



# Tsutsumi Production Inc.

Princess *Kuwa*, hime-kuwa, the result of 100 years of  
development  
originated from the sword smithcraft tradition of Aizu.

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# History of Tsutsumi Production



Based on the technique developed by successive masters from Kanesada the Tenth to Kanemitsu the Third, the foundry started its smithing operation on the premises where Miyoshi Nagamichi had originally worked as a sword maker.



It was in 1954 when Endo Akira was adopted as husband for a daughter of the Tsutsumi family whose forefathers had been renowned iron smiths such as Kanesada the Tenth, Kanetsugu the First, Kanetsugu the Second, Kanemitsu the First, Kanemitsu the Second, and Kanemitsu the Third. When Akira was taken into the family, they were, as wooden clog makers, residing on the property bestowed upon Miyoshi Tohshiro Nagakuni, a master swordsmith, who had accompanied his feudal lord, Kato Yoshiaki, to the Aizu area upon the change of fief.

After Master Nagakuni had put the place in operative order in 1627, Nagamasa the First, then Nagamichi the First, had succeeded the workshop, its operation having lasted for 250 long years until the time of Nagamichi the Twelfth, who had to stop producing swords in 1876 as the law banning the wearing of swords had been issued. Nagamich the Twelfth, reputedly known far and wide during the late Tokugawa regime, then, shifted his business from sword making to tool making, fostering numbers of apprentices before its closure in 1888. The Tsutsumi family, after that, became clog makers and enjoyed a considerable success, but by the time Akira was married into the family in 1954, the paulownia clog business had been on the decline, thus the future prospect of the family economy was entrusted to the young groom' s resourcefulness.

Although blacksmith business was also dwindling in those days, a flash of inspiration eventually led Akira to a revolutionary invention of a stainless steel *Kuwa*, named "Hime-kuwa" later on, the chief product of the foundry which has been expanding its market all over the country to this day.





# The origin of “Princess Kuwa” (hime-kuwa)

Swordsmith Kanesada’ s hoe,the idea practiced even today.

An agri-treasure,princess *Kuwa* (hime-kuwa),the legendary hoe,  
now our brand-name.

The legend goes that in 1589 Lord Ashina Yoshihiro, the castellan of Aizu Clan then, lost in the battle of Suriagehara, and ran to the land of Hitachi. Princess Tsugu, however,left behind along with one of chief counselors, Tomita Ukon,together went into hiding. Under pretense of being a farmer’ s daughter,the princess had to take up a heavy hoe for tillage.

Unable to keep witnessing the noble girl’ s plight, the counselor secretly visited Kanesada, a swordsmith of the former lord, and asked the smith to make an exceptionally lightweight hoe for the princess. Kanesada applied sword-making skill to a farming tool, and thus created a splendid hoe, the fruit of his effort and soul being breathed into it.

The following year, a new lord Gamo Ujisato was appointed to govern the Aizu territory. Later, when the Lord Gamo was presented with a case that contained the hoe, he learned the occurrence and exulted at the story.As a token of his extolment, the lord dipped one hair brush into black ink and wrote a few words, with a lively stroke, on the lid of the container. The words read, “an agri-treasure, Princess *Kuwa*.”





# Craftsmen and their skills

The heart, the utmost importance for both the maker and the user.

That's why you see a heart mark hollowed out the flat blade.

The spirit of an iron smith lies in his single-minded focus in steel forging, unafraid of shattering fire sparks and oblivious to his burning skin.

Until some ten years ago Aizu used to be a place where a number of such smiths practiced their skills they acquired from their masters specializing in sword making. Tsutsumi Production is one of the few foundries that have continued to produce such agricultural tools, hoes exclusively. The craftsman mentality our ancestors passionately prized is still kept alive in our factory where each step is meticulously checked and evaluated throughout the entire procedure.

At work with the same spirit as those who use our *Kuwa*, we painstakingly handle each and every single hoe toward our best finishing touch.

As we know that "iron with use glows bright" . Our forefathers' shining spirit is the daily reminder to follow their creed and to further search for betterment.



# [ Main production steps ]

## 1. Welding



The processing method that started around 1936.

## 2. Forging



Forging basics : leveling, forming, spiriting ,  
breathing life into each piece of iron.

## 3. Whetting



The edge, its process of supreme importance,  
requiring a master skill to whet up to 0.1 millimeter in thinness.

## 4. Hardening



Iron heated at 1472°F (800°C) .  
The color of the heated iron tells its temperature.

## 5. Tempering



The precise moment must be detected.

## 6. Finishing



The stainless steel as bright as a mirror.





## 〈Hira-guwa〉

In our processing method, a stainless base metal is joined with two different types of steel from either side, namely, semi-steel and ultra low carbon steel, which results in optimal sharpness. This technology puts us beyond reach by our rivals.

It is designed to maintain the sharpness. The more frequently you use one, the sharper does its edge get through the friction against the soil.

As one saying goes, “Walk 8 miles, and you will see a hoe in a dissimilar form, “ there are roughly estimated several hundred types of varied hoes in Japan, each one suitably employable for each particular local climate and soil property.



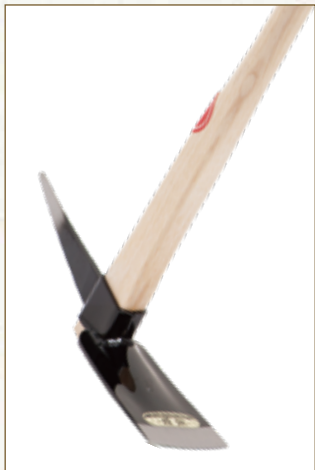
**hira-guwa**



## 〈Toh-guwa〉

This type is used to dig soil for tree planting and plowing. Its structure in which base stainless steel is sandwiched in the middle makes this hoe robust and sharp.

Compared to the hira-guwa, this toh-guwa is heavier, but, by plunging the tool into the ground, the heaviness can be advantageous when heavy soil is being dug up.



pickax



toh-guwa  
(large)



toh-guwa  
(medium)



toh-guwa  
(all)

## 〈Joren,〉

This tool is designed for tillage, earthwork, ditching, and home gardening.

( either with or without openings )



black joren,  
a hand scoop with openings,



black joren,  
a hand scoop without openings,



a triangular cutter,



## 〈A multifaceted heart-shaped hoe〉

A tool for effortless weeding.

The pointed tip makes a user feel easy to impale soil with little effort.

When the tip is placed deep into soil in a cutting fashion, not only thorough weeding, but plowing, ridging, and hilling up can be done as well.

It is multifunctional.



1. is the curved edge designed for even contact with soil. Pull it toward yourself, and the weed can be cut off.
2. is designed to cut weed in and around depressions, curbstones and protrusions. Rub the weed with this part.
3. is designed for digging work besides removing deep-rooted grass.

It is advised to keep the tools indoors after washing them up.



## 〈one-handed *sharpull*〉

Grass roots can be cleanly removed with little effort as if the roots were glided up. Weeding work can be done, of course, as with other types of *Kuwa*, but this particular product is much more powerful in digging out firmly rooted grass because of the teeth of the hoe.

A fruit of hard work by our master craftsmen, this product is born after total 42 steps of processing.



one-handed *sharpull* for weeding

## 〈The tree-planting ceremony〉

In 1979 we were honored to produce two special *Kuwa* for both Showa Emperor and Empress to use on the occasion of national tree-planting ceremony held in Aichi Prefecture.

The technical know-how we utilized in the making of those hoes can be experienced with our *toh-guwa* specifically produced for tree-planting ceremonies.



tree-planting *Kuwa*





# History



Beginning in the late Edo period, numbers of craftsmen were making a living as swordsmiths in Aizu.

In 1628 the Tokugawa shogunate assigned a change of fief on Lord Kato Yoshiaki, the castellan of Matsuyama Clan, who was then ordered to move to Aizu and govern this area. One swordsmith by the name of Miyoshi Toshiro attended on the lord and settled down in Koka-machi Town of Aizu, where he had a bestowed foundry with a frontage of 27 meters.

There was also a popular swordsmith named Nagamichi, reputed Aizu's master hand. His foundry flourished with his successors lasting for 12 long generations until it had to come to an end when the Meiji government enacted law that banned samurais from wearing swords in 1876.

Spanning over 300 years from the Edo to Showa periods, Aizu had a great number of iron smiths working, and, because of its sheer number and their exquisite blades, Aizu was acclaimed as "Kingdom of blacksmiths in the east."

