

In Japan, the crests used to indicate lineage, parentage or social position are referred to as *kamon* (family crests). They are thought to have originated in the Heian period (794–1192) when emblems were affixed to the framework of ox carts as a sign of nobility. In the samurai society after the Heian period, armor, flags and banners were decorated

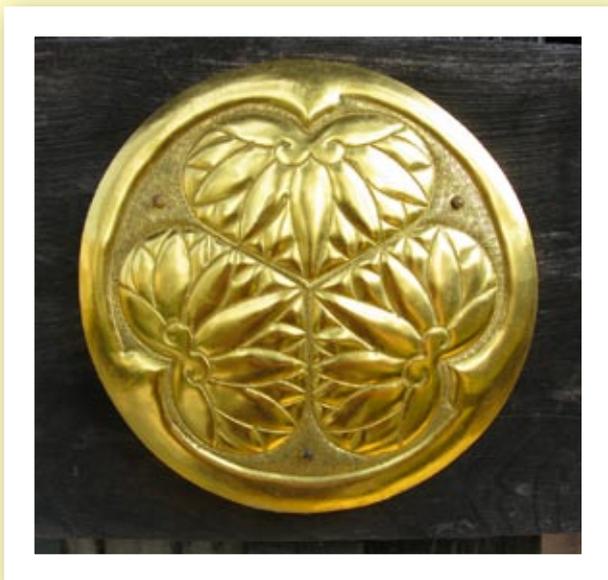
with *kamon* to distinguish between enemies and allies on the battlefield, and as a sign of distinguished service. By the Edo period (1603–1867), when the



Kirimon is used to decorate roof tiles. It is a stylized design of the flowers and leaves of the paulownia tree and together with the *kikumon*, it is also used for the Imperial Family crest. It was bestowed by the Imperial Family on the successors to the shogunate, as well as to retainers. Today it is a comparatively popular family crest.

country was peaceful and culture flourished, *kamon* became decorative rather than a symbol of authority. This was the time when *kamon* came into general use to identify merchants and traders, homes and families, or businesses, and not only warriors and nobles. Even today, many people wear formal dress that includes *kamon* on ceremonial family occasions. Gravestones are also engraved with *kamon*.

There are various types of *kamon* with motifs that include plants like the



Mitsuba aoi (three leaves of hollyhock) is one of the best-known *kamon* in Japan. It is the Tokugawa shogunate's family's crest.

KAMON

chrysanthemum, cherry, or bamboo; or animals like horses or birds; natural phenomena such as lightning bolts, waves or mountains; or weapons, including swords, bows and arrows. According to one theory, there are more than 20,000 types of kamon, but only about 200 prototypes. There are many simple and beautifully elegant designs for kamon and some of them were appropriated by European art nouveau.



1: This kamon depicts a natural phenomenon. What is it?



A: Tornado

B: Lightning

C: Typhoon



2: The uniforms worn by Japan's soccer team are decorated with an emblem with an animal motif. That animal is also used in the crest of Kumano Shrine in Wakayama Prefecture, which is a registered World Heritage site. What is the animal?



A: Eagle

B: Crow

C: Lion

See the back page for answers.