

***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). 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 Tokugawa shogun. 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 shoguns made several such donations 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.