

### ***Tachi* Sword Signed “Masatsune”**

The Masatsune *tachi* longsword is one of the most prized treasures of Tsurugaoka Hachimangu and is designated a National Treasure. It was forged in the twelfth or early thirteenth century by a swordsmith named Masatsune in the western province of Bitchu (present-day Okayama Prefecture). Bitchu and the neighboring province of Bizen were famed for their high-quality iron sand and their tradition of steel craftsmanship. Masatsune was a member of the Aoe school of sword artisans, who were favored by the elite samurai and aristocrats of medieval Japan. The sword and its ornate mountings were dedicated in 1736 by Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684–1751), the eighth head of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled Japan from 1603 to 1867.

Dedicating swords to shrines was a popular practice among the warrior class, and was intended to increase the efficacy of one's prayers or to express gratitude to the deities. The Tokugawa made a number of such dedications to Tsurugaoka Hachimangu because of their deep respect for the Minamoto clan, the founders of the shrine and of the first warrior-led government in Japanese history. The Tokugawa conducted extensive repairs to the shrine and expanded it several times during their rule. This sword was donated to mark the completion of one such renovation project.