoku region and spotlight the No.2 Samurai serving Date Masamune. Let's slip back in time and meet this remarkable figure!



Katakura Kagetsuna better known by his common name Katakura Kojuro—was born as the second son of the Shinto priest of Narushima Hachiman Shrine in present-day Yonezawa City, Yamagata Prefecture. Although his family served as priests, the Katakura Clan had also been hereditary retainers of the Date family for generations. Kagetsuna's half-sister even served as the wet nurse of Date Masamune. Recognised for his talent from a young age, Kagetsuna first served as a page to Masamune's father, Date Terumune. He later became a close attendant to Masamune himself, acting as both his mentor and tutor.

His First Battle in Funeral Attire

At age 24, Kagetsuna faced his first battle when his lord, Date Masamune, was just 14. Their enemy was the long-standing rival, the Ashina Clan. The Date forces, unable to properly grasp the situation on the battlefield, soon fell into disadvantage. Their morale began to waver, and it seemed the young lord's first campaign might end in defeat. At that moment, Kagetsuna changed into Shinishozoku the white garments worn to face death and shouted: 'I will stake my life on this battle for my lord!' Seeing this, the other retainers and soldiers cried out: 'If our boss, Kojuro is willing to risk his life, then we will fight with him!' Their morale surged at once, and the army ultimately emerged victorious.



This episode vividly conveys Kagetsuna's unwavering loyalty and resolve. You can truly feel his determination to make Masamune's first campaign whom he had served as a mentor a triumphant one. It is said that this event deepened Masamune's trust in Kagetsuna even further, establishing him as one of his most trusted confidants.

The Greatest Crisis of the Date Clan

When Kagetsuna was 29 and his lord, Date Masamune, was 19, Masamune executed Nihonmatsu Yoshitsugu, the man responsible for the death of his father, Terumune. This act provoked the surrounding domains, which banded together to form a large coalition army and launched an attack against the Date Clan. Masamune had divided his forces during the Nihonmatsu campaign, so only a small number of troops were available for this battle. Meanwhile, the enemy was a massive coalition from southern Oshu. The imbalance was overwhelming: 7,000 Date troops versus 30,000 coalition soldiers. The Date army was driven to the brink of disaster, with Masamune's main encampment nearly encircled. A retreat in such circumstances is generally considered extremely disadvantageous and yet, it was Kagetsuna who managed to pull it off successfully. He slowed the enemy's advance by deploying musketeer and archer units for long-range defence, and by placing ambushes at key points to launch surprise attacks, disrupting the coalition's momentum. Finally, Masamune's elite corps, the Kurohabaki-shu, formed a protective shield, allowing Masamune to escape safely.



The retreat at Hitotoribashi, often cited as one of the very few successful retreats in Japanese history, is remembered not as a defeat, but as a strategic victory achieved by Katakura Kojuro. By the way, Masamune's elite corps the Kurohabaki-shu may sound familiar to anyone who loves armour. Yes, Habaki refers to the shin guards. They protect the most vulnerable and painful area to be struck, a fitting name for an elite unit. Black was the symbolic colour of the Date army, and their armour was uniformly black. Although I have focused mainly on his exploits in battle, Kagetsuna also played an essential role as Masamune's right-hand man in diplomacy and negotiations. His talents truly knew no bounds. His son, the second Katakura Kojuro, was also a highly capable commander. More on that next time stay tuned!