

### **Face Armor for a Horse**

This face armor is made of lacquered leather and is very light, weighing only about 400 grams. The smooth gold areas around the eye holes, the tip of the nose, and crest are gold lacquer. Vermilion lacquer was used for the rims of the eyes and the insides of the ears. The medallion at the top of the head is the Tokugawa family crest; it depicts three leaves of an *aoi* plant (*Asarum caulescens*), a type of wild ginger.

Given the decorations and lightness of the armor, it is likely that it was intended for parades and ceremonial use rather than battle. It was given to Kunozaan Toshogu Shrine as part of the possessions of Tokugawa Iemochi (1846–1866), the fourteenth Tokugawa shogun. Iemochi was a horse enthusiast, but it is not known whether any of his horses wore the armor.

The fiber on the forehead is yak hair. Samurai often wore helmets that depicted a strong animal or used something from that animal's body to symbolize their desire to have the same kind of strength. The yak hair here may have a similar meaning.