

Formal Edo period koshirae regulations

Introduction

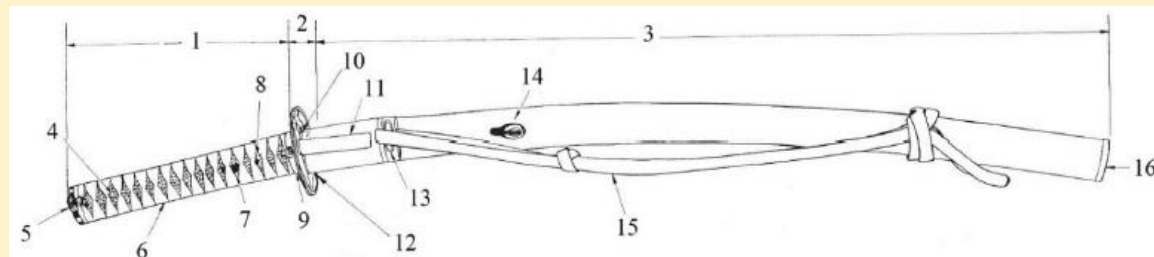
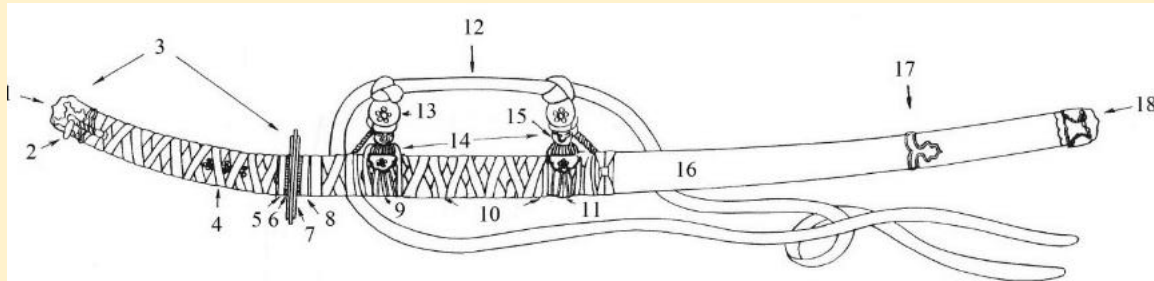


Definitions

The word **koshirae** (拵) comes from the verb **koshiraeru** (拵える) which means “to make, produce, create, manufacture.” Thus the term koshirae can be literally translated as “making” or “outfit.”

Purpose

- The primary purpose of the koshirae is to enable the use of the bare blade
- However, the koshirae also serves to demonstrate one’s aesthetic taste, economic status or even socio-political role and rank



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| 1. kabutogane (兜金) | 11. harubi-gane (腹帯金) or ashi-kanamono (足金物), the whole ensemble is called ni no ashi (二の足) |
| 2. sarute (猿手) | 12. tachi no o (太刀の緒) |
| 3. tsuka (柄) | 13. taiiko-gane (太鼓金) |
| 4. menuki (目貫) | 14. ashi-ai (足間) |
| 5. fuchi (縁) | 15. kawasaki-gane (革先金) |
| 6. ko-seppa (小切羽) | 16. saya (鞘) |
| 7. ō-seppa (大切羽) | 17. semegane (鍔金) |
| 8. sayaguchi (鞘口) | 18. ishizuki (石突) |
| 9. harubi-gane (腹帯金) or ashi-kanamono (足金物), the whole ensemble is called ichi no ashi (一の足) | |

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| 1. tsuka (柄) | 9. fuchi (縁) |
| 2. tsuba (鐔) | 10. seppa (切羽) |
| 3. saya (鞘) | 11. kōgai (筭), kozuka (小柄) on the back |
| 4. same (鮫) | 12. koiguchi (鯉口) |
| 5. kashira (頭) | 13. kurigata (栗形) and kawara-gane (瓦金), ura-gawara (裏瓦) on the back side |
| 6. tsuka-maki (柄巻) | 14. kaerizuno (返角) or origane (折金) if of metal |
| 7. menuki (目貫) | 15. sageo (下緒) |
| 8. mekugi (目釘) | 16. kojiri (鐙) |

Historical background

- Tokugawa Ieyasu won the decisive battle of Sekigahara in 1600 and was invested shōgun by emperor Go-Yōzei (後陽成天皇, 1572-1617) in 1603. He made Edo the seat of his Tokugawa-bakufu, dissociated Japan from Western influence and banished Christianity (particularly as a result of the Shimabara revolt in 1637-8, when many Christian peasants rebelled against raised taxes).
- He reinforced his position by defeating Hideyoshi's heir Hideyori and eventually conquering Ōsaka Castle in 1615.
- In the same year, 1615, Ieyasu started to compile a kind of "samurai code" which governed the responsibilities and activities of daimyō and the bushi class in general. The so-called **buke-shohatto (武家諸法度)** was finally issued in 1635 and ordered for example daimyō and to make elaborate pilgrimages to Edo on a regular basis, ie the **sankin-kōtai (参勤交代)**: for tozama daimyō in 1635 and for fudai daimiyō– in 1642.
- His rule ushered an era of prosperity, stability and encouragement of indigenous culture and arts.
- The improved welfare, as a result of peace and administrative reforms, and the sankin-kotai obligations led to daimyo's pursuit of finer accoutrements, including koshirae. The blossoming of the the nation culminated in the **Genroku period (元禄, 1688-1704)**, in which rice crops were abundant and consumer prices rose.
- Overall, the age of prosperity lasted for circa a century, until the Kyōhō period (享保, 1716-1736). At the beginning of the 18th century, the coin reserves of the bakufu were running short, because the major gold and silver mines were depleted.

Sword and koshirae evolution in Edo period

- Even prior to the inauguration of the Tokugawa bakufu, Hideyoshi had tried to disarm the civilian population and deter mid-and lower-ranking bushi from wearing splendid mountings. So, class- and rank-related rules of attire and uniform were somewhat enforced, even if the rules were not formally prescribed.
- The Tokugawa government decided to codify formally and very strictly also swords: i.e. how long a sword had to be, who was allowed to wear what kind of sword, and when certain swords had to be worn by whom.
- It started with an edict from the second year of **Shōhō (正保, 1645)** which regulated the hairstyle of the samurai. The name of this edict was *Daishō-katana-sunpō oyobi tōhatsu-futsumō no sei* (大小刀の寸法及び頭髪髯毛の制) and it said also that a katana was limited to a blade length of 2 shaku 8 sun (~ 84.84 cm) and a wakizashi to 1 shaku 8 sun (~ 54.54 cm).
- In the eighth year of **Kanbun (寛文, 1668)**, the Tokugawa bakufu issued the so-called **mutō-rei (無刀令)** with which it prohibited all persons not belonging to the samurai class to wear swords with a blade length over a ko-wakizashi. A ko-wakizashi blade was specified as no longer than 1 shaku 5 sun (~ 45.45 cm).
- Later this law was modified, so that travellers of the somewhat dangerous Tōkaidō (the then main road between Kyōto and Tōkyō) were allowed to wear swords with a nagasa up to 1 shaku 8 sun (a wakizashi instead of a ko-wakizashi) for their self-defence. Meanwhile, oversized katana came out of fashion during the Edo period and the jōsun (常寸), the “standard length,” measured around 70 cm.

Attire evolution

- Transitioning from the Kamakura-period hitatare (直垂), the kamishimo (袴) became popular towards the end of the Muromachi period.
- The hitatare was originally worn with a tachi hanging cutting-edge down from the belt, but with the kamishimo, an uchigatana was thrust cutting-edge up through the belt.
- For a “compromise,” two approaches existed. Those approaches were effectively the progenitors of the handachi.
 - In one, a tachi was equipped with removable ashi-kanamono to allow a thrusting through the belt.
 - In the other, an uchigatana-koshirae was invented where the kurigata and kaerizuno or origane respectively were mounted on the other side of the saya so that it was possible to wear it to the hitatare thrust through the belt with the cutting edge facing down.
- With the appreciation of the uchigatana amongst higher-ranking warriors and the final development of the daishō also the dress code changed and the handachi disappeared again.
- That meant that – except for the battlefield tachi – no sword was needed which was worn with its cutting-edge down. The uchigatana with the wakizashi as daishō pair were the swords for the semi formal everyday clothing and no longer a tachi.

Hierarchy of attire and koshirae

The codified attire requirements (**Bakugi-sankō**, 幕儀参考) stipulated that the clothing and weapons to be worn on different occasions were:

1. taireifuku (大礼服), the most formal dress: worn with **kazari-tachi** or **efu no tachi**
2. reifuku (礼服), formal dress: **chiisogatana** (小刀) or **itomaki no tachi**
3. tsūjō-reifuku (通常礼服), normal formal dress: **chiisogatana** or **katana**
4. ryaku-reifuku (略礼服), semi-formal dress on duty: **daishō**
5. heifuku (平服), civil clothing off duty: **wakizashi** or **katana**
6. with armour (katchū, 甲冑) or at falconry: **itomaki no tachi**
7. at (official) trips (ryokō, 旅行) or for hunting: **handachi**

Duty semi-formal wear: hitatare



Most formal court wear



Formal court wear



Semi-formal wear



Duty semi-formal wear: kamishimo



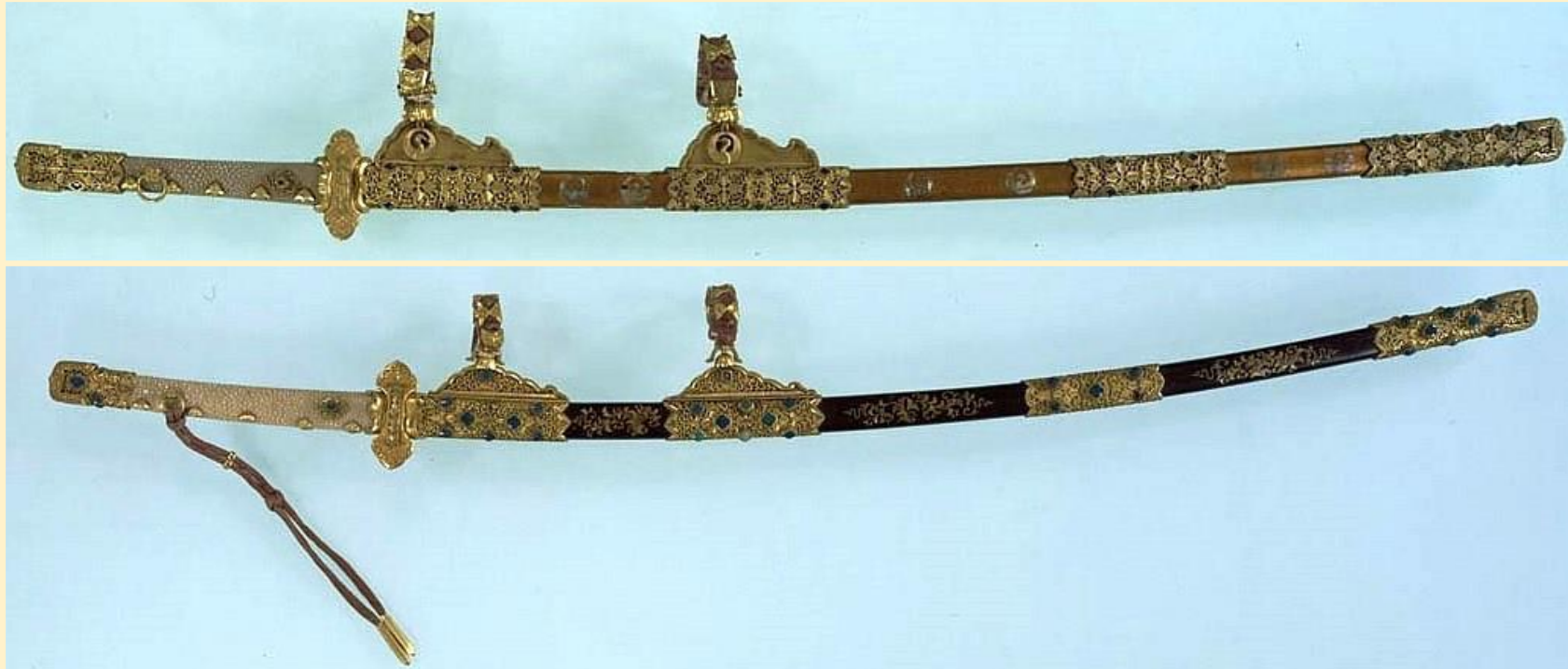
Tachi illustrations (1/3)

The formal tachi types include: *itomaki no tachi* (糸巻太刀), *efu no tachi* (衛府太刀), and *kazari-tachi* (飾太刀)

The most formal sword – the *kazari-tachi* or *efu no tachi* worn with the *taireifuku* (most formal court dress) – was reserved for those *bushi* with a rank which allowed them to participate in ceremonies and festivities of the imperial court.

The *kazari-tachi* mountings of the Heian period were kept quite unchanged. These mountings were lavish, usually decorated in gold and sometimes – precious/semi-precious stones. As that type koshirae was rather svelte, the sword inside was usually merely a metal tsunagi.

Kazari tachi



Tachi illustrations (2/3)

The *hosodachi* mountings of the Heian period were kept quite unchanged. A *kenukigata-menuki no tachi* could also serve as *efu no tachi* and there were also hardly any changes to the Kamakura-period model. The *efu no tachi* was worn with the most formal court attire.

Hosodachi



Efu-no-dachi



Tachi illustrations (3/3)

- The *itomaki no tachi* as ceremonial sword was based on the interpretations of the late Muromachi period.
- It was worn with formal court dress, armour or attire for falconry.
- The hilt and the upper area of the saya are wrapped with fabric. The saya wrapping is called watari-maki (渡巻) or also saya-maki (鞘巻) and covers the area between the two ashi-kanamono or from the sayaguchi to a couple of windings after the second ashi-kanamono. It is assumed that this interpretation combined several functions, namely to provide a better grip for the left hand when drawing the sword and to protect this area of the scabbard from the constant rubbing with the hip area of the armour. Anyway, the earliest itomaki no tachi had a highly practical character. Later on, from the Edo period onwards, the itomaki no tachi shared the destiny of the kenukigata-tachi before: it was raised to a ceremonial sword and acquired the same sophisticated scabbard decoration as other ceremonial swords, i.e. ikakeji, nashiji and makie.

Itomaki no tachi



Chiisagatana

- The term literally means “short/small katana”
- The official text of the **Bakugi-sankō** (幕儀参考) states:
 - “The chiisagatana can be worn with the formal dress of the reifuku or tsūjō-reifuku
 - The blade length measures between 1 shaku 5 sun and 1 shaku 8 sun (between ~ 45.45 and ~ 54.54 cm)
 - The furnishing is equivalent to a katana but is shorter
 - That means the sayajiri is straight as at the katana, it can be mounted with a mitokoromono (三所物), and the tsuba is basically smaller than a katana-tsuba. For the latter, an old iron tsuba or also a shakudō-tsuba can be used. The interpretation of the fittings corresponds to the taste of the wearer”.
- Regarding the mitokoromono, the document suggests in another chapter that a wakizashi should just be equipped with a kozuka only.



Daishō (1/2)

- The term daishō (大小) means literally “big and little” or “long and short.” It is composed of the abbreviations for “long sword” (daitō, 太刀) and “short sword”(小刀) and appears for the first time towards the end of the Muromachi period.
- The **Shinchō-kōki** (信長公記), the 16-volume chronicle on Oda Nobunaga’s life between 1568-1582, mentions: “***It became common to wear a daishō on the hip.***”
- And the Tōdai-ki (当代記) publication from the early Edo period mentions in an entry for the fourth year of **Tenshō (天正, 1576)** a ‘kinsaku no katana daishō’ (金作ノ刀大小), i.e. a “**daishō mounted with gold fittings.**”
- But also terms like ryō-goshi (両腰) or moro-koshi (諸腰) were in use to describe a sword pair. They can be translated as “**the two on the hip**”
- For example the Shinchō-kōki mentions a ‘nagatsuka no tachi-wakizashi’, (長柄の太刀・脇指), ‘tachi/wakizashi with long hilt’ or a ‘kin-noshitsuke tachi-wakizashi’, 金熨斗付け太刀・脇指, ‘tachi/wakizashi with golden noshi application’. These entries list a tachi and wakizashi but we can clearly see the trend away from a tachi worn with any uchigatana or koshigatana (as sashizoe side sword), towards an en suite mounted pair of swords.

Daishō (2/2)

- The daishō became very popular in Edo period and various artistic interpretations existed. While daishō per se were not regulated bar the length of the swords, there were some requirements for the formal pair of mounts
- The ‘**banzashi-daishō**’ was the ‘regulated’ or formal pair: literally the term means about ‘**daishō worn during the rota**’
- It was a form of sword mounting for visiting Edo Castle and/or the shōgun in the course of the sankin-kōtai
- It had to fulfill the following characteristics:
 - The scabbard had to be lacquered black.
 - The hilts had to be covered with white same.
 - The katana-saya had to have a flat kojiri and the wakizashi a round one.
 - The kashira had to be of horn and the end of the black hilt wrapping had to be knotted atop of it.
 - Initially, the tsuba had to be undecorated (except a nanako ground and family crests) but later also golden shishi lions, dragons and floral motifs were allowed.
- The banzashi-daishō koshirae was also the “base mounting” for swords handed over as presents (kenjō, 献上), also the term kenjō-koshirae (献上拵) was in use during the Edo period; it was also called **kamishimo-sashi** (袴指).

Banzashi-daishō illustrations



Q&A