

Battle Jacket

Garments like this one were worn over a suit of armor to provide protection from the weather. This jacket is made of felted wool, which was imported from Europe. Battle jackets made in the Edo period (1603–1867) were modeled on similar European garments introduced to Japan in the sixteenth century, but the Japanese version often lacked sleeves and looked more like a vest. There is a portrait of the fourteenth Tokugawa shogun, Iemochi (1846–1866), wearing a garment resembling this one.

There are five red Tokugawa family crests on each of the jacket's lapels, as well as gold crests on the front of the jacket. The crests depict three leaves of an *aoi* plant (*Asarum caulescens*), which is a type of wild ginger. The emblem on the back of the jacket is the Chinese character for *aoi* written in an ancient script.

The garment is unlined, and the stitching is rather rough and uneven, indicating that either it is an unfinished item, or it was constructed quickly because it was needed immediately for battle.