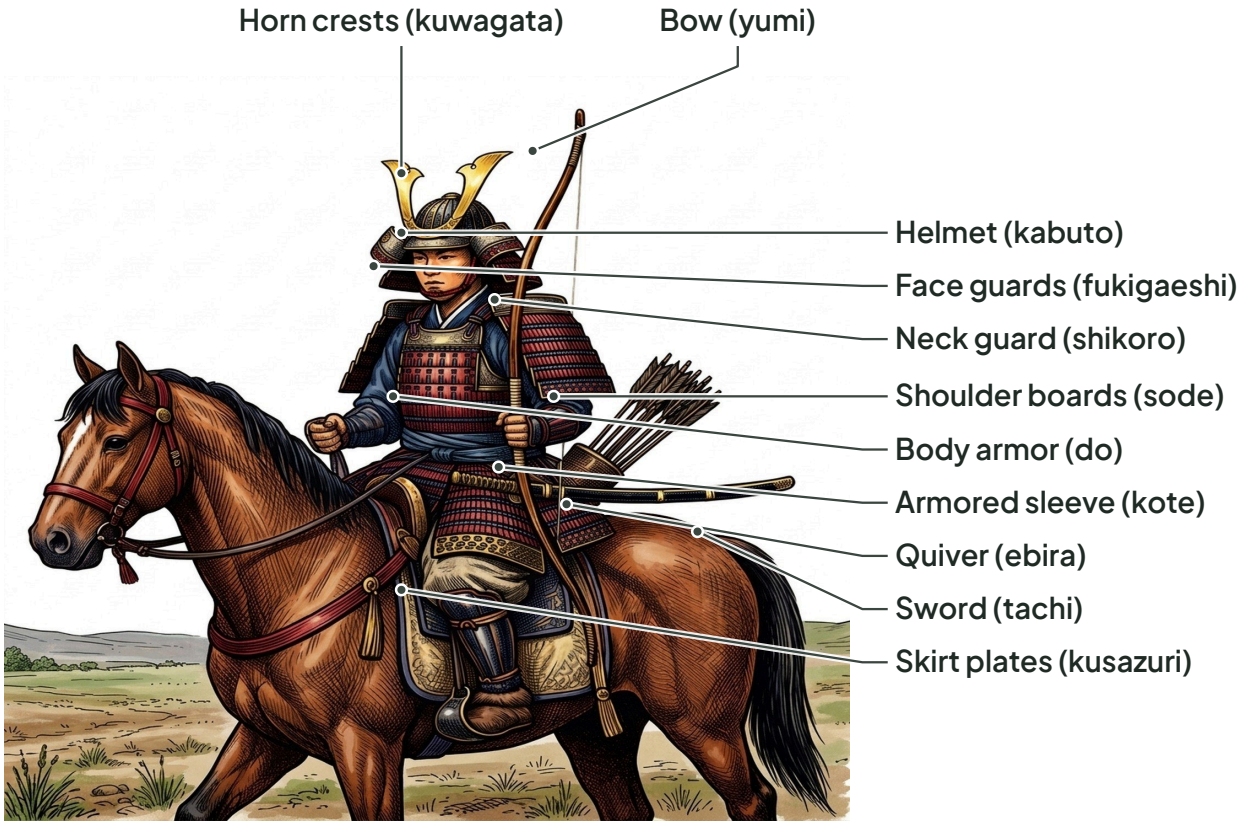
SAMURAI ARMOR ABOUT 1274

When the Mongols landed in 1274, samurai rode out in o-yoroi, “great armor.” It was made for archers on horseback. Hundreds of small scales of iron and leather were lacquered and laced together in rows with silk cords. The laced rows bent as the rider twisted to shoot, and with a bow in one hand and the reins in the other he carried no shield. A full set could weigh about 20 to 30 kilograms (45 to 65 pounds). A long curved sword called a tachi hung edge-down from cords. By the 1500s, armor looked different.



THE PARTS

Helmet (kabuto) A domed iron helmet made of plates joined with rivets.

Horn crests (kuwagata) Two flat gilt crests on the front, worn by leading warriors.

Neck guard (shikoro) Rows of laced plates flaring out to guard the neck.

Face guards (fukigaeshi) The neck guard’s top edges, turned back beside the face.

Shoulder boards (sode) Big flat boards of laced plates that worked like shields.

Body armor (do) A boxy coat of small scales laced together in rows.

Skirt plates (kusazuri) Four hanging panels that guarded the hips and thighs.

Armored sleeve (kote) A sleeve with metal plates, on the arm that holds the bow.

Bow (yumi) A tall bow of wood and bamboo, gripped below the middle.

Quiver (ebira) A frame on the hip and back that held the arrows.

Sword (tachi) A long curved sword hung edge-down from cords.