

## **Matsudaira-go Museum of History and the Matsudaira Tarozaemon Family**

This small museum on the grounds of Matsudaira Toshogu Shrine displays documents, weapons, armor, statues, and various other items associated with the Matsudaira family. Among the oldest of these is a sixteenth-century wooden likeness of Matsudaira Chikauji (d. 1394?), the family's founder. He is depicted seated and wearing a monk's robes in an allusion to Chikauji's experience as a traveling monk before settling in the village of Matsudaira. Most of the other items in the museum are heirlooms of the Matsudaira Tarozaemon branch family. This branch was established in the fifteenth century and tasked with protecting the ancestral home of the Matsudaira when the main line of the family began occupying new territories to the south and west.

The Tarozaemon were loyal retainers to the Matsudaira and fought alongside their relatives in many battles. This included the decisive Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, which cleared the way for Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the head of the Matsudaira family at the time, to unify all of Japan. Some of the pieces of armor on display at the museum were worn in those battles by members of the Tarozaemon family.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), when the Tokugawa shogunate controlled Japan, the Tarozaemon family held the high rank of *hatamoto*. This status was awarded in return for protecting the Matsudaira homeland and the graves of the shoguns' ancestors. It gave the head of the Tarozaemon family the right to an audience with the shogun as well as the expectation to make regular visits to Edo (now Tokyo), the *de facto* capital. The Tarozaemon family lost its privileges when the shogunate was overthrown following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, but retained its estate in Matsudaira-go well into the twentieth century.