



企画展

武具へのこだわり

Devotion to Arms and Armor

●Location : 1F Gallery of the Matsudaira Family Collection

●Date : 8/ 22 – 10/6, 2025

●Closing days 9/8 (Mon)、9/9 (Tue)

The swords and armor featured in this exhibition were essential tools for samurai, who entrusted their lives to them. To ensure they could perform at their best in times of need, these weapons and armaments were not only carefully maintained on a daily basis but also customized to fit the wearer's body and preferences.

They also served as part of the samurai's attire — both in daily life and on formal occasions — and were often used as a means of self-expression. Many warriors commissioned artisans to incorporate their personal tastes, cultural refinement, and religious beliefs into the design, resulting in highly individualized pieces.

In this exhibition, we will explore the many unique and personalized features found in these weapons and armor, focusing especially on materials connected to the Echizen Matsudaira family, lords of the Fukui domain.

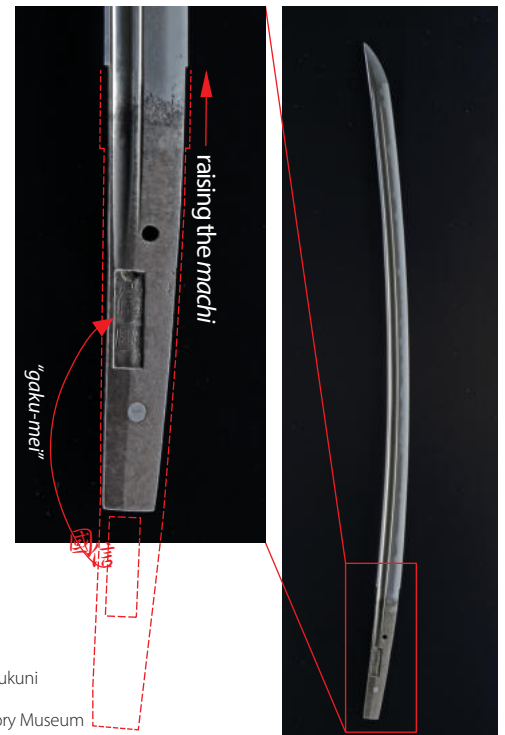
Even Legendary Blades Were Resized! Refined for Practical Use:

Point of Devotion #1

The Art of *Suriage* (Blade Shortening)

Looking at the history of Japanese swords, the *tachi* used up until the Nanbokuchō period (14th century) were typically long and deeply curved, designed for mounted warriors to wield from horseback. However, from the Muromachi period (15th century) onward, the *uchigatana*, worn at the waist and used on foot, became the mainstream style. As a result, many older swords were resized to be more suitable for use on foot.

This resizing process is known as *suriage*, in which the blade is shortened by cutting from the tang end (*nakago*) and raising the *machi* (notch). When the blade is shortened so much that the original signature (*mei*) of the swordsmith is lost, it is called *oh-suriage* (major shortening). In some cases, to preserve the signature, the portion bearing the *mei* is cut off and embedded into the reshaped tang; this is known as *gaku-me*.



Long Sword (*Katana*) Inset inscription (*gaku-me*): Nobukuni
Nanbokuchō Period, 14th century
Fukui City Shungaku Memorial Library, Fukui City History Museum

Refined for Sharpness? Remaking and Reusing Outdated Weapons:

Point of Devotion #2

The Art of *Naginata-naoshi*

This is a sword that was remade from *naginata* — long-handled weapon that was commonly used up until the Nanbokuchō period (14th century) — into *wakizashi* or *uchigatana*. Because many of these blades had survived intense combat and were of exceptional quality, it has long been said that “there are no dull blades among *naginata-naoshi*.” Indeed, their shapes often suggest an extraordinary sharpness at first glance.



Short Sword (*Wakizashi*) Unsigned; attributed to Hojōji Kunimitsu
Nanbokuchō Period, 14th century
Ekki Library, housed at Fukui City History Museum

Custom-Made Blades :

Point of Devotion #3 **Chumon-uchi**

In addition to valuing renowned swords from the past, it was also common for individuals to commission contemporary swordsmiths to create custom blades tailored specifically for them. Some swords even have inscriptions on the tang (*nakago*) such as “*ouju* [Name of Patron],” indicating that they were made upon request. The sword introduced here, which bears a possession inscription (*shoji-me*) reading “Possessed by [Name],” is also believed to be a product of such a custom order (*chumon-uchi*).

Short Sword (*Wakizashi*)
Inscription: (Aoi Crest) Made with Nanban Iron,
at Edo, Musashi Province, by Echizen Yasutsugu
/One of the swords owned by Honda Narishige (Tachiaoi Crest)
Early Edo Period (16th century)
Private Collection, housed at Fukui City History Museum

shoji-me



A One-of-a-Kind Custom-Made Masterpiece:

Point of Devotion #4 **Exquisite and Personalized Sword Mountings**

The scabbard, handguard (*tsuba*), and other metal fittings of a Japanese sword are often more visible than the blade itself, and during the Edo period, they were considered part of a samurai's fashion. As a result, a wide variety of sword mountings have been passed down to the present day, reflecting careful attention to materials, lacquer techniques, design, and overall coordination.



Daisho Sword Mountings with Scabbards Wrapped in Snake Skin
Edo Period (19th century)
Fukui City Shungaku Memorial Library, Fukui City History Museum

Rarely Worn on the Battlefield, Yet Rich in Detail and Symbolism:

Point of Devotion #5 **Armor as a Reflection of Samurai Prestige “Gusoku”**

The set of armor (*gusoku*) introduced here was created during the Edo period, a time when warfare had largely ceased. These pieces were made for successive lords of the Fukui domain. Naturally, it was no longer an era in which feudal lords would wear armor and head into battle, so instead of focusing on practical combat functionality, these armors emphasized visual splendor and innovative design.

Armor worn by domain lords was crafted to reflect their personal tastes and preferences, but it also served as an important symbol of the family's prestige. As such, these were special items, valued not only for their craftsmanship but also for their role in representing authority and status.



4-piece Cuirass Armor (*Gusoku*) with Brown Silk Lacing
Edo period (17-18th century)/Ekki Library, housed at Fukui City History Museum

Gallery Talk

— a guided tour by the curator
(sorry, in Japanese only)

8/31 (sun) ・ 9/21日 (Sun) ・ 10/4 (Sat)
2:00.p.m ~ for about 30minutes

※Admission Tickets Required

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Fukui City History Museum 911-0004 3-12-1, Houei, Fukui City
Phone : 0776-21-0489/ Fax : 0776-21-1489
Curator : Tomoya Matsumura

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福井市立郷土歴史博物館 〒910-0004 福井市宝永 3-12-1
電話 0776-21-0489 Fax 0776-21-1489
担当：松村知也