

**Pencil**

This pencil, which belonged to Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), is the oldest known pencil in Japan. It was discovered among his personal belongings in a case used to store writing utensils. The pencil is thought to have been a gift from one of the Spanish emissaries who met with Ieyasu—the graphite inside it is from Mexico, which was then part of the Spanish Empire.

The tip of the graphite is angled and the edges are softly rounded, indicating that the pencil has been used. The oak casing, however, shows no signs of having been carved or sharpened, so it probably was not used very much. Pencils would have been difficult to use on the thin, textured *washi* paper common in Japan at the time.

Important Cultural Property