

# Comments from Our Readers

Thank you very much for the many heart-warming messages.

Opportunities for students to experience swords and armour at school events are extremely valuable in sparking their interest in history. I also give lectures on historical anecdotes at community centres and nursing homes. I have also published books such as 'Unknown Aspects of the Sengoku Period', 'The Study of the Helmet Produced by Sumiyoshi Hisashi of Nosu', 'Exploring the True Image at the Miyamoto Musashi Exhibition' and so on, continuing my efforts to preserve historical events so they will not be forgotten. Now that I am 80 years old, I am striving to cope with the gradual weakening of my memory, especially when it comes to people's names. I believe that 'if we do not know history, we cannot speak about the present.' — Nickname: bushiM

Thank you very much for reading Yamato Damashii. Your principles and commitment to learning from history once again reminded me of how important that attitude is. I began visiting elementary schools because I wanted to give children an opportunity to discover 'How amazing Japanese culture and history truly are!'. In every class, the children get incredibly excited, eagerly touch the real artifacts, and come to me with big smiles, asking all kinds of questions. Seeing that brings me great joy. I hope to continue offering history lessons where students can touch and feel the past for themselves. Please stay well, bushiM, and continue delivering your lectures. We also appreciate your continued support for our company and this newsletter. (Hanamoto)



I found the discussion on entrance exams very interesting. It reminded me of the nervousness I felt when I took my exams decades ago. I always looking forward to your every newsletter

— Nickname: Bus

Thank you very much for reading Yamato Damashii. Now, as a parent, I was nervous about the entrance exams of my son and daughter who prepared for that. I remember how my heart pounded and how my chest tightened because of it. But, I am, currently, studying the armours, sword and so on. I will deepen my knowledge about them and make efforts to fulfil your intellectual curiosity. Thank you for your continued support. (Nakabori)



I had touched Japanese swords before, but I did not know much about matchlock guns, so I learned a lot from this article.'

— Nickname: Yamato

Thank you very much for reading Yamato Damashii. When we visited the elementary schools, the students were excited with matchlock guns and made a lot of questions to us with their full smiles. That scenes made me happy. So, that was the reason why I wrote this article. I will continue creating articles that make you think, 'Ah, I see!' so please look forward to each issue. (Shimatani)



We have also received many messages via email and LINE. Thank you very much!



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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We deliver

# 大和魂

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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.

## The entrance ceremony

Hello, this is Akemi Nakahori. It has become a season when the gentle spring sunlight feels especially pleasant. This spring, my daughter, Kanae, has entered junior high school. Seeing her in her slightly oversized uniform, I felt both happiness and a quiet warmth in my heart at how quickly she was growing. Do you know when entrance ceremonies first began? It is said that entrance ceremonies in a form close to what we see today started in the Meiji period. As Western educational systems were introduced and the structure of schools was established, entrance ceremonies as 'formal events' gradually took root. In fact, the idea of cherishing these 'milestones in life' has been deeply rooted in Japan since much earlier times.



## Nara Period ~

In Japan, it was during this period that boys were regarded as adults between the ages of 12 and 16 through a coming-of-age ceremony known as 'Genpuku'.



They changed their hairstyles to those of adults, adopted adult clothing, and took on their adult names. This ceremony was considered an important ritual for family succession, and it gradually spread among the common people. It also signified a transition from a 'protected position' to one of 'bearing responsibility.' Even today, this shift in awareness can be seen as something that carries over into modern entrance ceremonies.

## Edo Period ~

At temple schools (terakoya) and domain schools, there was no fixed timing for enrolment. Learning was considered to begin 'when one feels ready,' and unlike today, there was no standardised entrance ceremony. Admission took place freely at any time.

## Meiji Period ~

In the early period, the academic year for higher education commonly began in September. However, in 1886 (Meiji 19), April enrolment was encouraged in elementary schools, and by 1900 (Meiji 33), it was also implemented in elementary school regulations. Subsequently, in 1910 (Meiji 43), imperial universities changed their enrolment to April, leading to a nationwide standardisation.

**Why April?** There is a theory that April was chosen because 'the climate is mild and the budding trees signal the arrival of spring'.

On the other hand, there are also practical reasons. Japan's fiscal and academic years begin in April, which is why this timing has become the standard. Globally, however, September enrolment is more common. In Europe, due to its long history as an agricultural society, it was considered reasonable to start school in autumn (September), after the harvest was completed. This custom eventually became institutionalised.

The enrolment ceremony is an entrance into a new world for children—and for parents, it might be a moment to reflect on where I come from. During her elementary school days, many school events were cancelled due to COVID-19. Even so, she used to enjoy each day to the fullest, growing up cheerful and full of smiles. As my adolescent daughter enters junior high school, I hope she will continue to grow unchanged, always moving forward with a smile. May these memories of spring lead to many wonderful days ahead.

My daughter-class clown →



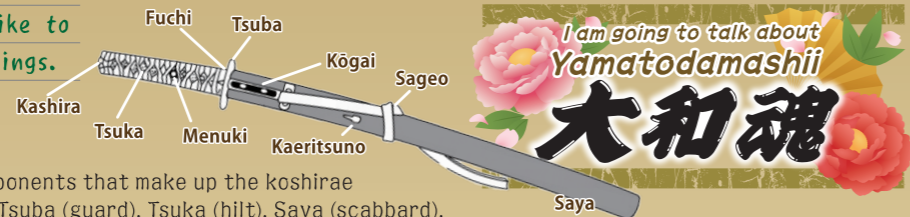
She has grown so much! ↓



Hello, this is Takako Shimatani. I would like to talk about the hilt (handle) of sword fittings.

### what are Tosogu (sword fittings)?

Tosogu refers to the collective term for the components that make up the koshirae (the mounting of a Japanese sword), such as the Tsuba (guard), Tsuka (hilt), Saya (scabbard), Menuki (ornaments on the hilt), and Kogai (hairdressing tool). They serve a practical function by protecting the blade and improving portability, while also having a decorative aspect that reflects the status and position of the owner.



I am going to talk about Yamatodamashii

大和魂

**Saya (Scabbard):** A cylindrical outer casing that protects the blade, commonly made from wood such as Japanese magnolia (ho-no-ki).

**Tsuba (Guard):** A disc-shaped metal fitting located between the blade and the hilt, serving to protect the hand and prevent slipping.

**Menuki:** Decorative elements on the hilt that connect the tang (nakago) with the hilt.

**Fuchi-Kashira:** Metal fittings that decorate the base (fuchi) and the end (Kashira) of the hilt.

**Koduka (Small utility knife):** A small knife, similar to a cutter, that fits into the koduka-hitsu slot of the scabbard and serves as a practical tool.

**Kogai:** A hairdressing tool stored in the kogai-hitsu slot of the scabbard, used to arrange traditional hairstyles.

**Sageo:** A cord attached to the scabbard, used to secure the sword to the belt (obi) and for other practical purposes.

### what is the Tsuka (Hilt)?

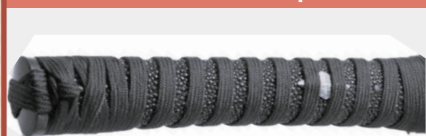
The tsuka (hilt) serves several important functions: it absorbs impact, improves the precision of handling the sword, and prevents the blade from breaking or slipping out. It is made from magnolia wood (ho-no-ki), covered with ray skin (samegawa), and then wrapped with leather or braided cord known as tsuka-ito. This wrapping technique is called tsuka-maki. It provides a non-slip grip so that the sword can be held firmly even when the hands become sweaty during combat or training, and it also helps absorb shock. It is no exaggeration to say that one entrusts one's life to the hilt, and therefore the wrapping was traditionally carried out by specialised craftsmen known as tsuka-maki artisans. In addition, fittings such as the fuchi-kashira and menuki are also applied to the hilt.

	Heian-Kamakura-Nanbokuchō Periods	Sengoku Period	Edo Period
<b>Characteristics of design?</b>	Formality-oriented, ceremonial	Focus on strength rather than visual aspects: easy to repair: slightly longer for a firm two-handed grip	Balance of design and functionality
<b>Material of the hilt (core)?</b>	Japanese magnolia wood (ho-no-ki)	Japanese magnolia wood (ho-no-ki)	Japanese magnolia wood (ho-no-ki)
<b>Material of the wrapping?</b>	Silk cord with a glossy and beautiful dyed finish	Leather cord (deerskin), or cotton cord wrapping	Pure Silk cord
<b>Wrapping style?</b>	It features minimal cord ridging, resulting in a flat overall wrap.	Practicality-focused: wrapping is rougher and thicker	Design-oriented: diamond patterns are even with extremely precise tightening.
<b>Is ray skin necessary?</b>	Important (primarily for reinforcement)	Important (larger nodules preferred)	Important (well-arranged nodules: often from a single piece)

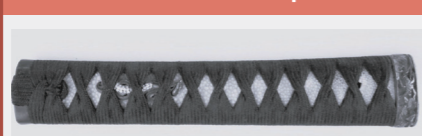
### what are the representative styles of tsuka-maki (hilt wrapping)?

The materials used for katate-maki (one-handed wrap) included 'cotton', which absorbs blood and sweat to reduce slipping, and 'deerskin', which maintains grip even when wet. By wrapping the lower half of the hilt tightly and densely, the area where grip strength is applied becomes extremely firm. Meanwhile, the upper section exposes ray skin (samegawa) with large nodules, creating friction that helps prevent the palm and the hilt from slipping.

#### Practical Use: 'Katate-maki' (One-Hand Wrap)



#### Aesthetic Beauty: 'Hishi-maki' (Diamond Wrap)



The diamond shapes are uniform, and the gripped positions are considered stable.

#### High Durability & Finish-Oriented: 'Morohineri-maki'



Both sides at the crossing points are tightly secured, making the wrap strong. However, it takes more time to complete, and if not tightened properly, it is said to cause damage to the cord.

A well-executed tsuka-maki is 'exceptional in appearance, grip, and durability.' It is even said among those who handle swords that 'by looking at the hilt wrapping, one can tell how the sword has been treated.'

As the nature of warfare shifted from cavalry-centred combat to infantry-based fighting, the way swords were handled also changed significantly. Along with this change, tsuka-maki evolved from a mere symbol of formality into a practical design that emphasised grip and durability. By the Edo period, there was a growing pursuit of hilt wrapping that combined both aesthetic beauty and functionality.

With this historical background in mind, I find myself wishing to ask a tsuka-maki craftsman to create a purple morohineri-maki that embodies both functionality and balanced beauty. What do you think?



Hanaemon's

I am going to make you back in times!



This year, the Taigadrama-one of NHK's historical epic series, 'The Toyotomi Brothers' is being broadcast, so I would like to introduce some famous brothers in Japanese history. In this issue, let's take a time slip to these brothers!



The first Shogun who established the Kamakura Shogunate: Yoritomo and a brilliant military tactician: Yoshitsune: the brothers

**Minamoto no Yoritomo** (1147-1199)  
**源頼朝・義経 Yoshitsune** (1159-1189)

### The Brothers Are Separated...

During the Heiji Rebellion (1159), their father, Minamoto no Yoshitomo, was defeated by Taira no Kiyomori. As a result, Yoritomo was placed under the watch of the powerful Hojo Clan in Izu Province, while Yoshitsune was entrusted to Kurama Temple. Later, Yoritomo married Masako, the daughter of the Hojo family, thereby forming strong ties with the warrior clans of eastern Japan. For the Hojo Clan as well, this marriage meant gaining a connection to the legitimate heir of the Minamoto lineage. After staying at Kurama Temple, Yoshitsune eventually went to join the Oshu Fujiwara Clan, which had close ties with his father, Yoshitomo. The Oshu Fujiwara Clan was based in Hiraizumi, in what is now southwestern Iwate Prefecture, and at the time it flourished so greatly that it was known as the 'Northern Capital.' Located far from Kyoto, the region maintained a high degree of geographical and military independence, making it difficult even for the Taira Clan to interfere. Thus, Yoritomo survived in the eastern regions, while Yoshitsune survived in Oshu—each living on in different lands.

### After 20 Years, the time for uprising had finally come!

In 1180, Yoritomo raised an army in response to a decree issued by Prince Mochihito, the son of the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa. Answering Yoritomo's call to arms, Yoshitsune also departed from Hiraizumi and was reunited with his brother. Although they were defeated in their first battle, the death of Taira no Kiyomori—the absolute leader of the Taira Clan—led to the rapid expansion of Minamoto power across the country, forcing the Taira to retreat to western Japan. It was Yoshitsune who played a crucial role in defeating the remnants of the Taira who had fled the capital. Making full use of mobility, psychological warfare, and surprise tactics, he defeated the Taira one after another. He also adapted flexibly to naval battles, despite having little prior experience, and became the central figure in the destruction of the Taira Clan.

### The Beginning of Conflict with His Brother

Toward the final stages of the Genpei War, the Minamoto-Taira conflict, Yoshitsune began to form direct ties with the imperial court. After the fall of the Taira, he received court ranks and titles. From the court's perspective, they sought to prevent power from concentrating in the hands of the warrior class by setting the Taira and Minamoto against each other. After weakening the Minamoto during the Heiji Rebellion and allowing the Taira to rise, they then encouraged the Minamoto to revolt, leading to the Taira's downfall. Next, they aimed to weaken the warrior class further by dividing the Minamoto brothers. Yoshitsune, however, was drawn into this strategy, and thus the conflict between the brothers began. Yoritomo, for his part, intended to establish a government centred on the warrior class. Therefore, Yoshitsune's actions—accepting titles directly from the court—amounted to disregarding the authority of the emerging samurai government. If such actions were permitted, warriors across the country might turn their allegiance not to Yoritomo's government, but to the imperial court. For this reason, Yoritomo could not overlook Yoshitsune.

### The Victorious Brother and the Tragic Younger Brother

Upon learning of his brother's anger, Yoshitsune hurried back toward Kamakura, Yoritomo's base. However, he was not allowed to enter the city and instead fled to Hiraizumi in Oshu, where he had prior ties. Although the Oshu Fujiwara Clan had once sheltered Yoshitsune, a generation change in leadership led them to yield to pressure from Yoritomo. Yoshitsune was attacked and ultimately took his own life. With Yoshitsune's death, the Tohoku region also came under the control of Yoritomo's Kamakura government.

Yoritomo began his rise as an exile sent to Izu, without a solid base of power even when he initiated his uprising. In contrast, Yoshitsune gained great fame through his remarkable achievements in the Genpei War. However, for Yoshitsune to receive court ranks directly—without Yoritomo's approval—posed a threat to the stability of Yoritomo's still-developing samurai government. Thus, rather than simply being a brother who killed his meritorious sibling, Yoritomo may have had no choice but to eliminate a figure who disrupted the unity of an unstable regime. At the same time, Yoshitsune likely did not envision a future in conflict with his brother. He merely followed what was then a natural course: for a warrior who had achieved great military success to receive rank from the court. Yoritomo, however, was attempting to shift away from the traditional court-centred system toward a new order centred on the warrior class—a vision that perhaps was never fully understood by his younger brother.

