

Shokasonjuku was originally a small private school run from the nearby home of Yoshida Shoin's (1830–1859) uncle, Tamaki Bunnoshin (1810–1876). Shoin was put under house arrest in 1854 after trying to sneak out of Japan on an American ship departing from Yokohama. He was sent back to Hagi, and during his confinement Shoin began to hold lectures in his tiny *tatami* mat room. As his popularity grew, a larger schoolhouse became necessary.

In November of 1857 a small shack on his family's estate was converted into a one-story schoolhouse. It had a tile roof covering an eight-*tatami*-mat-sized room (approx. 14.6 m²). The main room's sliding panels have been opened so that visitors to Shoin Shrine can see the interior. A portrait of Yoshida Shoin hangs in the middle of the room at the rear.

Even after its conversion the single room quickly became too small, and four months later Shoin and his students worked together to expand their schoolhouse. They added three smaller rooms, a total of ten-and-a-half *tatami* mats (approx. 19.1 m²). Now at eighteen-and-a-half *tatami* mats (approx. 33.7 m²), Shokasonjuku could accommodate twenty to thirty students at a time.

Due to the impact that Shoin's students would have on the course of Japanese history during the Meiji period (1868–1912), this area was inscribed as one of the “Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution” on the UNESCO World Heritage List.