

Sohaya no Tsuruki (*Tachi* Sword)

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) kept this thirteenth-century sword at his bedside during his final days. He asked that the sword be treated as if it were his body after he died. He intended it to symbolize his vow to protect his descendants, even in death. The sword was transferred to Kunozaan Toshogu along with his physical remains soon after his passing.

Until the final decades of the nineteenth century, the sword was kept in the most sacred part of the shrine. With the opening of Kunozaan Toshogu Museum in 1965, the sword was moved into the museum archives for safekeeping and display to the public.

Officially, the sword has no name, but it is commonly called “Sohaya no Tsuruki” after an engraving on the tang. The exact meaning of these engraved words is not clear, and the sword was not signed by its maker. However, the particular shape and style of the sword indicate that it was made by the Mitsuyo group of swordsmiths in Miike (now part of Fukuoka Prefecture), for this reason it is also known as the “Miike sword.”

Important Cultural Property