Spread of Firearms and the Production in
the Early Part of the Modern Times

UDAGAWA Takehisa

This paper discusses the realities of the spread of firearms in Japan. The quite a few papers on the firearms have been issued so far since the Meiji period, however, many of them focused on the issues when the firearms were first introduced to Japan in the 5th of Tenbun (1548) and the systematical discussion on the long history of firearms have not been made.

The new weapons introduced into Japan from abroad were utilized in the battles among the feudal lords from a certain period. In the western Japan, the Shimazu family in the Satsuma province adopted the firearms for the first time, and then the Ōtomo family in the Bungo province and the Mori family in the Aki province followed. The Ōtomo family utilized the firearms as the means to secure the position of the military commissioner. Firearms were not the tools only for battles.

Eventually, the firearms spread to the eastern Japan. The Takeda family in Kai province and the Go-Hōjō family in the Sagami province ordered the squires in the region into the services and endeavored to obtain the firearms as many as possible. The Takeda family was defeated by the firearm unit of Oda Nobunaga because the number of firearms the Takeda family in possession was smaller than that of the Oda family. The Go-Hōjō family's adoption of firearms was behind the Takeda family.

After the Eiroku period, the spread of firearms was accelerated. The fact that deserves attention is that the large caliber guns and cannons came into use. In a battle at the mouth of the Katsu River in the Tensyō period fought by Oda Nobunaga, battles in the Bunroku and Keichō periods fought by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and the Battle of Ōsaka by Tokugawa Ieyasu, the cannons were used extensively. After the appearance of large sized cannons, the castles came to be built using stones.

To use the firearms, gunpowders that blast off the bullets are required. Im-
mediately after the introduction of firearms, Japan could not produce the gunpowders and, therefore, imported them from abroad. It is clear that eventually, gunpowders came to be produced in Japan from the face that the production methods of gunpowders were handed down from generation to generation. When the number of firearms in possession became the determining factor for the victory or defeat, the changes in the contents of the books of secrets occurred. That is, the shooting techniques came to be included in the books of secrets. The shooting techniques came to be systematized as the battle experiences were accumulated, and the gunnery was created. How the gunnery was created clearly shows how the firearms came to spread.