

Markus Sesko

KOSHIRAE-TAIKAN

擀大鑑

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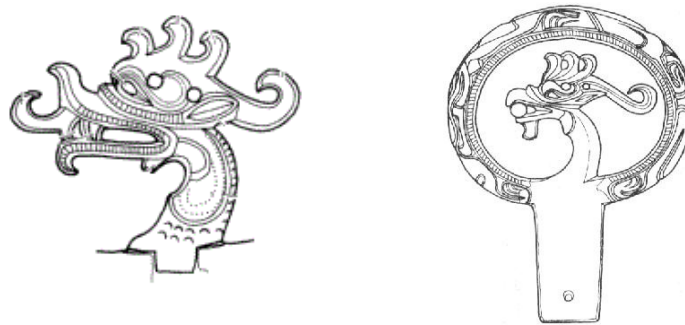
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c. *tan'ryū* type and d. *tan'hō* type:

This is the most common interpretation of *kantō* type swords. Here too, numerous different styles are known, for example the dragon or phoenix head can stand solitarily in a ring or the ring can form the neck or body of the “animal” and show scales or feathers, or even clouds. In most cases, the curve of the neck flows into the curve of the ring element.



Picture 11: Example of *tan'ryū* and *tan'hō* interpretations.



Picture 12: Schematic representation of a dragon head (left)
and a pommel of the type *tan'ryū* (right).



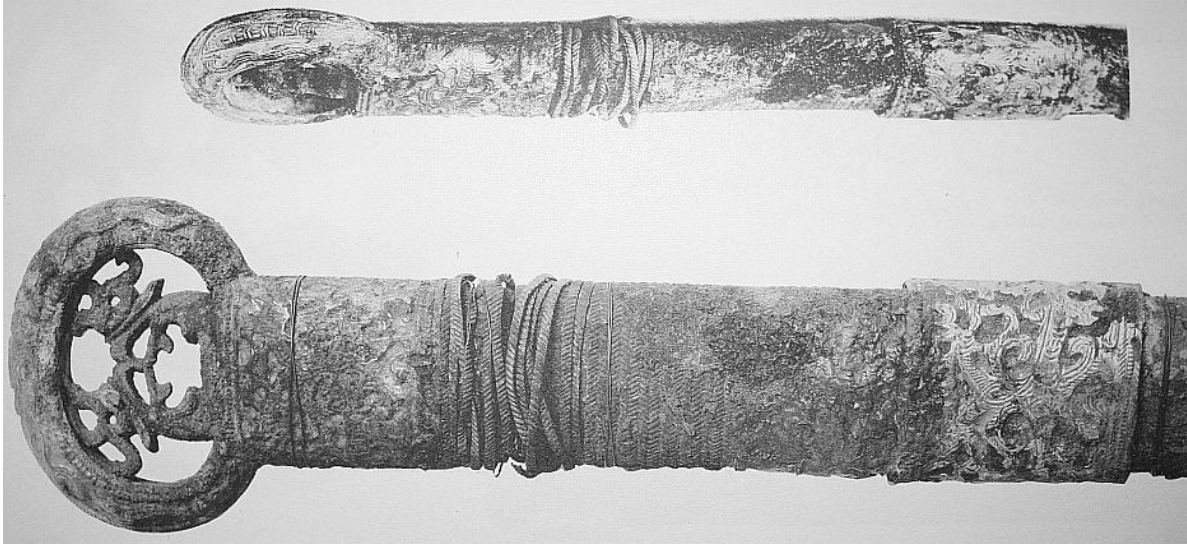
e. *sōryū* type:

Pommels of the type *sōryū* were found in quite sophisticated interpretations, not only in terms of craftsmanship but also in terms of aesthetics. The depictions range from highly stylized to “realistic” heads with details like facial expression and scales. It has to be mentioned that the open mouth of the dragon often looks like the beak of a bird and that the elements on the back of the the head which merge with the ring element frequently remind of a cockscomb. The ring element and the dragon head can also be accentuated by gildings. From the quantity and variety of excavated specimen we learn that this type of pommel was quite popular. And also a trend can be seen that many pommels differ noticeably from interpretations of the mainland, that means they were already made according to a peculiar Japanese taste.



Picture 13: Examples of *sōryū* interpretations.

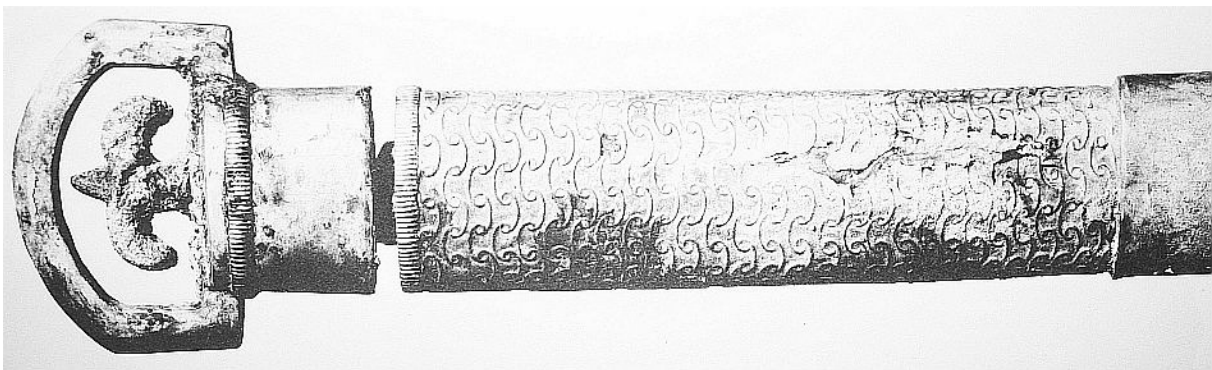




Picture 14: Picture of a sword with *soryū* pommel. Please note the lateral ornamentation of the pommel in the upper picture.

f. *san'yō* type:

The inner part of the pommel is interpreted here as a construct of three leaves. This kind of pommel is often found in South Korean excavations but is rare in Japan. Some specimen were found on Shikoku and the Kantō region. We know pieces from Korea with a silvered hilt cover and gilded leaves. Some like the one seen in picture 16 which was excavated in Saitama Prefecture show a triple leaf ornamentation and a gilded cuff towards the hilt which shows reliefs of a dragon design.



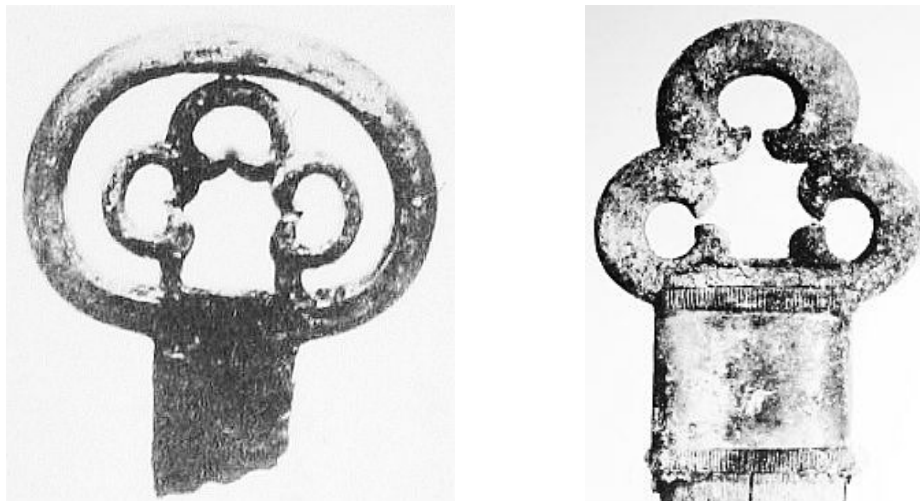
Picture 15: *san'yō* interpretation with an angular ring element and silvered hilt cover.



Picture 16: Pommel of *san'yo* type with sophisticated decorations

g. *sankei* or *sanrui* type:

At the *sankei* or *sanrui* type the outward ring element is often missing, either because it broke off or because it was made that way. But also the latter interpretations are classified as *kantō*. Findings on the Asian mainland have shown that the *sankei* or *sanrui* type was introduced to Japan via Korea. Some pieces who bronze or silver accentuations.



Picture 17: *sankei-kantō* with and without surrounding ring element

2.2 *kara-tachi* (唐大刀)

Regarding *kara-tachi*, i.e. literally “T’áng *tachi*,” the *Tōdaiji-kenmotsu-chō* differentiates between two types: First the “normal” *kara-tachi*, and second the so-called *kara-yō-tachi* (唐樣大刀). Experts assume that the former term was used for swords imported from the mainland and the latter for those made in Japan according to the mainland models. This assumption is based on the use of the character *yō* (樣) which means “style,” “way,” “manner” or “fashion.” But others assume that both sword types were made in Japan and the *kara-tachi* were those which were made and used exactly according to the T’áng ceremonial prescriptions and that *kara-yō-tachi* were already „japanized“ swords worn at inofficial court and other events which were not so strictly regulated. However, there are only three swords of that kind extant in the Shōsō’in and the experts of the Meiji-period inventory were not able to attribute to the supplement *yō* definitely to one of these specimen. Therefore the general term *kingin-densō kara-tachi* (金銀鈿莊唐大刀, lit. “T’áng *tachi* with gilded silver fittings”) was used.

Picture 38 shows one of these *kingin-densō kara-tachi*. It has very fine gilded silver fittings with crystal and lapis lazuli applications. The interpretation of the fittings is listed as *tsuzuragata-saimon* (葛形裁文) in the *Tōdaiji-kenmotsu-chō*, that means lit. “Kudzu shape in openwork design.” This is the old term of the later *karakusa* (唐草) for such arabesque designs. It is interesting that the fittings don’t show crystals or lapis lazuli applications on the reverse side to prevent a rubbing on the cloth of the wearer’s garment. Even it is a ceremonial sword, the hilt was equipped with finger depressions on the side of the cutting edge which speaks for a practical design. Such an interpretation is not found on T’áng-Chinese swords. The hilt itself is covered with *same* and is unwrapped. The *menuki* is a so-called *makoto-menuki* (真目貫 or 誠目貫) at which the metal peg forms one piece with the ornamental head piece. A white leather *kake* is mounted to the ring at the pommel and the cords attached to the *yamagata* fittings is of purple leather. The dark brown scabbard is decorated with subtle gold applications in the form of animals and plants. The *tsuba* is a so-called *kara-tsuba* (唐鐔), i.e. a *tsuba* based on the model of T’áng-Chinese swords.*⁹

*⁹ There was no special term for such a *tsuba* during the Nara period. Word creations like *kara-tsuba* or also *fundō-tsuba* (分銅鐔, lit. “*tsuba* in the form of a balance weight”) were introduced later.



Picture 38: Scabbard details of the *kara-tachi* top and modern reconstruction of the sword bottom.

Picture 39 next page: Detail of the upper section of one of the three *kara-tachi* of the Shōsō'in.



Picture 41 shows another *kingin-densō kara-tachi* of the Shōsō'in. Its fittings are not so elaborate as at the aforementioned sword but there is no difference in quality in terms of craftsmanship. The hilt is covered with white *same*, has depressions for the fingers, a leather *kahe*, and additional to the *makoto-menuki* four small so-called *tawara-byō* (俵鉾) along the cutting-edge side. The two *yamagata-gane* are equipped with a crystal each. The brown scabbard shows a subtle floral decoration with butterflies.



Picture 40: Modern reconstruction of the *kingin-densō kara-tachi* from picture 41.

Picture 41 next page: Detail of the upper section and *saya* ornamentation of one of the three *kara-tachi* of the Shōsō'in.



Let us now come to the changes of sword mountings. With the strengthening of the military aristocracy and their final coming-to-power as Shōgunate, an interesting development took place. Namely swords so far classified as war swords (*hyōjō no tachi*) were “upgraded” to ceremonial swords (*gijō no tachi*). In practical terms, sword forms like *kenukigata-tachi* and *hyōgo-gusari no tachi* were now worn at the highest ceremonies and festivities by members of the military aristocracy. This trend can also be observed in subsequent periods, for example the *itomaki no tachi* mounting of the warring Muromachi period became a ceremonial sword in the Edo period. But that means for our studies that we are quasi always “lagging behind,” i.e. we are in most cases only able to examine the extant showpieces of the upper class which were already further developments of their martial predecessors because most of the latter pieces were destroyed and did not survive in large numbers.

4.1 Further developments of the Kamakura and Nanbokuchō period

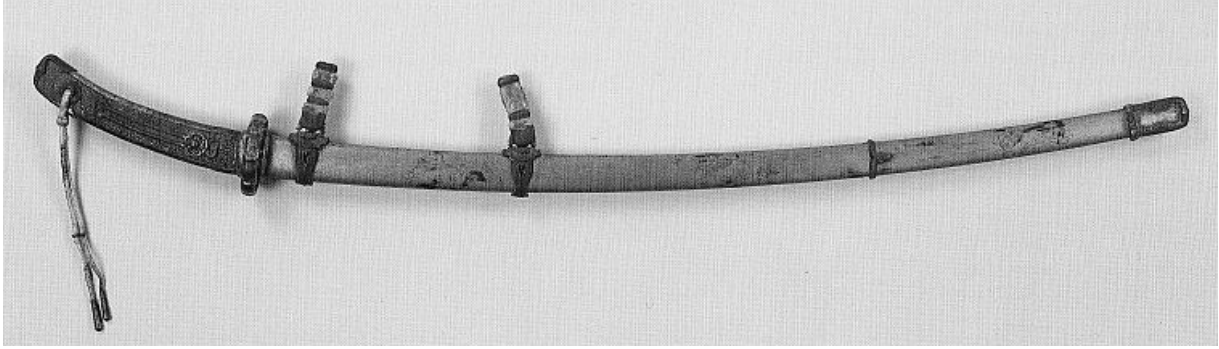
4.1.1 *kenukigata-tachi* (毛抜形太刀)

The *kenukigata-tachi* which emerged during the Heian period was occasionally still in use during the early Muromachi period (see picture 75), even if it had then as mentioned just a ceremonial function. Anyway, we know numerous portraits of important figures of the Kamakura period which are depicted wearing *kenukigata-tachi* (see picture 73) which speaks for the “arrival” of this weapon as status objects. With the transition to the Kamakura period we also see a change of this sword form, namely that some specimen did no longer have tangs and hilts with openings but a „normal“ hilt covered with *same* showing large *menuki*³⁵ in the form of a *kenukigata-tachi* openwork design. Swords of that kind are called *kenukigata-menuki no tachi* (毛抜形目貫太刀). They were still worn as ceremonial swords during the Edo period and a very early piece of a *kenukigata-menuki no tachi* is preserved in the Kasuga-taisha in Nara (see picture 74).

³⁵ So-called *ō-menuki* (大目貫) or *naga-menuki* (長目貫).



Picture 73: Portrait of Minamoto no Yoritomo (源頼朝) with a *kenukigata-tachi*.



Picture 74: *kenukigata-menuki no tachi* from the Kasuga-taisha. The bottom picture shows the detail of the hilt.



Picture 75: Rare example of a *kenukigata-tachi* from the early Muromachi period. Please note the noticeably thinner *kenuki* element. The tang was still opened but the hilt was of wood mounted with a gilded copper fitting. In addition, the inner surface of the hilt was decorated with *nanako* and gilded arabesques.

4.1.2 *hyōgo-gusari no tachi* (兵庫鎖太刀)

The *hyōgo-gusari no tachi* came through the Kamakura period quite unchanged. Picture 76 shows two pieces from that time. Please note that the small *tawara-byō* along the lower edge were kept too.



Picture 76: Two *hyōgo-gusari no tachi* from the Kamakura period.



Picture 76 a: *hyogo-gusari no tachi* with peony and *karakusa* ornamentation preserved in the Ōyamamizu-jinja (大山祇神社).



Picture 76 b: Three *hyogo-gusari no tachi* preserved in the Kasuga-taisha.



Picture 76 c: *guncho-mon hyogo-gusari no tachi* (群鳥文兵庫鎖太刀), *gō* “Uesugi-*tachi*” (上杉太刀).



Picture 76 d: *tsuba* and hangers of the Uesugi-*tachi*



Picture 76 c: Taishō-era interpretation of a flamboyant Kamakura-period *hyōgō-gusari no tachi*.



Picture 107: Two examples of an *itomaki no tachi-koshirae* from the Edo period.



Picture 107 a: More examples of Edo-period *itomaki no tachi-koshirae*.



Picture 107 b: Hilt details of two Edo-period *itomaki no tachi-koshirae*.



Picture 107 c: *watarimaki* detail of the *itomaki no tachi-koshirae* seen on the next page.



Picture 107 d: *itomaki no tachi-koshirae* to the *kokubō tachi* of Ryūmon Nobuyoshi (龍門延吉), once owned by Emperor Go-Mizunoo (後水尾天皇, 1596-1680). To the right detail of the brocade bag which comes with the sword.

***bakumatsu-koshirae* (幕末拵)** – General term for the rather practically oriented sword mountings of the *bakumatsu* era, i.e. from about Ansei (安政, 1854-1860) onwards. The *saya* is mostly lacquered black and the hilt wrapping in many cases white or cream.

***bashin* (馬針)** – lit. “horse needle”; was worn – if at all – instead of a *kozuka* or *kōgai* on the *saya*; the *bashin* was originally designed to ease a horses’ blood congestion after a very long ride by bloodletting; later the *bashin* had more an ornamental character and were mostly worn to a Higo-*koshirae*; the term *bashin* can also be read as *umabari*.



Picture 159: *bashin*

***chigo-zashi* (稚児指)** – Small ornamental sword which is worn by boys from the *bushi* class up to the age of six at certain festivities. The sword, or later in the case of a *daishō* the swords, had about half the size of “real” swords but the proportions were the same. A *chigo-zashi* mounted a real blade and the ornamentation of the *koshirae* depended on the rank and wealth of the family. This mounting is also called *inai-zashi* (祝指, lit. “worn to the festival”) (picture see next page).

***chin* (鎭)** – old, nowadays unusual work for *menuki*

***chōnin-sashi* (町人指)** – Edo-period general term for shorter swords worn by the bourgeois class (*chōnin*, 町人). Sometimes also the time *dōchū-sashi* (道中指, lit. “worn on the streets”) was in use.

***chūya-saya* (昼夜鞘)** – lit. “day and night scabbard.” A scabbard whose halves are differently lacquered. This form goes back to the middle Edo period when more and more wealthy merchants dared to show off their flamboyant short swords. For avoiding envy from lower-ranking and often young *samurai*, they turned the sword around in the belt so that the “simple” and unobtrusive, mostly monochrom side faced outwards.

***dashi-menuki* (出目貫)** – lit. “exposed *menuki*”; *menuki* which were placed for the most part above the hilt wrapping and which were just fixed with one cord going around on each side; *dashi-menuki* are also those *menuki* which sit centrally on the evenly wrapped area of a *katate-maki*

***dekiai-koshirae* (出来合拵)** – lit. “ready-made *koshirae*”; term for *koshirae* of the middle Edo period and later which mounted affordable blades and which could be bought at sword shops quasi „off the shelf“



denchū-sashi (殿中指) – lit. “worn in the palace”; At a *denchū-sashi-koshirae*, the *sayajiri* called *denchū-kojiri* (殿中鐙) or *o-meshi-kojiri* (御召鐙) becomes noticeably broader. This interpretation came into fashion amongst some *daimyō* who had their *wakizashi* mounted that way when attending at the inner part of Edo Castle where only short swords were allowed.



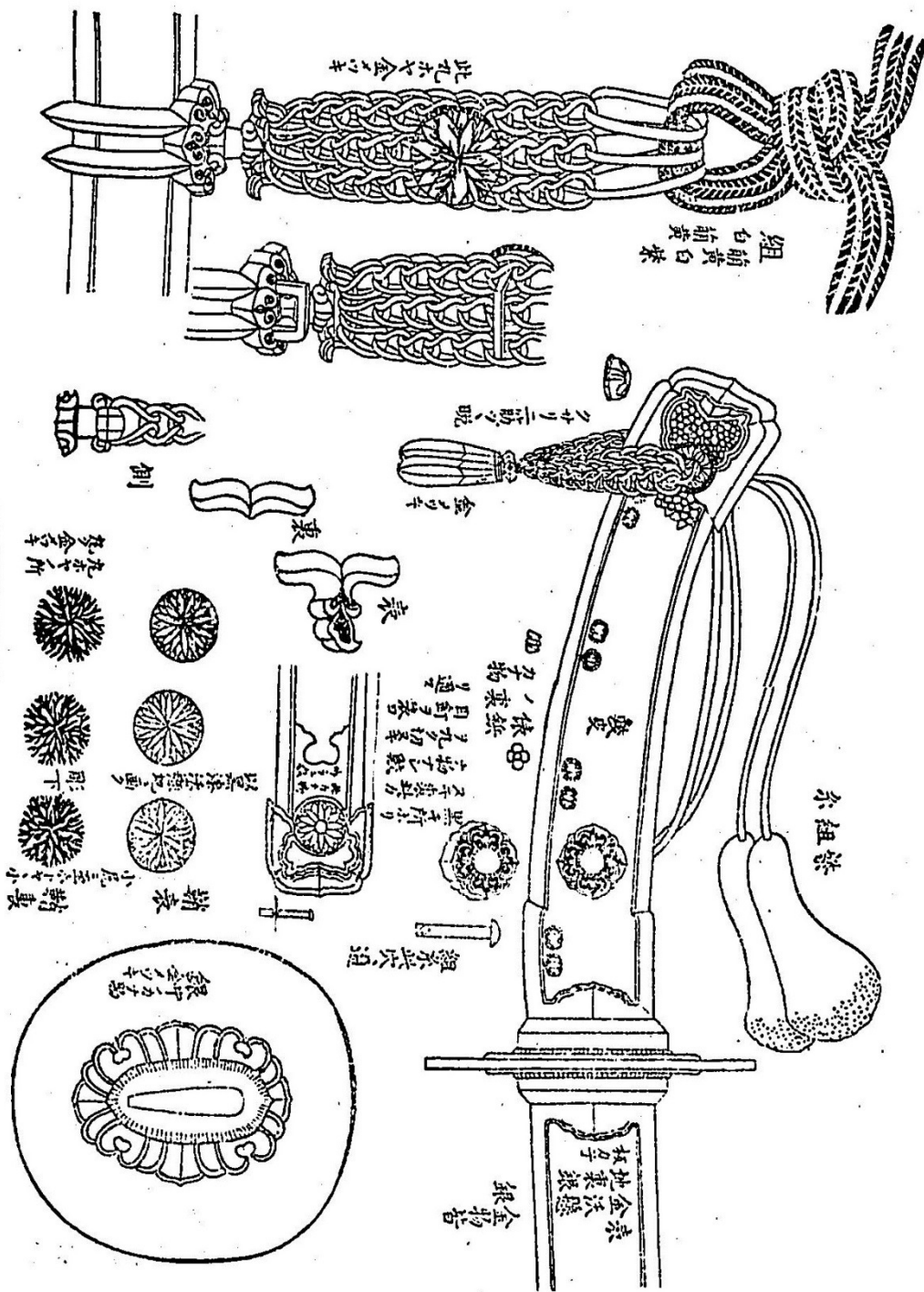
Picture 160: *daishō-koshirae* with a *denchū-kojiri*



Picture 160 a: *wakizashi-koshirae* with *denchū-kojiri*

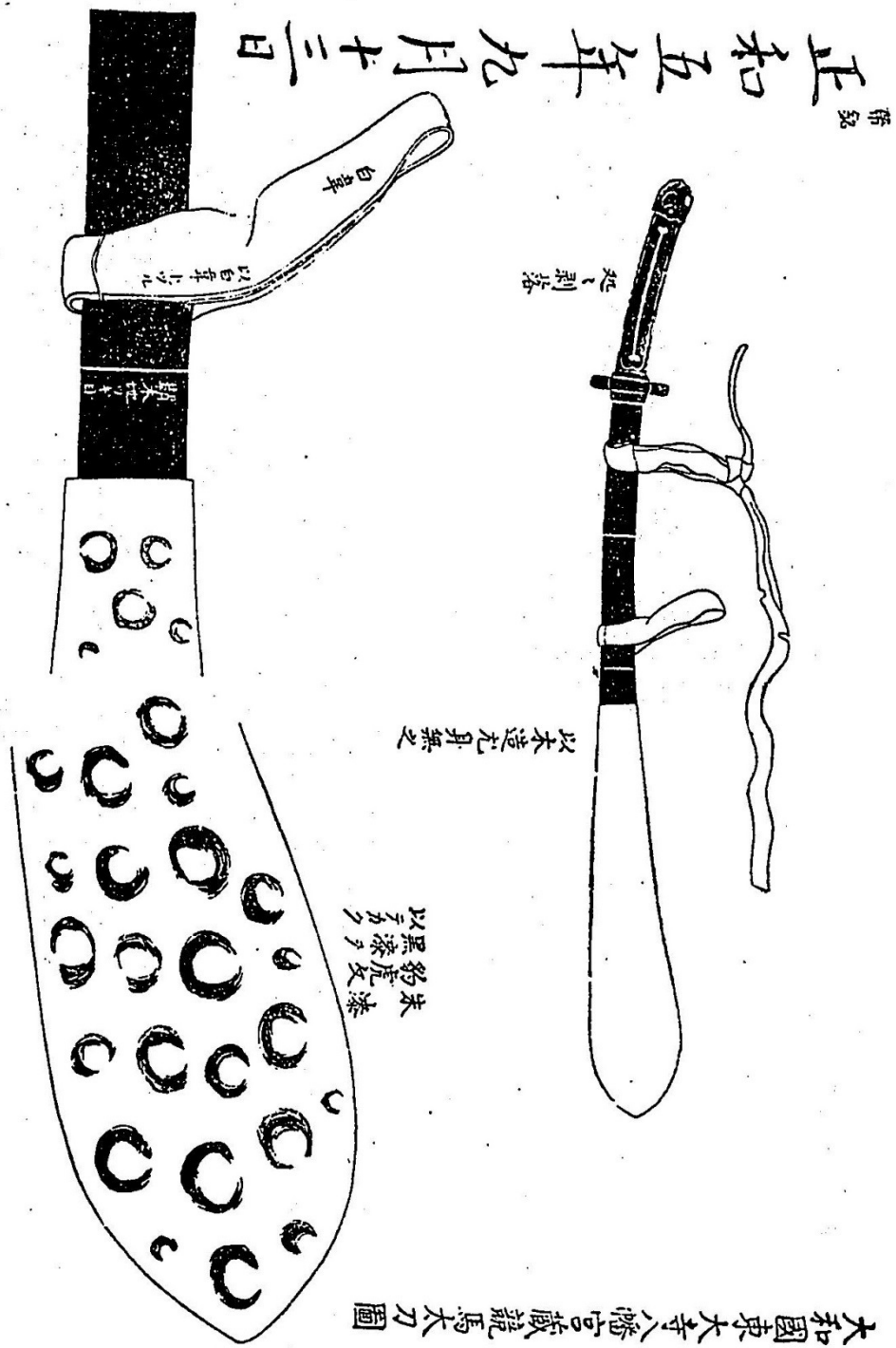


Picture 160 b: *katana-koshirae* with a *denchū-kojiri*



相模國鎌倉鶴岡八幡宮藏太刀金具圖縮圖二之卷三出

tachi fittings preserved in the Tsuruoka-Hachimangū, Kamakura, Sagami province.



A *kurabe-uma no tachi* preserved in the Tōdaiji-Hachimangū, Yamato province, belt dated Shōwa five (正和, 1314).