



Hello, this is Akemi Nakahori. From February through March, Japan enters what is known as the examination season. It is an important time when students take a step forward toward their future. When I look back on the period when my son was preparing for his examinations, it certainly seemed that he was the one facing the greatest challenge. And yet, in truth, I feel that the one who was least able to remain calm was me. I was filled with worry and restlessness, frustrated by the fact that there was little I could do to help. I imagine that many parents have experienced the very same feelings.



Examinations, once taken for granted—when did they begin?

The origins: Ancient times

Examinations in Japan date back nearly 1,300 years. During the Nara period, systems influenced by China were introduced, and examinations were used to select individuals for government service. At that time, people studied Chinese characters and Confucianism—teachings that emphasise living rightly as a human being, with morality and compassion—and those with such learning were chosen to serve in government positions.

The age of the Samurai: Were there no exams?

From the Kamakura through the Muromachi periods, society was shaped by the warrior class. Rather than written examinations, 'military skill' and 'family lineage' were emphasised, and formal exams were relatively uncommon.

The Edo period: The importance of learning

In a long era of peace, learning once again gained importance. Samurai children studied at domain schools, while townspeople learned reading and writing at temple schools. The belief that 'study leads to success' gradually took root in society.

The Meiji era: The birth of modern examinations

With the establishment of a modern education system, entrance examinations were introduced. Academic performance began to determine educational paths, forming the foundation of today's examination system.

Toward modern examinations

Today, not only test scores but also school records and interviews are considered important. Examinations may be gradually changing—from something focused solely on 'memorising knowledge' into a place where students come to understand their own abilities and reflect on their future.

Reading this, I found myself recalling how I once faced examinations myself. Now, as a parent, I stand in a different position—quietly watching over my child from behind. To the parents who support students, and to all those who hold their grandchildren close in their thoughts: the simple, unspoken wish of 'You'll be all right' carries strength, even within the familiarity of everyday life. Even without being spoken aloud, the strength to persevere exists within each of us. To believe in that strength, and to stay close in quiet support—this may be what we call the Japanese spirit, Yamato-Damashii.

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



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The Philosophy of Daimyou Ltd.

The Philosophy of Daimyo Company Limited. 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.

Happy New Year. This is Takahiro Hanamoto. The word I have chosen to represent this year is 'Step.' Last year was a year of steady progress — beginning with small **Steps** that gradually built confidence, eventually leading to bigger and more decisive **Steps**. It was a year of moving forward without stopping. This year, I hope to slow down slightly while continuing to move ahead with consistency and purpose, making steady **Steps** rather than rushing. Having devoted much of my time to work, I would also like to make a little more room for balance this year, and enjoy making **Steps** in the mountains - or, in my case, spending some time on the golf course - as a way to refresh myself. I look forward to your continued support this year.

Happy New Year. This is Miki Nakabori. The one Chinese letter I have chosen to represent this year is 'Cultivate'. This year, I hope to carefully accumulate my own growth and new challenges, cultivating what is genuine and enduring. While valuing the bonds within our team, I also wish to cultivate relationships of trust with our customers. In my personal life, I sometimes find myself losing a sense of ease as I am occupied with time and family matters. However, by being mindful of balance and cultivating a calm and gentle rhythm, I hope to spend this year with greater serenity. As we reflect on 2026, I hope to feel that this has been a year in which we truly cultivated many things. With that in mind, I wish to cherish each day as it comes. Thank you very much for your continued support this year.

Happy New Year. This is Takako Shimatani. The Chinese letter I have chosen to represent this year is 'Breath.' Before speaking to my colleagues, I want to take a deep breath and ask myself whether my words are truly the right ones. Before addressing our customers, I want to take a breather and consider whether my words will genuinely bring them comfort and satisfaction. In the midst of busy and fast-moving days, I hope to pause from time to time so that I do not lose sight of what truly matters to me. By taking these small moments to breathe, I wish to move through the year with care, awareness, and a sense of peace. I look forward to your continued support this year.



Part 3-at Nishifuji Elementary School

Part 3

A TIME SLIP THROUGH JAPANESE HISTORY!

Hello! This is Hanaemon, also known as Takashi Hanamoto. The other day, I had the pleasure of giving a history lesson to sixth-grade students at Nishifuji Elementary School in Onomichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture. This was my third visit to the school.



As in previous sessions, the first period was devoted to an introduction to my company, followed by a talk on Japanese armour and swords. After the explanation, the students were invited to experience the real items firsthand—touching actual armour, helmets (Kabuto), Japanese swords, and even a matchlock gun.



At the corner where students could try on replica helmets, a familiar long line quickly formed. Teachers also joined in and tried them on together with the students. When the students were allowed to hold a sword mounting with both hands, they excitedly exclaimed,

'It's heavy!' and 'So cool!'

'This one's really heavy too!'
'This is seriously amazing!'



Then, as they handled the matchlock gun, some shouted. When they heard the sound of its firing mechanism, they reacted with wide eyes, saying, Watching them explore these historical objects with such excitement brought great joy to all of us. During the history quiz, which was met with great enthusiasm, the students answered many questions correctly based on what had been explained in class. Seeing that the lessons had truly reached them was deeply moving.

When we presented the final ten students with family-crest hand towels and original Daimyo-themed items, they were absolutely delighted.



A message from the teacher

I had been struggling with how to make history lessons engaging for children, but this class allowed them to actually touch and feel real objects, sparking their interest in history. Thank you very much for providing such a meaningful lesson. We look forward to welcoming you again next year.

We received such warm comments.

Many students eagerly raised their hands to share their thoughts and impressions, making the class both lively and fulfilling. About ten years ago, I found myself wondering why I did this work. I hoped that one day I could offer children a 'starting point' a chance to become interested in, and even grow to love, Japanese history. I will always remember the kind words from the teacher, and I hope to continue visiting many elementary schools in the future, sharing opportunities for children to experience and appreciate Japan's wonderful cultural heritage.



Hello, this is Takako Shimatani. In this issue, I would like to talk about the matchlock gun, which captivated the children during our recent visit to an elementary school, their eyes shining with curiosity and excitement



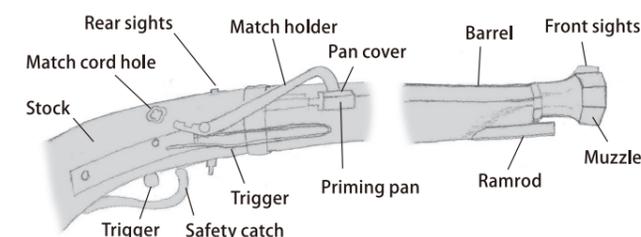
when did matchlock guns arrive in Japan?

It is said that firearms were introduced to Japan in 1543, when a Chinese merchant ship drifted ashore on Tanegashima Island (present-day Kagoshima Prefecture). On board were two Portuguese men. The local lord of Tanegashima, Tokitaka Tanegashima, warmly welcomed the castaways and purchased two matchlock guns at a great expense. One of the guns was lent to a local swordsmith with orders to reproduce it, and Kinbee Yaita successfully created the first Japanese-made matchlock gun. The remaining gun was presented to Yoshihisa Shimazu, the lord of the Satsuma Domain—current Kagoshima Prefecture, who in turn offered it to Ashikaga Yoshiharu, the 12th Shogun of the Muromachi Shogunate. In response to the Shogun's command, craftsmen from Kunitomo Region in Omi Province, where highly-skilled craftsmen were gathered, succeeded in reproducing the firearm within six months.

what is a matchlock gun made of?

- Match cord hole:** the opening through which the burning match cord passes
- Barrel:** the tube through which the lead ball travels
- Priming pan:** holds the ignition powder
- Pan cover:** covers and protects the priming pan
- Match holder:** grips the burning match cord
- Ramrod:** used to load gunpowder and bullet into the barrel
- Trigger:** lowers the match cord to ignite the powder
- Stock:** the wooden body placed against the shoulder
- Front and rear sights:** used for aiming

A matchlock gun consists of three main parts: the barrel, the stock, and the firing mechanism (Karakuri). The firing process is as follows: Pulling the trigger → the lit match cord touches the priming pan → the gunpowder ignites → the bullet is fired through the barrel.



when were the matchlock guns used in battle for the first time?

Domestically produced matchlock guns spread throughout Japan, and their first confirmed use in actual combat is believed to have been in 1549, during the Battle of Kurokawasaki in Satsuma. The following year, in 1550, it is said that around 300 firearms were used in the Second Battle of Kawanakajima. However, at that time, traditional weapons such as spears and bows remained the main forces, and firearms were largely used in a supporting role—often to frighten horses with their loud noise.

when did matchlock guns become true weapons of war?

Matchlock guns came into full use as primary weapons during the Battle of Nagashino. In the conflict between the Oda-Tokugawa Alliance and the Takeda Clan, Oda forces deployed thousands of firearms in an organised manner, marking Japan's first successful large-scale firearm-based military tactic. This strategy involved rotational firing, creating the illusion of continuous gunfire. As matchlock guns evolved from tools of intimidation into decisive weapons, the main fighting force became Ashigaru (foot soldiers). Unlike swords, bows, or long spears—which required years of training—matchlock guns could be used effectively even by newly recruited soldiers, allowing armies to maintain speed and accuracy on the battlefield. The effective range of matchlock guns at the time was said to be within 100 meters, capable of penetrating wooden boards about 3 cm thick. At distances of 50 meters or less, they were powerful enough to pierce armour. Skilled gunners, known as Teppō-Shū (gun units composed of Samurai), were said to achieve hit rates of 80-90%, and even in chaotic combat situations maintained 20-30% accuracy. To counter firearms, more mobile and defensive armour known as Tōsei-Gusoku was developed during this period.

changing forms

- A standard matchlock gun measured about 130 cm in length, but many variations were created to suit different combat situations:
 - Samazutsu: designed for use on ships or in castles
 - Bajōzutsu: compact guns for firing one-handed while on horseback
 - Tanzutsu: small, concealable guns for personal defence
 - Ō-teppō: large-caliber firearms with greater power

Craftsmen who had studied the skills to produce guns adapted their designs to the needs of each battlefield. However, during the peaceful Edo Period demand declined, and further innovation gradually ceased.

What stands out is not merely the weapon, but the craftsmanship that transformed it to suit Japan's culture and methods of warfare. When the way of fighting changes, weapons change. When the user changes, form changes. The spirit of craftsmen constantly seeking better forms and solutions is, I believe, the very foundation that continues to support Japanese craftsmanship today.