

Eyeglasses

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) owned these tortoiseshell glasses during the later years of his life. They would have been worn perched atop the bridge of the nose or held up to the face with one hand. Glasses were rare in Japan during the seventeenth century, so it is likely that these were imported. It has been suggested that they were a gift from either Spain or Portugal. Alternatively, it has been speculated that they were made in Japan, and that a glassmaker in Kyushu ground the lenses.

It is known that Ieyasu gave at least one pair of glasses to a public official in Kyoto as a gift, since the official wrote in his diary that he received a pair of eyeglasses from Ieyasu in 1593.

Important Cultural Property