

## **Toyoma Nostalgia Museum (Toyoma Kaikokan)**

The Toyoma Nostalgia Museum houses a valuable collection of historical items, especially objects related to the warriors who governed Tome in the Edo period (1603–1867). Its collection is the enduring legacy of the industrialist and philanthropist Watanabe Masando (1892–1975).

Watanabe was the youngest of five siblings born to a farming family in Toyoma (Tome's former name). He was a skilled businessman who held many influential positions throughout his lifetime, including president of a regional development company called Tōhoku Kaihatsu (now part of Mitsubishi Materials Corporation) and president of his alma mater, Meiji University.

Watanabe donated his collection of artifacts to the town of Toyoma for the founding of this museum, which opened in 1961. He also laid down three precepts:

- 1) Sincerity is the most important thing in life
- 2) Toyoma is our home

3) We must never forget to approach life from the perspective of a beginner

The current museum building, opened in 2019, was designed by the renowned architect Kuma Kengo, who designed the Noh Stage in the Forest (Mori Butai) in Toyoma and the Suntory Museum of Art in Tokyo. Locally sourced materials, such as the Toyoma slate used for the roof tiles, were emphasized in the museum's construction. The modern structure also evokes elements of Toyoma's past. For example, the right angles of the building are modeled on the sharp street corners of Toyoma's layout when it was a castle town. The extended eaves offer shade and shelter from the rain, mirroring the design features of traditional rural farmhouses, and the greenery on the roof tiles mimics the moss that thrives on thatched farmhouse roofs.

The first sight to capture visitors' attention in the entrance hall is a lavishly

decorated festival cart used in Toyoma's Aki Matsuri, an autumn festival dating back to 1675. Next is a video of Kuma explaining how local

craftspeople and materials are central to the museum's concept. Through the windows, the extended eaves of the roof block out the view of the sky but draw attention to the sunny garden. In contrast, the rooms of the main collection are darkened as though they are inside of a storehouse. This darkness makes the exhibited items stand out. Panel displays give context to the artifacts by tracing the history and hierarchy of the Date and Shiraishi families, who governed the region in the Edo period.

The permanent collection features rare and valuable items pertaining to Toyoma's history. Among the highlights are swords and suits of armor, such as the black-lacquered five-piece suit of iron armor that belonged to Shiraishi Munezane (1553–1599), a retainer of the Date family. The helmet of this largely blue and black ensemble is decorated with calligraphy of the character 也, meaning "to be," rendered in flowing, elongated strokes. Among the many pieces of artwork is a painting that depicts a poem by the powerful warlord Date Masamune (1567–1636) with calligraphy by the esteemed Buddhist priest Kōgetsu Sōgan (1574–1643), and a painting by Kanō Tan'yū (1602–1674), one of the foremost painters

of the Kanō school. Special exhibitions explore various aspects of the region's history, offering visitors many insights into Toyoma's past.