

# The Japanese Quiver

By Godai Katsunaga

## Intorduction

The Ya, or arrow of Japan was between 34 and 38 inches in length, this required a special quiver design for use on horse back. We will examine several quiver designs and their uses.

## History

Japanese quivers were based on two broad categories, the uncovered or open quiver and the covered or closed quiver. The open quivers were either the Kari or the Shiko type. The closed quivers could be the Utsubo or the Yadzutsu type.

Due to the great length of the arrows the mounted archers of Japan had to draw their arrow differently than their European counterparts. The arrow had to be grasped near the arrow head and then lifted out of the quiver and then pulled down away from the quiver. This also fit the style of archery by placing the arrow on the correct side of the bow for shooting.



Fujiwara no Hidesato depicted in an 1890 print by Yoshitoshi. (From public domain)



Example of Japanese open quivers on display at the New York Metropolitan Museum (Photo by Inazakira)

The Kari-ebira quivers were made up of an open framework to which the arrows were tied. The base was normally a box or a basket. These were made in varying sizes, with some being almost as large as a small chair and probably carried by an attendant to the samurai. The Kari type of quiver was the most common quiver used for warfare and could hold over two dozen arrows. The box was commonly made of wood and the backing could be either bamboo or metal. Some styles of kari-ebira quivers were covered with fur and called Sakatsura quivers. This is the most common quiver used in by samurai.

The Second style open quiver was the Shiko style, smaller quiver than the Kari quiver; it may have been used for hunting or in ceremonial archery. Commonly had the box made of leather and only held up to 6 arrows.



Shiko style quiver (Photoby Samurai Antiquesworld)

The Yadzutsu closed quiver was basically a tube for transporting arrows. It is the same type of quiver still in use today for Kyudo. It would have been used to transport arrow to and from ceremonial shoots.



Yadzutsu style quiver. (Photo by World Antiques)

The Utsubo quiver was often used to protect arrows when traveling great distances. The common use was during the Edo Period when Daimyo traveled from their home province to Edo with their troops. It protected the arrows from the weather, while maintaining them available for use.

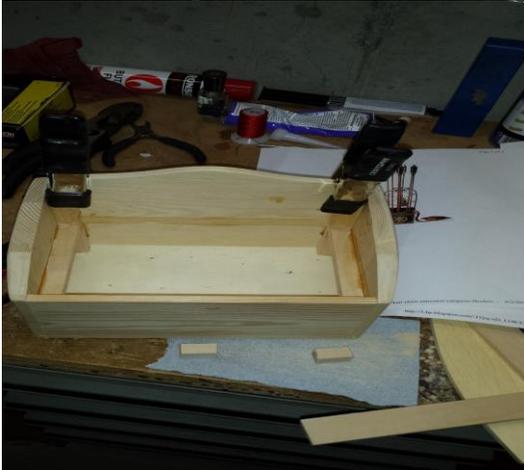


Utsubo style quiver (Photo by World Antiques)

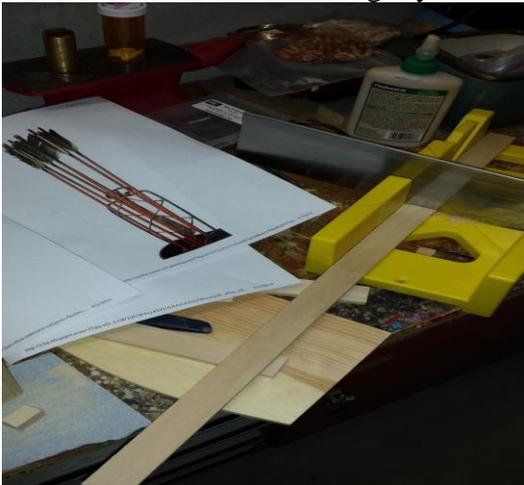
### **Construction methods used for Kari-ebira**

The displayed quiver was constructed using the following steps. The methods used only hand tools and period techniques with the substitution of materials as noted.

1. The box of the quiver was made from White Pine because of its light weight and strength. This wood is similar to the white pine found in Japan.
2. The inside slats were made from Basswood, because of their close grain and light weight and strength. This is similar to *Tilia Japonica*, a subspecies of basswood found in Japan.



3. The box was glued together to form a strong but light structure. The slats were measured and cut to fit tightly and allow the arrowheads to slide down into the box.





4. A steel rod of .2 inches in diameter was then attached to the box to form the back structure. I have noticed that this style quiver had both steel and bamboo backs. To improve survivability I decided to use steel.



- I wrapped the steel rod in 48 pound hemp to give it a more rattan wrapped look. The hemp was then sealed with arrow sealer to protect it from the environment.



- I painted the box/base portion of the quiver with black lacquer paint. And used the same lacing that I had used on my heavy armor to make the back lacing on the quiver. I used a pattern seen on several period ebira.



7. A dragonfly symbol was painted on the quiver and period arrows tied in. This step took additional research and some trial and error.



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