

Japan Heritage, Narrative No.1

The Educational Heritage of Early Modern Japan

:the origins of learning and etiquette



JAPAN HERITAGE

日本遺産



Chinese texts from Ashikaga Gakko (Ashikaga academy), designated as National Treasures

Story

Even before the introduction of the modern educational systems of the West, in Japan, both the ruling samurai classes and large numbers of commoners were capable of reading, writing, and arithmetic; norms of etiquette were also well established. The educational heritage of early modern Japan played a central role in the high levels of education of Japanese, since large numbers of people from all ranks of society were admitted to domain schools, village schools, private academies, and *terakoya* writing schools that provided instruction to commoner children. Educational heritage was a catalyst for the modernization of Japan after the Meiji Restoration. Indeed, the spirit of learning engendered at these educational institutions, and the importance they placed on etiquette, helped shape the national character of present-day Japanese.



A martial arts performance at Kodokan (Kodokan school)



The interior of the Shizutani Gakko (Shizutani school) lecture hall



An illustration of Kangien (Kangien academy) (Owned by Public Interest Incorporated Foundation Hirose Museum)

The Kairakuen garden was created to complement Kodokan (Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture)

Mito City/Ashikaga City/Bizen City/Hita City
Educational Heritage and World Heritage Registration Promotion Council

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Component Cultural Properties



Shizutani Gakko (Shizutani school/
1670-1870/Bizen City, Okayama Prefecture)

Shizutani Gakko is the oldest public school for commoners in the world remaining today. Established by Ikeda Mitsumasa, lord of Okayama Domain, it was one of the largest village schools in the country, and admitted students from Okayama and other regions of Japan.



Ashikaga Gakko (Ashikaga academy/
?-1871/Ashikaga City, Tochigi Prefecture)

While its year of establishment is unknown, the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier wrote of the academy: "this academy in the Bando (present-day Kanto) region is the largest in Japan and its most famous."



Kangien (Kangien academy/1817-1897/
Hita City, Oita Prefecture)

Kangien, the largest private academy in early modern Japan, was established by the Confucian scholar Hirose Tanso. The academy adopted the *Sandatsuho* system of admitting students regardless of their social status, age or educational background, and attracted large numbers of students from across Japan.



Kodokan(Kodokan school/1841-1872/
Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture)

Established by Tokugawa Nariaki, the ninth lord of Mito Domain, Kodokan was the largest domain school in Japan. Akin to a university, various subjects were taught at the school, including Confucianism, history, medicine, and military science.

Mameda-Machi(Mameda-Machi town), a college town that supported Kangien (Hita City, Oita Prefecture)

About Japan Heritage

Created by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan Heritage comprises a series of narratives about Japan's culture and traditions, told through the historic attractions and unique characteristics of different regions in the country. Local governments direct the preparation and use of their tangible and intangible cultural properties to communicate these stories both within Japan and abroad, with the aim of promoting regional revitalization.

