

## History of Tendo Shogi pieces

Shogi was mentioned in the Wakan Sansai Zue encyclopedia (1712). It is said to have originated from India and appeared in China during the Zhou Dynasty (1046 BC – 256 AD) before spreading to various parts of the country, where various methods were developed. The details of how shogi was brought to Japan are not clear, but in the Meigetsuki journal, it can be read that shogi was played in 1199. There is also a scene of a game thought to be shogi drawn on the Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga set of picture scrolls. It is known that it gained popularity during the Kamakura period. In shogi, the pieces of each player are placed facing each other and are moved on the board to attack and defend. It is recorded in the Shōgi Rokusyūno Zushiki dating from the Edo period that there were numerous small, medium-sized and large variants of shogi in Japan. The current small variant of shogi became mainstream while others declined. There are no known shogi board relics that date back to the Middle Ages, but from the early modern period onwards, some were found with maki-e decoration on the sides. In the Edo period, go, shogi, and sugoroku game boards, collectively called the sanmen (“three boards”), formed a standard set as part of the trousseau of a daimyo woman and were also used as decorative items with hina dolls. In the past, pieces placed on the board were called horses and were decorated with characters for pawns, go pieces or generals’ horses. Among relics, the oldest surviving pieces in Japan are the seven pieces including a king and a gold general excavated from the well-shaped ruins in the former precincts of the Kōfuku-ji Temple in Nara Prefecture. They have been excavated together with a wooden writing plate inscribed with the date 1058. Numerous pieces were excavated at the Ichijōdani Asakura clan’s

residence in Asuwa-chō (now Fukui City), Fukui Prefecture, including a drunken elephant. It is believed that before 1573, when the Asakura clan fell, different pieces from those used today were also used. A single piece discovered at the ruins of Kinowasaku, Sakata City, Yamagata Prefecture, had “soldier” written on the front and “gold” on the back. According to the Yōshūfushi chorography, characters were drawn on pieces by Minase Issai, a master calligrapher, after been asked to do so by Toyotomi Hidetsugu. This is said to be the beginning of the respect shown to the Minase family’s calligraphy. In 1612, Ōhashi Sōkei became a master, and the castle shogi tournament at the Edo Castle became a regular event. Then, in 1636, the second-generation master Soko published Sōkei’s Shogi Zushiki in an expanded edition, clearly stating the illegal moves. It is considered that this is how modern shogi has been established. Since then and up to this day, shogi has become a popular pastime for the masses, was the subject of popular literature and nishiki-e (color woodblock prints), and had shogi game records and puzzle books published too.