

Dutch Naval Cannon

This muzzle-loaded Dutch cannon was cast sometime in the late sixteenth century. It could shoot a 33-millimeter cannonball between 300 and 500 meters and was fired by fuse. The cannon's wheeled carriage allowed it to be moved easily around the deck of a warship or the battlements of a European castle.

Imported European cannons were used in Japan longer than imported muskets. Japanese gunsmiths quickly learned to produce high-quality matchlock muskets, but they struggled to match the durability of heavy European cannon barrels. Unlike musket barrels, cannon barrels were typically forged as single pieces of metal.

The first cannons in Japan were a pair of breech-loading swivel guns acquired from Portuguese traders in 1576. Dutch and English suppliers had supplanted the Portuguese by the early 1600s. They provided the cannons that the forces of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868) used at the Siege of Osaka (1614–1615), the best-known artillery battle of the samurai age.