

Ninja Tools

Digging implements (*kunai*)

The ninja wedged *kunai* into gaps between stones to help them climb walls.

The trowel-like iron tools were also used for digging holes or stuck into the ground to secure ropes, which were tied to the loops on the handles. *Kunai* are 45 to 60 centimeters long.

Gimlets (*tsubogiri*)

Tsubogiri are made of iron with an oak wood handle and are 18 centimeters long. They come in two styles, small (iron part, 4.5 cm; handle, 13.5 cm) and large (iron part, 6 cm; handle, 12 cm). The ninja used them to make holes in doors so they could reach in and unlock them.

Foot spikes (*makibishi*)

Makibishi are objects made of interlocked pieces of iron or bamboo, with 6-

centimeter spikes. The ninja would scatter the *makibishi* on the floor when entering a house. Since people did not wear shoes indoors, this was an effective way of slowing down pursuers while the ninja made their escape. They have holes in the spikes and can be strung together. Ninja would also attach the *makibishi* to a rope, dragging them behind to trip up enemies.

Grappling hooks (*kaginawa*)

Kaginawa is a grappling hook with two or more spikes fastened to an iron ring and attached to a hemp rope around 4 or 5 meters long. The ninja threw the hooks up to help them climb stone walls and reach other high places, as well as to descend. They also used the hooks to restrain people after capture or to secure doors to prevent others from entering.

Medicine cases (*inro*)

An *inro* is a series of small boxes set in a case covered with lacquered wood or washi paper. The boxes are secured with string passed through holes on either side, which can be attached to a kimono sash to make the *inro* easier

to carry. The ninja used *inro* to carry herbal medicines, including one to ease stomach pain, while on important missions.

Writing implements (*sekihitsu*)

The ninja carried this portable writing set with them on missions so they could record important information. They stored a fine brush inside the handle and kept ink and cotton in the container.

Cloth (*tenugui*)

This length of cloth was colored with sappanwood dye and used by the ninja in various ways: around the neck or as a headband to absorb sweat; to cover their faces; to extend the length of their kimono belts; or to help pull themselves up when climbing.

Five-colored rice (*goshikimai*)

Preparation: The ninja would dye rice using edible pigments to produce

blue, yellow, red and black grains, along with white. Working in groups of four or five, the ninja would drop the colored rice as a way of leaving directions for their comrades who were following behind. The ninja would also leave rice at points along roads to help them find their way back home, and they would use the rice to create codes that they had devised in advance. A specific meaning would be assigned to each color; for example, blue rice could mean “turn right,” red rice “turn left,” and so on.