

PAN

AMSTERDAM

MANDARIN MANSION



Wakizashi mountings by Araki Tōmei

Iron, gold, wood, ray-skin, lacquer

65 cm

Signed Ginshōtei Tōmei

Kyoto, circa 1840-1870

Araki Tōmei (1817-1870) was a famous Japanese metal artist who made sword fittings. He was born in Kyōto in 1817 as the son of a rice trader. Born in the year of the ox, it was a custom for Japanese families to give such boys away to another family, so the rice business went to his younger brother. Little did he know, the art world was going to be better for it.

At age 13, he entered an apprenticeship with Gotō Tōjō (22) of the Kyōto-based Kenbei line of the famous Gotō metalworkers. Later, he entered an apprenticeship with Gotō Ichijō, one of the best metal workers of all time, who worked directly for the shōgun and imperial family.

Araki became very famous for his highly realistic three-dimensional representation of millets, for which he used special tools he made himself. He was a friend of the famous painter Hayashi Ranga with whom he studied painting.

Araki Tōmei was one of the best of his time and is a highly sought-after maker by seasoned collectors. We mainly find boxed (unmounted) sets with menuki, kozuka, tsuba, etc. Among those, the ones made with a shakudō base are the most common, iron ones much less so. Complete koshirae sets mounted with an en-suite set of his fittings, like what we have here, are almost unheard of.