Together we will take a look into the past. I will tell you how the abacus developed from the european point of view. Probably the japanese see the development of this calculating help a bit different. We hope, you can add some points, especially concerning the suan pan and your soroban.

The abacus' history started ca. 2600 years ago in Madagaskar. There to count the amount of soldiers, every soldier had to pass a narrow passage. For each passing soldier a little stone was put into a groove. When ten stones were in that groove they were removed and one stone was put into the next groove.

Later the grooves in the dust were replaced by grooves in or lines on tables in west Asia and Europe. We do not know, whether the suan pan developed from this scheme by replacing the grooves by sticks and the stones by balls or not. *Do you know it?*

In 607 the japanese regent Shotoku Taishi made a cultural approach to China. The chinese suan-pan comes to Japan and became optimized by Taishi by removing one of the upper balls. Since 1940 the new soroban with only four lower balls is used.

In Europe the abacus was used only by the Roman. Since their numbering system is inapplicable for huge numbers, it could not be used in the middle ages.

In the european middle ages the people used tables with grooves or boards and kerchiefs with lines to calculate with. Instead of the stones special coins were used by displacing using special rules.

From the orient, transmitted by the crusaders, the writing procedure for calculating Gelosia came to Europa. Long time it was condemned, especially by the church, but after all it could achieve. In the nineteenth century, the russian stchoty came to Europe, but today it is used only by children for playing.

In the seventeenth century the Englishman Napier developed the logarithms. Since with its help the calculating operations can be reduced to addition and multiplication, Napier reflected to make the multiplication easier. He developed Napier's Bones, which could be used like Gelosia method.