

NIHONTO NEWSLETTER

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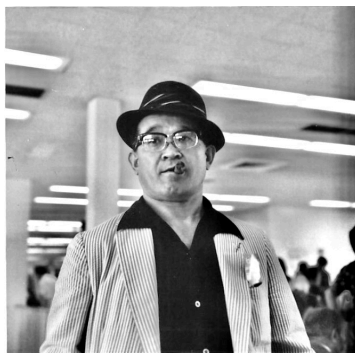
ALBERT YAMANAKA'S NIHONTO NEWSLETTER

Albert Yamanaka's Nihonto Newsletter was published monthly from January, 1968 to July of 1973. It was a mimeographed newsletter consisting of articles written on all aspects of Japanese swords: swords, schools, smiths, history, exhibits, appraisal, comments on collecting, etc.

Albert Yamanaka lived in Japan after the war and became a student of Honami Koson, the most prominent sword expert at the time and a descendant of the Honami appraisers and polishers.

Since this newsletter has been out of print since 1973, and there is a considerable amount of original and unique material presented in it, the Yamanaka family (which has the copyright to this material) supported this effort to make the Nihonto Newsletter available again in an online easily accessible version. We hope old and new collectors will enjoy reading it, and reading material that is often not available in English, even today.

Leon Kapp



**ALBERT YAMANAKA
1973**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SWORD SMITHS	
Izumi Province, Kaga Shiro School	3
Settsu Province, Nakajima Rai School	4
Iga Province, Munechika	5
Ise Province, Muramasa School	6
Owari Province, Kunitsugu	10
Mikawa Province, Nakahara School	11
KYOHO MEIBUTSU CHO	
Suruga Masamune	14
Nakatsukasa/Kuwana Masamune	15
Ikeda Masamune	16
Ishida/Kirikomi Masamune	16
FAMOUS SWORDS, KOKUHO	
No. 30, Masamune: Kanse Masamune	18
No. 31, Masamune: Hyuga Masamune	18
No. 32, Masamune: Kuki Masamune	19
No. 33, Masamune: Hocho Masamune	20
No. 34, Masamune: Hocho Masamune	21
IDENTIFICATION OF NIHONTO THROUGH SHAPES: YOSHINO PERIOD, Part 2	22
PUBLICATIONS	
Shumi no Menuki	26
PRICE LIST FOR SWORD CARE ITEMS	27

SWORDSMITHS

IZUMI PROVINCE

Izumi Province, like Kawachi Province, did not produce very many sword smiths at all. The only group mentioned is the school called the Kaga Shiro school which flourished from about the mid-1300s to about the end of the 1400s. The founder is Mitsumasa who is said to have been the student of Narichika of Hoki Province.

Mitsumasa was active around the Joji era and he had three students who were active around the Oei era.

The Kaga Shiro group was about the same as the Kongobei group in skill, so they are regarded to have been a poor group of sword smiths.

The school's smiths were:

MITSUMASA, 光正 Joji Era
YOSHIMASA, 吉正 Oei Era
SUKETSUGU, 資次 Oei Era
SUKETOSHI, 資利 Oei Era
SUKEMASA, 資正 Oei Era
SUKETSUGU 資次 Bunan Era
TOMOTSUGU 友次, Kakitsu Era
MASAKIYO, 正清 Oei Era
KANEZANE, 包真 Kyoroku Era
YOSHINORI, 吉則 Bummei Era
YOSHISHIGE, 吉重 Chokyo Era

Shape and Construction:

Katana shape with a sunzumari length (a little short). Hontsukuri and shobu tsukuri style or unokubi tsukuri, and all styles are seen in wakizashi lengths.

Hamon:

In nioi with and o-midare, yahazu midare or in chu-suguha with komidare. There will be Mura nie, and the hamon edge or border will be sharp, pointed or with jagged edges. Also, there are some works in hitatsura, but without nie, in contrast to conventional hitotsura work.

Boshi:

Komaru which is somewhat low or narrow. Sometimes there is an o-maru with a long kaeri. Other boshi will be midarekomi with different patterns on each side.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel will seem "very hard" and the hada will be ko-mokume hada with prominent masame hada

Nakago:

Short with a kurijiri tip or kengyo tip. The file marks will be katte sagari or suji chigai. Some works are signed with two kanji and others have long signatures.

TANTO:

Tanto are mostly hiratsukuri and sunzumari (less than 8.5 sun) and with sori. Some are josun (about 8.5 sun) takenoko sori. The hamon in most cases is chu suguha lacking nie, and similar to the hamon in the longer blades. The hamon edge or border will have sharp, jagged features.

The jitetsu is ko-mokume hada with masame hada. Sometimes we see moroha tsukuri tanto.

SETTSU PROVINCE

The history of sword making in this province dates back to the dark (early) period of Japan, and it is said that Emperor Jimmu, the legendary first emperor (or so the Kojiki tells us) made his landing here in his quest for control of the islands.

Due to the reason that it was right next door to Yamashiro Province as well as as Yamato Province in which there were a number of sword smiths active, Settsu's history of sword making is not very old.

The oldest school is the Nakajima Rai school whose smiths came to Osaka from Kyoto from the Yamashiro Rai school.

THE NAKAJIMA RAI SCHOOL

KUNINAGA 国長, Gentoku Era, Student of Rai Kunitoshi

KUNINAGA 国長, Keian Era

YOSHIKUNI 善国, Keian Era

MUNENAGA 宗長, Oei Era

YOSHIFUSA 吉房, Oei Era

TOMOUJI 友氏, Oei Era

KUNIYASU 国安, Kemmu Era, son in law of Awajiro Rai Kunisue.

TOMOTSUNA 友綱, Oei Era, worked in Nakajima

YOSHITSUNA, 吉綱 Oei Era, -worked in Nakajima

YOSHIUJI 吉泚, Oei era, Worked in Tenoji

KUNIYASU 国安, Koji Era, worked in Hyogo

HASEBE KUNISHIGE 長谷部国重, Oei era, worked in Tenoji

Rai Kuninaga established himself in the Nakajima section of Naniwa (Osaka) in Settsu Province, and thereby came to be called Nakajima Rai.

Kuninaga is said to be a son of Awajibo Kuniyasu and was the brother of Rai Kunitsugu. It has been said that the Awajibo were sword smiths in Awa Province, however, this has been proven not to be so. The name refers to Awaji No Sho of Settsu Province.

In describing Nakajima Rai Kuninaga's work, everything is exactly the same as the work of Rai Kunimitsu except that it is slightly inferior.

In cases, Kuninaga made swords with less common shapes such as shobu tsukuri, naginata tsukuru, and unokubi tsukuri.

His works are usually signed Rai Kuninaga.

Regarding the other Nakajima Rai sword smiths, they are considered to be poorer versions of Kuninaga's work, and therefore, when compared to Rai Kunimitsu's work, they fall short of the regular Rai blades of Yamashiro Province.

The same can be said for Hasebe Kunishige who worked in Tenoji.

IGA PROVINCE

MUNECHIKA

Munechika was active around the Kemmu Era, during the early Yoshino period. He worked in Otowa 音羽, a village in Ao Gori 阿拝郡 in that province.

It is believed that Munechika came to Iga Province from Yamato Province following the Ouchi who came to rule that province.

In the present day Otowa Mura in Ayama Gun, there are the remains of a house in which Munechika is said to have lived in.

Iga Munechika is often mistaken for Munechika of Sanjo in Yamashiro Province, however, as we can see from the dates there is no connection between these two sword smiths other than the fact that their names are exactly the same.

MUNECHIKA 宗近

Worked in Yamashiro and Yamato traditions.

Shape and Construction:

Made tachi in the style of the mid-Kamakura period, although the overall shape of the blade seems as though it has been made on a slightly smaller scale.

The shinogi ji is narrow, and the shinogi line is high.

The blade is thick and the mune is either mitsu mune or marumune.

Hamon:

The hamon is in nie with a chu-suguha pattern. There is no hataraki or activity inside of the hamon. The edge or border of the hamon will have hakikake, uchinoko and nijuba, although it lacks nie. Ko-gunome hamon are also seen.

Boshi:

Komaru

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel will seem weak or unrefined. The hada is mokume hada with masame hada in places.

Nakago:

The nakago is short with a kurijiri tip, or with a slight ha agari tip.

The file marks will be sensuki or katte sagari.

Sometimes the file marks on the shinogi ji will be kiri, and on the hira, suji chigai. Inscriptions are made with two characters.

I

ISE PROVINCE

The grand Shrine of Ise is located in this province and this may have been the reason for the fact that there were no sword smiths here in ancient times. For this same reason, there were no great battles fought in this province.

It is only after the Yoshino Period that the entire country was turned into a battle ground that we see sword smiths starting work here. The Muramasa school was located here.

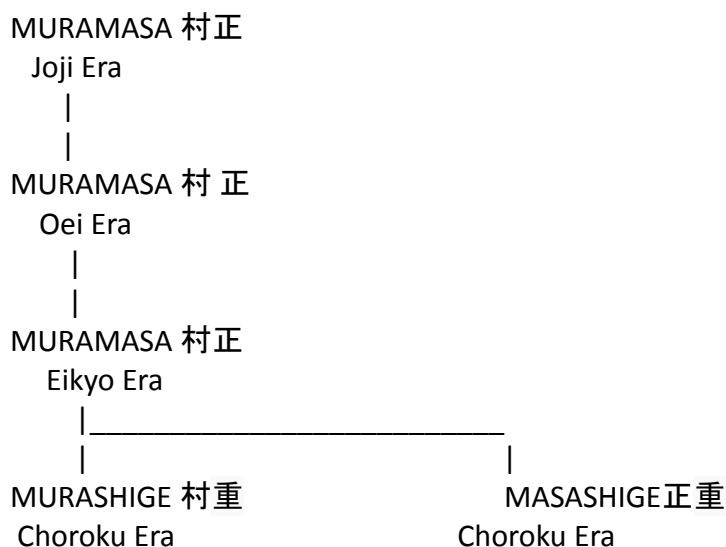
Muramasa along with Masamune and Munechika of Sanjo are names known to those who have no knowledge of Nihonto, and these three smiths have been the subjects of many dramas and plays.

It has been said that once a Muramasa blade leaves its saya, it never returns to it unless it first draws blood. In another sense this tells us of the great cutting ability of Muramasa blades.

There have been many theories regarding Muramasa, however according to Honami Koson, the first Muramasa worked around the Oei Era (1394-142) or thereabouts. Muramasa is said to have been a student of Heianjo Nagayoshi 平安城長吉 and this is understandable since there are great similarities between the works of these two smiths.

According to some old texts, the Muramasa geneology is as follows:

Geneology scheme A:



Geneology, Scheme B:

Such tales are still believed by many in Japan today.

We are quite certain that Muramasa himself never made his blades with these intentions, however, many incidents associated with Muramasa blades all have had their part in bringing about these tales.

The most famous of the many incidents are associated with the first Tokugawa Shogun, Ieyasu, his father Hirotada, and his grandfather Kiyoyasu, all of whom had been cut or injured by a Muramasa blade, and as the result of this, Tokugawa Ieyasu decreed that blades by Muramasa were taboo to the Tokugawa family, and forbade any of his retainers from owning or carrying a Muramasa blade.

This is one of the main reasons that there are very few blades with a Muramasa signature, since his blades had their inscriptions erased or altered due to the Tokugawa decree. In looking at a Muramasa blade, one never sees anything evil about it nor anything supernatural about it, it is just another nihonto with a particular hamon that is a Muramasa. If anything, this hamon may have made some contribution to the Muramasa blade being different from others, for this type of hamon design is not seen on any other sword smith's work prior to Muramasa.

A description of Muramasa blades is:

MURAMASA 村正 初代, first generation

Worked in the Soshu tradition with the addition of the Mino tradition.

Worked in Sengo Village in Ise Province.

Was a student of Heianjo Nagayoshi.

Shape and Construction:

Katana shape of the Sengoku Period with a koshi sori impression that is a little stronger than torii sori. The overall appearance or impression of the blade is very strong, but at the same time it is graceful. Hira niku will be lacking, the shinogi is high, and there are many blades which will have very thin mune. The kissaki is slightly longer than usual for the period, and roundness at the fukura will be lacking.

The mune is high and it is either mitsumune or ihorimune.

Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi or futatsuji hi are seen on occasions, as well as kuichigai hi. Ken are seen sometimes which are longer than the ones usually encountered. Sometimes, kenmaki ryu in a gyo style, tokko tsuki ken, and bonji are seen.

Hamon:

The hamon is made primarily in nioi with the width of the Hamon showing extreme variations. The design of the hamon will be about the same from the base to the tip, and this is especially notable at the yakidashi where the design of the hamon is exactly same on both sides.

The hamon, at a glance, gives the sword the appearance of being a very sharp instrument. There will be hako midare, and between two hako midare waves, there will be a notare. This is the important point to be on the lookout for on a Muramasa blade, and this is his trademark. Also, the valleys between the midare waves descend very close to the cutting edge. Also, if there are any ashi descending from the midare waves, these ashi will run into the cutting edge. One of Muramasa's great abilities is in his making o-notare hamon. This o-notare of Muramasa is a pattern peculiar only to him and it is not found on any other sword smith's hamon. The valleys of the notare hamon almost touch the cutting edge. Other types of hamon seen are yahazu midare or sambon sugi similar to that of Kanemoto of Mino province:

In the case of the sambon sugi pattern of Kanemoto, the three peaks of the midare are of uniform height throughout the length of the blade, whereas in the case of Muramasa, there will be one group of midare waves whose peaks will have a sambon sugi or group of three peaks, and the hamon then abruptly falls into a deep gorge or a valley. Then the next group may form a repetition of the previous midare pattern or it may form a hako midare pattern. On certain blades, there will be a koshiba (providing that the blade is ubu). This koshiba is formed of hako midare with the pattern of the hako or box waves being very square.

Muramasa's hamon are formed in a mixture of Soshu and Mino traditions in most cases, however, there are some that are made strictly in the Soshu tradition. However, in these cases, there will not be enough nie which is the primary characteristic of the Soshu tradition, and also the edge or border of the hamon, in almost all cases, will have the sharp or pointed peaks as previously mentioned.

One peculiarity of Muramasa hamon is that they are about the same in katana, wakizashi, and tanto.

Boshi:

Notare with the kaeri yoru.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel will appear very coarse and hard and the hada is mokume hada mixed with masame hada.

Nakago:

The nakago is short and stubby, and with a tanagobara style (fish belly) shape. Most of the inscriptions are two characters, however, sometimes there are long are inscriptions with dates.

Tanto

Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri with a length of about 9 sun or thereabouts.

Some tanto have a length of about 8 sun with a slight sori.

The blades are wide and hiraniku is lacking.

The fukura will lack roundness

The blades are thin.

The mune are ihori mune or mitsumune.

Sometimes we see unusually shaped tanto with a length of about 6 sun and with a very wide blade for the length. These blades can be very thick as well. Muramasa blades give one the impression of being very sharp instruments.

Hamon:

The hamon are exactly the same as those described for katana, although in shorter blades, the scale of the hamon design might be a little smaller to balance with the length of the shorter blade.

Boshi:

Most boshi are in a Jizo style with the kaeri having a midare style.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The jitetsu will give the impression of being "dull" and with o-hada showing in places.

Nakago:

The nakago are extremely short and stubby and have a tanago bara shape which is called a Muramasa nakago sometimes.

Inscriptions are in two characters in most cases, although longer inscriptions are seen on occasion.

Work by other Muramasa school sword smiths, such as Masashige, Masazane and a few other lesser sword smiths are seen on occasion, but they are, in all respects very poor versions of Muramasa's works.

Also, whereas Muramasa's works are very lively and give one the impression of being sharp, the swords of the other smiths of this school give the impression of being very "dull" in the sense of the blade being "not sharp".

OWARI PROVINCE

The events in the history of this province date back to the early period when the legendary Yamato Takeru no Mikoto fought the barbarians and subdued them for the rule of the island, and later there were expeditions made to conquer the population in this area by the central government during the Heian period.

Still later, the Minamoto had some holdings in this area before they took control of the nation, and throughout history, this province was quite active. But from the standpoint of swords, there were hardly any sword smiths recorded here.

The very few that are recorded are sword smiths who came here from Seki in Mino province in the late Sengoku period such as Kunitsugu, Kanenobu, and Kaneshige. Kunitsugu came to Owari from Seki in Mino province and lived in Yamada Village, and it is said that he was active around the Soo Era. In the geneology of these smiths, we have Kanenobu following Kunitsugu who is also said to be a student of Mino Kaneuji. However, since

Kanenobu worked in Yamada and Shiga Village, he is commonly referred to as Yamada Seki or Shiga Seki.

KUNITSUGU 国次

Worked in the Soshu and Mino traditions, ca. Shoo Era

Tachi

Tachi were made in the style of the Yoshino period with a shallow sori, thick, with a low shinogi and wide shinogi ji. Bo hi with soe hi are the commonly seen hi. The hamon are in nie and in kogunome midare with yaki kuzure, and there will be large sunagashi and rough mura nie. There is no hataraki or activity seen within the hamon.

Sometimes, suguha with nijuba in places in places is seen.

The boshi is midarekomi with the tip in a jizo style, and the general pattern will have yaki kuzure with the pattern differing considerably from one side to the other.

The Jitetsu will seem very rough, coarse and poor. The hada is ko-mokume hada with strong masame hada in places.

There will be a strong shirake utsuri.

Although the above is the description for Kunitsugu, there are no extant works left, and the above description of Kunitsugu's works has been handed down in the Honami family for kantei.

KANENOBU

Refer to the Naoe Shizu school of Miro Province.

MIKAWA PROVINCE

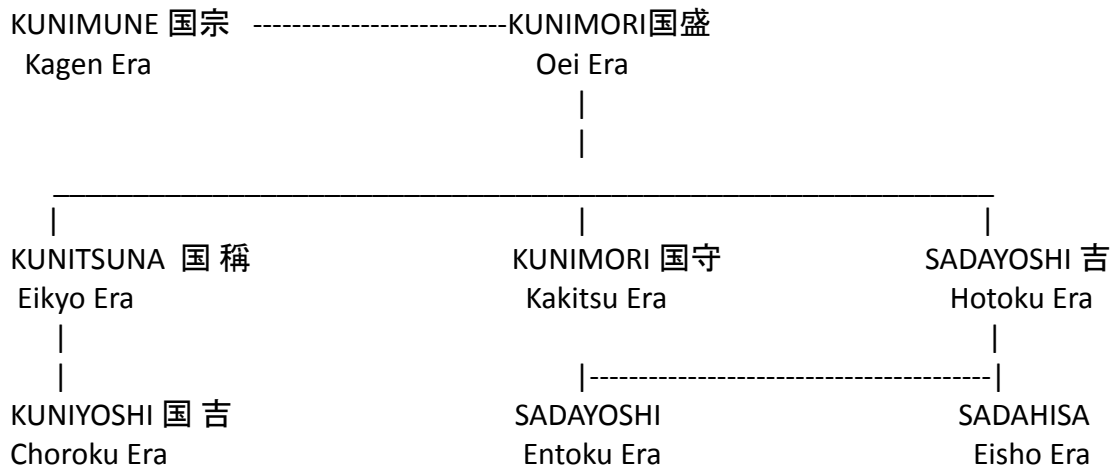
Mikawa Province, like Owari Province, is along the Tokaido highway and is right next door to Owari. As such, its place in the history of the Japanese sword is about the same as Owari's. However, this is the province from which Tokugawa Ieyasu emerged. From about the Sengoku period, there was quite a bit of activity among the warlords in the small provinces, and particularly around this area.

During the time of Minamoto Yoritomo, it is said that Yoritomo had his younger brother appointed as the governor of this area and that the new governor had called for sword smiths from Kyoto and Bizen Province, but this is mentioned only in rare old books and there is no factual evidence to back this up.

The oldest sword smiths active in this province was a group called the Nakahara school during the Oei era. It is said that Kunimune, the founder of the Nakahara school was the son of Kunimune of Bizen province, and that he was active around the Kagen era. His work very closely resembles Bizen Kunimune's work, however, considering the date, it probably was the third Kunimune who came to Mikawa province and founded the Nakahara School.

There was a blade by Nakahara Kunimune in the Marquis Satake Collection (in Akita Prefecture) with a date from the Kagen era which reportedly was in an excellent state of

preservation, however, this blade is probably the only known work by this smith. Marquis Satake's ancestors ruled present day Akita prefecture for hundreds of years.



YOSHIMTTSU 吉光
Choroku Era



KUNIMUNE 国宗
Kagen Era

KANETSUNE 兼常
Eisho Era

TAKAMITSU
Chokyo Era

SANEMORI 実守
Ocho Era

YOSHIHIRO 吉弘
Oei Era

MITSUMUNE 光宗
Shokei Era

KUNIMUNE 国宗

Worked in Yamashiro tradition
and in Bizen Tradition ca. Kagen Era
Founder of Nakahara School

TACHI

Shape and Construction:

Tachi style from the mid-Kamakura period. The sori is slightly shallow, however, the overall appearance of the blade is very graceful. The blade is slightly narrow. There will be hiraniku and the blade is thick.

Hamon:

Made in nioi in suguha with ko-choji midare and ko-midare in places. From about the mid-point of the blade going towards the kissaki, there is very little to see. The workmanship (hataraki) is concentrated in the lower part of the blade above the machi to about the mid-point of the blade.

Boshi:

Komaru with very little kaeri.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel is very finely forged with ko-mokume hada, and many will have jifu utsuri.

Nakago:

The tip of the nakago will be a shallow kurijiri. The file marks can be kiri, suji chigal and higaki. Inscriptions will be the two characters Kunimune. Sometimes there are long inscriptions.

KUNIMORI 国守

Worked in the Bizen Tradition, ca. Oei Era

KATANA and WAKIZASHI:

Shape and Construction:

Shapes are from the Muromachi period with a pronounced saki sori. There will be hiraniku and the blades will be thick. The general appearance of the blade is very poor.

Hamon:

Made in nioi and in the Oei Bizen style with midare and with yakikuzure. Some blades will be hitatsura which results from the yakikuzure present from about the monouchi area and forward towards the point. Some blades will be chu-suguha with komidare and there will be mura nie and nijuba.

Boshi:

Midarekomi with yaki kuzure in most cases.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel will seem “weak” and the hada will be mokume hada which will stand out very distinctly.

Nakago:

The nakago is short and broad. The tip is ha agari kuri jiri with kiri or higaki file marks, and the inscriptions are long.

KYOHU MEIBUTSU CHO

Installment 17

SURUGA MASAMUNE.

藪賀正宗

Owner: Matsudaira Satsuma no Kami

Suriage

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 3 bu

Note: another version of the Meibutsu Cho gives the length as 2 shaku 7 sun 5 bu, and the value as 300 mai.

Value: 7,000 kan

In the old days, this was owned by Otani Kyobu who ruled Suruga. This was during the days of the Battle of Sekigahara. Later that domain came to be ruled by Lord Hideyasa 秀康.

Imamura Note:

On the 14th of Taisho (1925), we were asked by the Matsudaira to catalog their sword collection and saw this blade at that time. It had an orikami for 350 Mai and was recorded as belonging to Matsudaira Echigo no Kami with a date of June 21, Genroku 5 (1692).

It has muneyaki and the hamon has togariba mixed in the midare pattern with very dense nioi and nie.

In places it looks like a Nobukuni.

About 6 sun above the machi, there is a ware kizu, and another one about 2 sun below this. The width of the blade is medium, and it is on the thin side.

The itame hada in the steel is very clear and there is a 'bluish' tinge which is very strong.

Yamanaka Note:

The Shimazu record says that this blade was purchased on Genroku 10 (1697) in Edo. In 1928, when the Shimazu sold the majority of their art collection at an auction, this blade was also sold, however, the old orikami with the 7,000 kan value as well as the earlier one with the 300 mai value reportedly did not accompany the blade.

The blade was nominated as Juyo Bijutsu sometime before 1945.

Otani Kyobu refers to one of the 5 magistrates of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and his name was Otani Yoshiyugu. He later changed his name to Yoshitake, and another name he used was Hyoma 平馬, and this was the name which he commonly used.

When he was 16, through the mediation of Ishida Mitsunari, he came to serve Hideyoshi very diligently. He was given 150 koku when he started, however as he climbed the ladder of success, he eventually received 50,000 koku and ruled at Suruga Castle in Echizen Province. During the Battle of Sekigahara, Otani fought alongside the Toyotomi Forces led by Ishida Mitsunari against the Eastern forces of Tokugawa Ieyasu, and he was injured and died in the battle.

The present whereabouts of this blade is unknown to us.

NAKATSUKASA/KUWANA MASANUNE 中務/少柔名正宗

Owner: Gyobutsu

Zogan mei

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 1.5 bu

Value: 300 mai

The late Honda Nakatsukasa 本多中務 purchased this blade when he was still at Kuwana Castle, through the mediation of Kotoku 光徳 (Honami).

On the omote, there is a zogan mei of "Honda Nakatsukasa" (本多中務), and on the ura "Masamune Hon A" and Kakihan (正宗本阿花押).

It was presented to Lord Ieyasu during the Kammon era, the value was raised to the above value, and then it was given to Lord Mito.

The late Chunagon presented it to the shogunate and the shogunate gave it to Lord Kofu. Later, it was presented again to the Shogunate.

Yamanaka Note

Honda Nakatsukasa refers to Honda Heihachiro Tadakatsu from the time he was 17 years old, when he went to his first battle, and then subsequently participated in 57 battles throughout the length of his life, and he never received any serious battle scars.

After the Battle of Sekigahara, he was given the Kuwana District of Ise Province with 100,000 Koku.

On the 14th of Keicho (1609), he retired and turned the rule of his domain over to his son Tadamasa. He died on October 18 the following year (1610).

Chunagon refers to Mito Tokugawa Yorifusa.

Kofu refers to the 2nd son Tsunashige, of the 3rd Tokugawa shogun Iemitsu.

The blade was nominated for Juyo Bijutsu in 1935 and as Kokuho in 1941, and it was again nominated in the new Kokuho program in 1945.

This blade was in the Shogunate collection until shortly after WWII, however it presently is owned by a private collector.

The Umetada Meikan lists this blade as having the zogan (inlay) work done on it

by Umetada Jyusai 理忠寿齋 in February of Keicho 11 (1606). We recall seeing this blade for the first time back in 1948 and right after that we made a notation in our copy of the Meibutsu Cho. We note that our comment was "not very good, Sept, 1948"

IKEDA MASAMUNE 池田正宗

Owner: The Owari

Zogan Mei

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 2bu

Value: 200 mai:

There are hi on both sides.

Lord Date Masamune 伊遊政宗 purchased this blade for 1,000 kan. Then it was sold by him. It was purchased by Ikeda Bitchu no Kami who sold it for 1,000 Kan to Lord Hidetada.

It seems it was received by the Owari and has since been that family from the time of Lord Dainagon, and details regarding it are not clear.

The appraisal was done on the 3rd of Keian (1650).

Yamanaka Note:

This blade is still in the Owari Tokugawa Collection, presently called the Owari Reimeikan Foundation which has all of the Owari Tokugawa art treasures. The foundation was founded by the Owari Tokugawa shortly after WWII.

Date Masamune is the founder of the famous Date clan of Sendai in Northern Japan.

Ikeda Bitchu no Kami refers to Ikeda Nobuteru's 3rd Son. He fought

with Tokugawa Ieyasu at the Battle of Sekigahara, and for his deeds

during that Battle he was given 60,000 Koku in Tottori. Owari Dainagon refers to Owari Tokugawa Yoshinao, the founder of the Owari Tokugawa and 10th off-spring of Tokugawa Ieyasu.

The blade presently is a Juyo Bunkazai.

ISHIDA KIRIKOMI MASAMUNE 石田切込正宗

Owner: Matsudaira Echigo no kami松平越後守

Suriage

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 2bu

Value: unknown

Owned by Mori Wakasa no Kami 毛利若狭守

Lord Ukita Chunagon Hideie 浮田中納言秀家 purchased it for 400 kan and gave it to Ishida Jibu Shoyu. After the death of Lord Hideyoshi, Jibu Shoyu was greatly hated

by all of the other various Toyotomi Daimyo and his life was in a precarious position. For this reason, Tokugawa Ieyasu felt sympathetic and had him move to Sawayama Castle in Omi Province. This was on the 7th of March of the 4th year of Keicho (1599). Feeling very concerned about Jibu Shoyu's trip, he had Yuki Chunagon Hideyasu 中納言秀安 accompany him on the trip along with two of his retainers, Nakamura Shikibu and Horio Tatewaki 堀尾帶刀 who saw the entourage safely to its destination.

When the entourage was at Atsuta, Jibu got off his mount and told lord Hideyasu of his appreciation for Lord Ieyasu for his thoughtfulness and wept, saying that "from here on, I am in my own domain" and that there was no further need for the three to accompany him. However, the three insisted that they must see him safely to the castle, but Jibu in his persistence had the three leave him and depart.

The above blade was given to Lord Hideyasu at this time and since then, it had been handed down in that family.

Yamanaka Note

Mori Wakasa no Kami refers to Mori Yoshiyasu who ruled at Saeki in Bungo Province in Northern Kyushu.

According to the book called Mata Jurozaemon Hon, Ukita Hideie purchased this blade sometime during the Tensho Era (1573-1591) and Bunroku Era (1592-1595).

Ukita Hideie, after the Osaka Battle was taken prisoner by the Tokugawa forces and then banished to Hachijo Island where he passed away in Meireki (1655) at the age of 84. Ishida Jibu Shoyu refers to Ishida Mitsunari.

Ishida Mitsunari was the instigator of the Battle of Sekigahara on Keicho 5 (1600), and led the Toyotomi forces against the Tokugawa forces where the Toyotomi forces met their defeat and Ishida met his death. This blade was in the Matsudaira Collection in Tsuyama in Mimasaka province for a long time and until quite recently. Shortly after WWII, the present owner purchased it from the Matsudaira.

Yuki Chunagon refers to the second son of Tokugawa Ieyasu, and is the founder of the Matsudaira of Echizen Province.

The box which contains this blade has written on it "Ishida Masamune". The blade is Juyo Bunkazai.

FAMOUS SWORDS: NATIONAL TREASURES OF JAPAN (KOKUHO)

NO. 30

MASAMUNE 正宗

KATANA

Meibutsu: Kanse Masamune

Length: 64.2 cm

Sori: 2.0 cm

Width: 2.6 cm

Shape and Construction:

Shinogi tsukuri with a slightly shallow sori and a kissaki which is a little longer than a chu-kissaki.

Hamon:

The hamon is ko-notare with gunome.

The nie and nioi are well formed, and there are sunagashi along the hamon border. Kinsuji are seen all along the hamon.

Boshi:

The boshi is midare komi and there is some nie kuzure and hakikake at the tip .

Jitetsu:

The hada is itame hada which is very tightly forged. There is an abundance of ji nie all along the ji. There are chikei in places and also jifu.

Hi and Carvings:

There are bo hi on both sides.

On the nakago, bonji and a ken are carved inside of the Hi, and bonji and a kurikara inside of the hi on the ura are in ukibori (i.e. they are carvings inside of a frame).

Nakago:

The blade is o-suriage. The file marks are katte sagari and there are two mekuri ana.

This blade is mentioned in the Kyoho Meibutsu Cho and we covered this blade in our last Issue (April).

No.31

MASAMUNE 正宗

Tanto

Meibutsu Hyuga Masamune 日向正宗

Length: 24.7 cm

Width: 2.2 cm.

Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri with an ihorimune.

Hamon:

Notare with gunome, and large midare are seen in five places on both sides of the blade. The midare waves are notably deep around the monouchi area and towards the kissaki. Nie are clustered around the dense nioi. Kinsuji and inazuma are found all along the hamon.

Boshi:

The boshi is a high komaru and there is a long kaeri.

Carvings:

There are gomabashi on the ura which are finished in kakinagashi below the Machi.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The jitetsu has itame hada which is very tightly forged, and because of this, ko-mokume hada is seen in places. There are chikei, yubashiri and tobiyaki, and a slightly rough area on the back or mune.

Nakago

The nakago is ubu with a kengyo tip. The file marks are katte sagari and there are three mekugi ana.

The gomabashi carvings are said to have been added to the blade by Honami Kotoku. The name Hyuga comes from Mizuno Hyuga no Kami who owned this blade at one time. This blade was described in the Kyoho Meibutsu Cho section in October 1968.

Probably, this is one of the better tanto by Masamune.

The blade was handed down in the Tokugawa family of Kii Province, and was sold by them at one of the auctions held in the early 1930s when it was purchased by one of the Mitsui, the former Baron Mitsui Takakimi (Hachiroemon) who still owns it.

No. 32

MASAMUNE

MEIBUTSU KYUKI MASAMUNE

Tanto

Length: 25.0 cm

Width: 2.3 cm.

Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri with an ihorimune. The blade has been polished down considerably which has left an odd appearance to the cutting edge on one side.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The hada is itame hada and very tightly forged.

There are abundant ji nie, and from this, chikei is present in places.

Hamon:

Notare with gunome, and there are many ashi all along the hamon. Dense nioi is seen around the ashi, and the nie clustering around the ashi are very bright. There are ara nie in places.

Sunagashi and kinsuji also are seen all along the blade.

Carvings:

There is a koshi-hi finished with kakinagashi in the nakago on the ura side.

Nakago:

Ubu with a kengyo tip. The file marks are katte sagari, and there are two mekugi ana. This blade is unsigned.

We covered this Masamune in the September, 1968 Issue in the installment of the Kyoho Meisutsu Cho.

This kyuki is sometimes read kuki, and either writing is accepted.

An interesting point about this blade, aside from the blade itself, is the gold habaki, which is inscribed "Umetada Jyusai Hikoichi ireru".

Gold habaki or any habaki made by the Umetada are very very rare, however when one takes this one in hand, there is much to be enjoyed in the workmanship and the skill which the Umetada demonstrated in these habaki.

There has been no one, absolutely no one, who has equaled the Umetada in making habaki, although many have tried.

A current habaki smith who is considered the best today has said that, he has not even come remotely close to making a habaki like the Umetada made, although he has been trying for the last 40 odd years.

#33

MASAMUNE

TANTO

MEIBUTSU HOCHO MASAMUNE 庖丁正家

Length: 21.7 cm

Sori: very slight.

Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri with an ihori mune.

The kissaki is thin, although it is unusually wide.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The hada is itame hada. There is a great deal of ji-nie which forms chikei in places.

Hamon:

Large notare which becomes a mimigata hamon (ear lobe shaped) at the top of the notare waves. The nioi is very dense and there are many ko-nie which turn into kinsuji.

Boshi:

Midarekomi with a slight, but abruptly stopped kaeri. The tip of the boshi is pointed.

Carving:

Suken with tsume on the omote. Bonji on the ura.

Nakago:

The nakago is ubu. The file marks are katte sagari and there is one mekugi ana. Although there is one hole, it is the result or remains of a fusion of several neighboring holes (3). The tip of the nakago is kurijiri. It is unsigned.

There are three Hocho Masamune, and all three are kokuho. This particular Hocho Masamune is presently owned by Hosokawa Moritatsu, of the former ruling family of Higo Province during the days of the Tokugawa reign. The Hosokawa had the title of Marquis prior to the end of WWII.

This blade was covered in the February, 1969 issue, in the 14th Installment of the Kyoho Meibutsu Cho. Comments on the blade were made in that installment.

NO. 34

MASAMUNE 正宗

TANTO

MEIBUTSU HOCHO MASAMUNE (SUKASHI) 庖丁正宗 すかし

Details on this Masamune were covered in the January, 1969 Issue, in the 13th Installment.

IDENTIFICATION OF NIHONTO THROUGH SHAPE

PART V (2): THE YOSHINO PERIOD 吉野 朝 時代

BITCHU PROVINCE 備中国

CHU AOE

The Chu Aoe school refers to the swordsmiths of the Aoe School who were active from about the mid-1300s to about the end of the 1300s, and this was during the Yoshino Period. These smiths are:

YOSHITSUGU 吉次

TSUGUYOSHI 次吉

TSUGUNAO 次直

SADATSUGU 貞次 (OSUMI GONNO SUKE)

MORITSUGU 守次

Although these swordsmiths made tachi, hiratsukuri ko-wakizashi, and tanto, the latter two styles are found more often than tachi.

The shape of the tachi are in the style of the Yoshino period which have a strongly emphasized sori and abundant hiraniku.

Also, these smiths made nagamaki, although those that are encountered today all have a shape that is called nagamaki naoshi.

HIRATSUKURI KOWAKIZASHI and TANTO:

These are divided into three groups, each having its own distinctive characteristics.

1. JOSUN (8.5 sun) TAKENOKO SORI. These are narrow and thick.
2. SUNNOBI (over 8.5 sun) with SAKIZORI and these are wide. These are also thin and will have sori. These are typical of the style known as an Embun-Joji style with that era's shape.
3. The same as style 2 above, however, the shape of the blade is more gentle than the above style.

In the case of the first style, this is seen in the works of Osumi Gonno Suke Sadatsugu. Style 2 is seen in the work of Yoshitsugu and Tsuguyoshi.

Style 3 is seen in the work of Tsugunao.

The characteristics of Aoe blades are in the hamon and in the steel, so therefore one cannot very well go by the shape alone, and this should be remembered when confronting one of these blades.

This situation of course, is not seen only with Aoe blades.

BINGO PROVINCE

KO-MIHARA

Although the Ko-Mihara sword smiths were active around the Late Kamakura period, there are a few who worked in the early Yoshino period, however, their work closely resembles that of the smiths of the Kamakura Period.

SUO PROVINCE周防国

KO-NIO 法二王

The Ko-Nio sword smiths, like the Ko-Mihara sword smiths also worked from the Kamakura period into the Yoshino period, and the characteristics of the sword smiths in working in the Yoshino period are just about the same as those working in the Kamakura period.

NAGATO PROVINCE長門国

SA YASUYOSHI左安吉

Yasuyoshi is regarded as the son of the great Sa, and is placed at the very top among the many Sa school sword smiths.

There are no known works of Yasuyoshi among existing blades, although many with 'attributions' as such are seen.

The great skill of Yasuyoshi is seen in his tanto. They are hirasukuri chukan sori (musori).

NANKAI DO南海道

KII PROVINCE紀伊国

IRUKA SANETSUNA 不鹿失網

Work of Iruka School sword smiths is very rare and tachi are especially rare, but tanto are seen sometimes.

Tanto:

Chukan sori (musori) and thick. The general appearance of the blade gives one an impression of it being a very sturdy blade.

Other Iruka smiths are:

KAGETSUNA 景網

NORIZANE 則実

SANEYOSHI 実可

SANEMASA 実正

SUDO KUNITSUGU 餐戸国次

Work by this last sword smith is also very rare, although those that are seen have the following shapes.

Katana and wakizashi:

Made in katana or honzukuri wakizashi shapes, although shobu tsukuri blades are seen sometimes.

In general, the appearance of the blade gives the impression of being slightly squeezed or compressed. That is, they seem to be made on a slightly smaller scale than blades with conventional lengths, sizes, and width and thickness.

Tanto:

Made in a sunzumari (less than 8.5 sun) length with a small stature, although the shape is very well made.

SEIKAIDO 西海道

CHIKUZEN PROVINCE 筑前国

Sa school

The Sa school was founded by Sa, one of the Masamune Jitetsu, and he worked in this province, and though Sa worked in the Kamakura period, his students all worked mostly in the Yoshino Period. They are:

YOSHISADA 吉貞

SADAYOSHI 定吉

YUKIHIRO 行広

SADAYUKI 定行

HIROYASU 弘安

HIROYUKI 弘行

KUNIHIRO 国弘

Works by these sword smiths are similar, although there may be slight differences in the details of their work.

A general description of their work is:

TACHI:

Made in the shape of the late Kamakura period and the Yoshino period.

HIRATSUKURI KO-WAKIZASHI and TANTO:

Chukan sori (musori) with the sori slightly accentuated towards the kissaki.

There are some blades made in the Embun-Joji era style of hiratsukuri ko-wakizashi.

BUNGO PROVINCE 豊後国

Ko-Takada School 古高田

The Ko-Takada school included the sword smiths

TOMOYUKI 友行

TOMOMITSU 友光
TOKIYUKI 時行
YUKITADA 行忠
YUKIMASA 行正
KUNIMUNE 国宗

The founder of the school is said to be Tomoyuki and there are quite a few works by this sword smith left to us.

It is said that Tomoyuki studied under someone in Osafune in Bizen province and some similarities can be seen in the early Takada works, although the later Takada blades are commonly regarded as poor work.

TACHI:

There is a standard tachi shape, but the sori is shallow, and the blade is wide and thick. There will be hiraniku, and the shinogi is high. The blade will give an impression of being sharp.

TANTO:

Tanto are sunnobi (over 8.5 sun) and hiratsukuri and wide with a slight Sori. They are also thick.

HIZEN PROVINCE 肥前国

Hirado Sa School 平戸左一文

Some of the students of Sa established themselves at Hirado in this province, and are accordingly called Hirado Sa. Most of the smiths of this school have the character Mori in their name. They are:

MORHIRO 盛広
MORIYOSHI 盛吉
MORITSUGU 盛次
MORIYUKI 盛行

Long blades are exceptionally rare, and almost non-existent. The blades seen are usually tanto.

TANTO:

Hiratsukuri and slightly sunnobi (over 8.5 sun) in length, and will have a slight saki sori impression.

HIGO PROVINCE 肥後国

CHU-ENJU SCHOOL 中延寿一門

The works of the Chu-Enju sword smiths are about the same as those of the Ko-Enju smiths, and there are not too many differences between the Ko- and Chu-Enju smiths.

SATSUMA PROVINCE

The Naminohira school is divided into two periods: Ko-Naminohira and Sue-Naminohira.

The Ko-Naminohira smiths are those who were active from the founding of the school in the Kamakura period into the Yoshino period.

Their characteristics are about the same, although those who worked in the Yoshino period will make the shape of the tachi a little stronger or more pronounced than those of the Kamakura period;

The sword smiths in this school were:

YUKITSUGU 行次

YASUMITSU : 安光

YASUTSUNA 安網

IEYASU 家安

YASUYUKI 安行

PUBLICATIONS

SHUMI NO MENUKI

by WAKAYAMA TAKESHI AND TAKONOUCHI HIROSHI

PRICE:\$20

This is a book for kodogu collectors. This book concentrates only on menuki from the early Goto smiths up to the present.

The book gives brief comments on each metal smith whose menuki are covered in the book.

An interesting feature of the book is that the illustrations of the menuki are covered in groupings determined by the motif of the design, that is landscapes, plants, birds, dragons, tigers, animals, fish, insects, etc.

Under each listing, such as animals, it covers various animals made by different metalsmiths. The book may be a little expensive by Western standards, but this seems to be the trend in Japanese publications of this nature in recent years.

Also, this is a limited edition of 800 copies, which may be another factor making the book so expensive

PRICE LIST FOR SWORD SUPPLIES

As was mentioned in an earlier issue, the supply list and the prices for sword related supplies we offer to our readers will have a very slight addition or mark up to cover our expenses and to help cover the cost of maintaining the Nihonto Newsletter. The reason as mentioned before, is to sustain the cost of producing the publication of the Newsletter, since we do not have enough subscribers to be able to depend on subscription income.

Also, we might mention that the charges for the kodogu boxes (for tsuba, menuki, fuchi-kashira, etc.) are a little different from those that are available to sword collectors in the States.

The boxes that we offer are of better, quality.

Tsuba box, menuki box, and fuchi-kashira box:

Grade A \$6.00
Grade B.....\$3.00

The menuki box can be used as a kozuka box.

Mitokoromono box and daisho tsuba box:

Grade A.....\$8.00
Grade B.....\$4.00

Brass Mekugi Hammer.....\$1.00
Choji Oil.....\$.50
Uchiko.....\$.50
Nugui Paper , 3sheets.....\$.25

Cleaning kit in Kiri Box.....\$3.00
(includes uchiko, nugui paper, brass hammer and choji oil)

SEKKA BOKU (ink stone for tracing)....\$3.00

YOSHINO paper for Oshigata.....\$.05

Rayon shirasaya bag for katana.....\$3.00
For wakizashi.....\$2.50
For tanto.....\$2.25

Silk brocade bag for katana.....A grade: \$10.00
B grade: \$7.50
Wakizashi.....\$5.00
Tanto.....\$4.00

Rayon cord for brocade bag: tachi.....\$3.00
Katana....\$2.50
Tanto.....\$2.00

Silk sageo A.....\$12.50
B.....\$12.00
C.....\$7.50
D.....\$7.20 (tanto)
E.....\$5.00

Silk tachi sageo.....\$30.00

Rayon tachi sageo.....\$7.50

Silk tsuka ito (per foot).....\$.65

Tsuka ito: the lengths needed for various types of swords are as follows:

- Tachi, about 19 shaku
- Katana, about 14 shaku
- Wakizashi, about 11 shaku
- Tanto, 8 shaku

The above lengths are the lengths which are recommended. The traditional tsuka craftsmen use slightly less, but we are told that the above mentioned lengths would be approximately the required lengths when the work is done by others than professional craftsmen.

The 19 shaku required for tachi includes the wrapping for a section of the saya with a saya

Colors available are black, dark blue, dark green, light green, violet, brown, yellow, and white.

The width of the cord comes in two sizes and those colors mentioned above are for the conventional width.

In the case of narrow cords which are sometimes used for wrapping tanto tsuka, they come in brown, yellow and white.

The rayon, cords, not mentioned above, but available at \$.40 per foot, and come in three colors, black, dark blue and brown.

The rayon cord is not very good since it tends to become loose after a while.

FUKUSA

Silk A.....\$15.00
B.....\$10.00
C.....\$7.50

Fukusa fabric squares are used during the handling of swords, i.e. to hold a blade or make any contact with a blade when inspecting a blade, and as a cushion for the blade when placing it down on a surface.

The reason we are not offering sword racks is that due to the manner in which they are made and the manner in which international mail is handled, we cannot guarantee that the rack will arrive at its destination in good condition.

The prices for the above items include, packing and shipping charges via ordinary (sea) mail. Therefore, if one wishes to have these items shipped by air, additional charges will be required. However, in such cases, we will not know the exact charges until the packages are actually shipped, therefore shipping charges by air mail will be asked for after the shipment is made.

In addition, we will supply anything else that is required by Nihonto collectors, such as tsuka wrappings, books, saya repairs, and other goods or services.

We are not quite ready at this time to receive swords for polishing or saya making or habaki making.

This will take some doing, since shipping charges will have to be figured out in addition to charges for clearance of the swords through Japanese Customs, which is a very nerve racking job. License applications must be made at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and registration is required at the city Hall. All this must be done to receive swords on their arrival. The same procedures must be taken again in shipping them out from Japan, so it isn't an easy task to receive and ship swords as is commonly believed by sword people in the West.

No less than three days are spent (in total) for these clearance procedures, and this has been the main reason why we have refused shipments of swords to date.

We shall be having all aspects of the receiving and shipping cleared up shortly, and at such a time, we will make an announcement as to what the charges will be and how long it will take to return a sword back to its owner.

Recently, the polishing of swords has been taking a very long time. We have one sword with a polisher, and it has been over one year, and to date he has not even started to work on this blade.

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