

忍辱鎧

Ninniku Yoroi

THE ARMOUR OF PERSEVERANCE




CEJAM

Centro de Estudios
Japoneses, Orientales
y Artes Marciales

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Contents

Introduction	5
Acknowledgements	7
Foreword	9

Chapter 1

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE ARMOUR	13
Ancient Japan (Yamato from 250 - 710 AD)	26
Nara and Heian periods (710-1185)	36
Kamakura period (1185-1392)	52
Muromachi period (1392-1568)	62
Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568-1600)	70
Edo period (1600-1867)	80
Ninja armour and equipment	92

Chapter 2

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JAPANESE ARMOUR	109
Geographic, historic and cultural factors characterised Japanese armour	

Chapter 3

THE COMPONENTS OF JAPANESE ARMOUR	117
Basic parts of Japanese armour	122
Oyoroï	126
Domaru	130
Haramaki	134
Tosei Gusoku	136
Wearing a suit of Japanese armour	138
Artisanal armourers and armour craftsmen	142

Chapter 4

CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS OF THE YOROÏ	149
Training with a Yoroi	150
Exhibition with Yoroi	160
A timeline of key events and developments in warfare in Japan's history	168
Bibliography	177

Introduction

In Japan today there are only a handful of authentic *kacchu shi*, or artisanal armourers, remaining who still make Japanese helmets and armour. Only those who are truly passionate about their craft have been able to continue this centuries-old tradition.

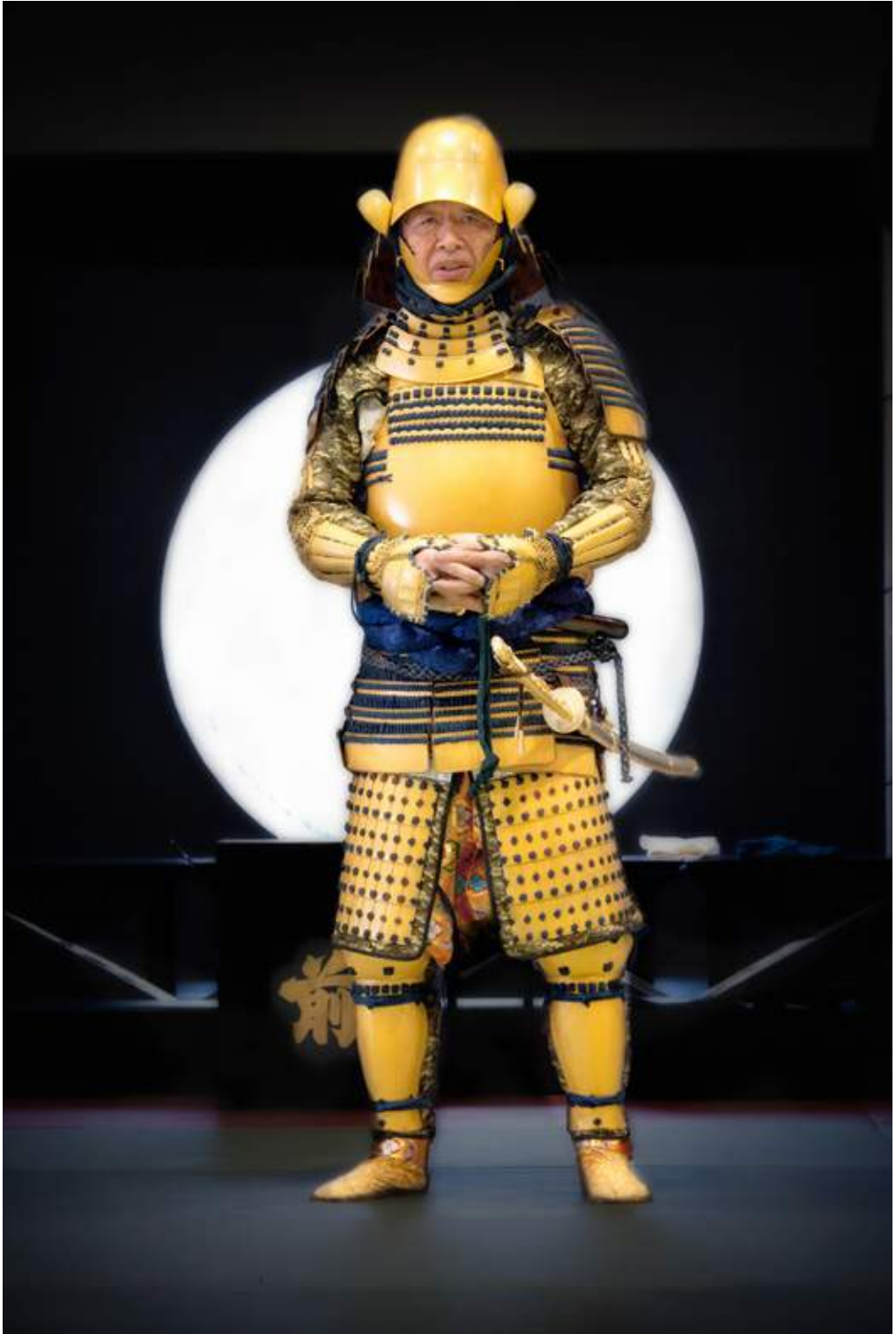
The repair and reconditioning of an old suit of armour can take up to a year of work, and simpler parts such as some helmets can take one or two months. Making a new suit of armour from scratch, which carefully replicates the ancient styles and features of the Heian, Kamakura or Muromachi periods, can take anything from three to five years.

First, cowhide is dried and cut into about three thousand small plates called *kozane* which are pierced with about fourteen holes, and then overlapped one by one until the entire armour is covered. They must then be joined together with silk thread in a painstaking process called *odoshi*. A minimum of three hundred metres of silk cord is usually used to braid a complete suit of armour.

Finally, the armour is decorated with different kinds of motifs such as dragons, dragonflies or plants, one of the most common being the chrysanthemum, which is the the national flower of Japan, and also the Imperial emblem. The armour is finished with a very careful lacquer called *urushi*, which, in addition to protecting all the pieces, gives them a spectacular aesthetic.

A true craftsman of Japanese armour produces work that is worthy of the highest honours and accolades; and this skill and artistry required by the *kacchu shi* throughout his life requires the utmost perseverance.

This new book *Ninniku Yoroi: The Armour of Perseverance*, seeks to provide an introduction to the fascinating world of samurai armour, along with a detailed exploration of the evolution of the design of these distinctive protective suits over the centuries. The Yoroi is examined not only from the perspective of their use in combat, but also as artifacts of artistic beauty and as expressions of power within the warrior Japanese warrior caste.



Foreword

Alex san has been studying and practising martial arts for a long time, and he is an excellent instructor. He is also an authentic warrior, a jissen-sha.

Sincerely, this is a marvellous book from a practical and cultural point of view.

Written by Masaaki Hatsumi, on the afternoon of Sunday 17 May 2020.

アレックスさんには長年日中、武道を
修業し、優れた武道の修業
者であり
又、実戦者でもあり、その
故に文化的にも実戦的にも
すばらしいといえることと
思っています。

A brief history

of Japanese armour





Late Yayoi period

2nd to 3rd century



Early Kofun period

4th to 5th century



Late Kofun period

6th to 7th century



Heian period

8th to 12th century

*“If your opponent is wearing
armour or thick clothing, attacking
kyusho alone will not be useful”.*

*“You must have an innate ability to
hit the kyusho while moving from
one technique to another”.*

Soke Masaaki Hatsumi





Ninja

ARMOUR AND EQUIPMENT





✓ *Soke Masaaki Hatsumi presenting ninja weapons and tools for television and print media articles.*



The characteristics of
Japanese armour

The geographic, historical and cultural factors
that influenced Japanese armour

The construction of

Japanese armour



Oyoroi 大鎧

吹返 **SHIKORO (FUKI KAESHI)**
Telescopic part of the helmet which protected the neck

居文 **KYOMON**
Engraved ornamental plate fixed to the shikoro

眉庇 **MABISASHI** - Visor

障子板 **SHOJI ITA** - Metal plates to protect the shoulders from impact

受緒 **UKE O**
Cord holding the sode

胸板 **MUNE ITA**
Chest protecting plate

大袖(馬手袖) **OOSODE / METE**
SODE - Right hand side shoulder/arm protector

梅檀板 **SENDAN ITA**
Right hand side protection plate for takahimo lacing and armpit

弦走 **TSURUBASHIRI** - Hide covering the front of the armour

馬手草摺 **METE NO KUSA ZURI**
Protective skirt (tassets) for the right thigh

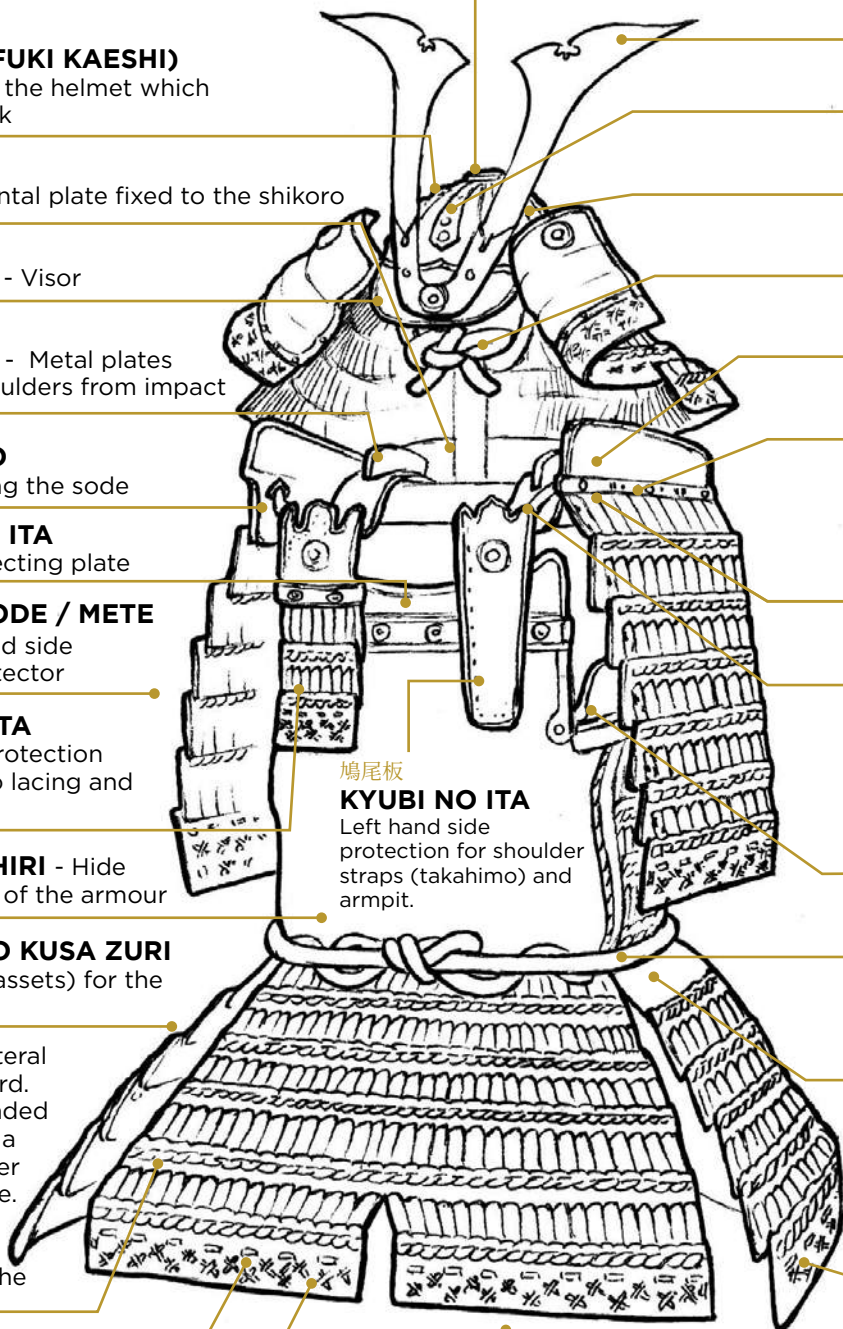
耳糸 **MIMI ITO** Literal translation: ear cord. Long strings threaded vertically through a fabric slightly wider than the odoshi-ge. This was used to connect the exterior items of the armour

畦目 **UNAME**
Horizontal braiding

菱縫 **HISHINUI** - Crossed knot

鳩尾板
KYUBI NO ITA
Left hand side protection for shoulder straps (takahimo) and armpit.

正面草摺 **SHOMEN KUSA ZURI**
Frontal tasset, thigh protector

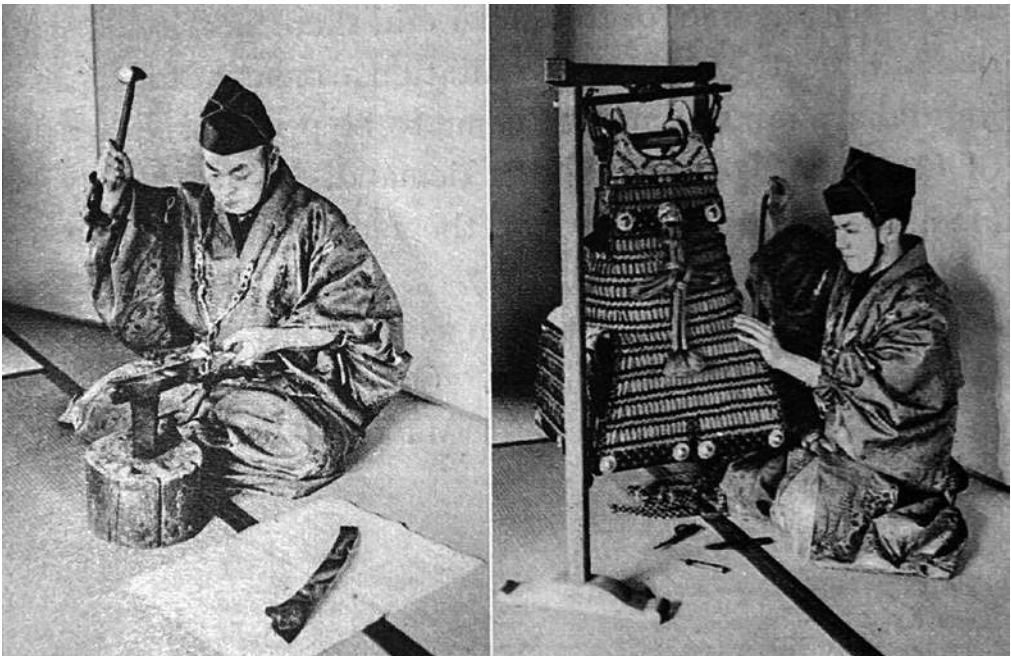


Artisanal armourers and *armour craftsmen*

Armour was made by skilled craftsmen who had to pay special attention to a few essential points in order to make good armour. Of course, the armour had to be robust and durable. At the same time, however, it had to be light, easy to wear and take off, and easy to carry and preserve. It was important that the armour was beautiful and brought dignity to its wearer. Furthermore, it had to adapt to the wearer's body during combat on the battlefield. All these points had to be taken into account when manufacturing armour.

Master armour craftsmen overcame these difficulties and succeeded in making armour that met all these requirements. These armour craftsmen are mentioned in documents before 1200 AD, but no particular names are given. The craftsmen of these magnificent works of art from the time of the Minamoto and Taira wars and the Kamakura period (1185-1392) are largely unknown.

It was not until the Muromachi period (1392-1568) that the names of the armour craftsmen became known. Among the armour preserved to this day, there are some from these periods that are engraved with the name of the armourer.



✓ *Armour craftsmen of the Myochin school, circa 1940.*

Contemporary applications

of The Yoroi





Exhibitions with Yoroi

On Saturday April 27th, 2017, members of the Bujinkan Dojo gave an embu at the Experience Japan festival at Farmleigh House in the Phoenix Park, in Dublin. This is an annual non-commercial event supported by the Office of Public Works, Dublin City Council and the Japanese Embassy in Ireland. In 2017, it was attended by 25,000 people.



古墳時代 Kofun Period

400 - 500



騎兵の成立(弓射騎兵)
Introduction of
horseback warriors
(mounted bowmen)

- ▶ **367** 百済の使者来る
Kudara (Baekje kingdom, Korea)
messengers arrive
- ▶ **391** 日本、百済(加羅)新羅を破る
Japan defeats Silla, Baekje (Gaja)
- ▶ **404** 高句麗好太王、日本を破る
Gwanggaeto the Great of Goguryeo
defeats Japan
- ▶ **479** 倭王武、鎮東大將軍の号を受けられる
Waibu receives the title of Seito
Taishogun
- ▶ **527** 磐井の乱
Iwai rebellion
- ▶ **587** 蘇我馬子、物部守屋を滅ぼす
Soga no Umako defeats Mononobe
Moriya

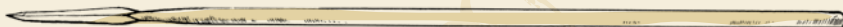
飛鳥時代 Asuka Period

600

- ▶ **592** 馬子、崇峻天皇暗殺
Soga no Umako has Emperor
Sushun murdered
- ▶ **593** 聖徳太子、推古天皇の摂政となる
Prince Shotoku appointed regent
by Empress Suiko
- ▶ **600** 隋に遣いを出す
Messengers sent to Sui (China)



鉄板甲(6世紀に消滅)
TEPPAN KO
Metal plate armour
(disappeared in 6th
century)



鉾-矛 HOKO
ancient spear



In this new work, *Ninniku Yoroi: The Armour of Perseverance*, Alex Esteve presents a journey through the history and evolution of Japanese armour, from its beginnings in ancient Japan in the Yamato period (250 AD - 710 AD) to the present day. This work, with more than 250 hand-drawn illustrations and photographs, is a starting point into the fascinating world of Japanese armour, from historical, anthropological perspectives, and also from the practical point of view of the most iconic of Japanese warrior castes: the samurai and ninja.

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