



Special Exhibition

Splendid Swords: Masamune and the Sagami Tradition

May 28 (Sat.) - July 18 (Mon.), 2022
at Exhibition Rooms of The Tokugawa Art Museum

For many, the name "Masamune" is synonymous with the Japanese sword. Masamune was a Kamakura-period swordsmith from Sagami Province who perfected a style of brightly shining steel blade with dynamic patterning dominated by nie crystal formations on the cutting edge. He had a great influence on later generations. Within the samurai society of the Muromachi period, Masamune's work was acclaimed as worthy of presentation to the shogun, and during the Warring States period, his swords were favored by the powerful warlords Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, which further enhanced his reputation, and his value became immutable during the Edo period.

This exhibition will explore the reception history of Japanese swords through the famous swords by Masamune and other swordsmiths close to him that have been passed down in the Owari Tokugawa family.

Important Cultural Property

*Katana Long Sword, known as "Ikeda Masamune."
Inscription: Masamune Suriage Hon'ami, insignia.
Kamakura period, 14th c.
Owned by the 3rd Tokugawa Shogun Iemitsu,
the 1st Owari Tokugawa Yoshinao, and others.*

INTRODUCTION

SWORDS OF THE OWARI TOKUGAWA FAMILY COLLECTION

The first swords passed down within the Owari Tokugawa family were items that Yoshinao, the first-generation Lord of Owari, had inherited from his father, Tokugawa Ieyasu. Following this, the collection gradually took shape through the addition of swords received by the successive generations of heads of the family as well as swords that were purchased by the family to be used in the gift-exchanging customs of the samurai culture of the day.

After many generations, the Tokugawa Art Museum now has approximately 500 swords in its collection, but because of the large number of items, it is not easy to grasp a complete picture of this collection. This exhibition delves into the origin and characteristics of this collection, focusing on the most highly revered Kamakura-period swordsmith of the Edo period, Masamune, and his style (alternatively known as the Kamakura-ryū/Sōshū-den, referred to in this exhibition as the Sagami tradition).



No.1
Sunpu-owakemono-odōguchō,
Record of Inheritance from Sunpu Castle to Owari Tokugawa
upon the Death of Tokugawa Ieyasu.
Edo period, 1618.

CHAPTER 1

THE MUROMACHI PERIOD — SWORDS PRESENTED TO THE SHOGUN

*9 swords are exhibited.

Originally produced as weapons, swords became a luxury fine craft item in the Muromachi period and came to be exchanged as gifts at various special events. Particularly rare and precious famous swords were considered to be well-suited for presentation to the shogun. While Masamune's name appears as one of the bladesmiths who made such swords, most of the swords were made by swordsmiths from Yamashiro (Kyoto Prefecture) and Bizen Province (Okayama Prefecture), which had been known as sword-producing regions for centuries.

The sword collection of the Owari Tokugawa family also includes several blades by master craftsmen such as Munechika of Yamashiro Province and Masatsune of Bizen Province, whose swords had been deemed worthy of presentation to the shogun, and thus we can confirm that the standards and values of the Muromachi period were carried over into the Edo period.



No.9 **Important Cultural Property**

Tachi Long Sword.

Inscription: Rai Kunitoshi, October 23rd Shōwa 4, 75 years old.
Kamakura period, 1315.

Owned by the 9th Shogun Ieshige and the 8th Owari Tokugawa Munekatsu.



No.12 **Important Cultural Property**

Tachi Long Sword, known as "Kiku-Ichimonji."

Incised inscription of chrysanthemum flower.

Kamakura period, 13th c.

Owned by Tokugawa Tadanaga, the 3rd son of the 2nd Tokugawa Shogun Hidetada, and the 1st Owari Tokugawa Yoshinao.

CHAPTER 2

THE EDO PERIOD — MASAMUNE, THE SHINING STAR OF GIFT EXCHANGE

*13 swords and a spear (*yari*) and arrowheads (*yajiri*) are exhibited.

Masamune's swords are characterized by their brightly shining base steel and richly varied blade patterns that are difficult to sum up in a single word. This dynamic style was favored by Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the great warlords of the Warring States period, and it is believed that a kind of "Masamune boom" occurred during the time of Ieyasu, when Masamune swords were considered the ultimate gift objects.

The ability to own a valuable Masamune sword was indicative of a family's elite status. The fact that more than ten swords bearing Masamune's name were handed down in the Owari Tokugawa family was surely a distinction that they could only have held as the senior of the three branch households of the ruling Tokugawa clan.



No.13 **Important Cultural Property**
Tantō Short Sword, known as "Fudō Masamune."
Inscription: Masamune.
Kamakura period, 14th c.
Owned by Tokugawa Ieyasu and the 1st Owari Tokugawa Yoshinao, and others.



No.15 **National Treasure**
Tantō Short Sword, known as "Hōchō Masamune."
Attributed to Masamune.
Kamakura period, 14th c.
Owned by Tokugawa Ieyasu.

COLUMN MASAMUNE AND THE HON'AMI FAMILY

*5 materials related to sword are exhibited.

CHAPTER 3 SADAMUNE, ANOTHER GENIUS

*12 swords are exhibited.

The Sagami tradition (Sagami-den), the style created by Masamune, was passed down to his disciples. Sadamune was a swordsmith who faithfully preserved Masamune's style and exhibited great carving skills. His name was also included among those whose swords were presented to the Muromachi Shogunate, and he was second only to Masamune in reputation during the Edo period.

Within the Owari Tokugawa family, the head of the family presented swords to his children and grandchildren on the occasion of various rites of passage, and the fact that Sadamune's swords were also chosen for important occasions such as succession ceremonies attests to how highly they were valued.



No.33 **Important Cultural Property**
Wakizashi Short Sword, known as "Monoyoshi Sadamune."
Attributed to Sadamune.
Nanbokuchō period, 14th c.
Owned by Tokugawa Ieyasu and the 1st Owari Tokugawa Yoshinao.

CHAPTER 4 THE DAWN OF THE SAGAMI TRADITION

*5 swords are exhibited.

The history of swordsmithing in Sagami began when the Kamakura Shogunate invited master craftsmen to the province, and it is said that Kunitsuna of the Awataguchi school in Yamashiro Province and Sukezane and Kunimune of Bizen Province moved to Kamakura. Shintōgo Kunimitsu followed in the footsteps of these talented predecessors and produced many excellent short swords with straight blade patterns. The peerless master craftsman Masamune himself emerged from Kunimitsu's mentorship.

The Owari Tokugawa's sword collection consists of works by a wide range of swordsmiths from different periods and regions, and we can trace in it the genealogy of Kunimitsu and other swordsmiths from Sagami Province.



No.45 **Important Cultural Property**

Tachi Long Sword.

Inscription: Kunitsuna.

Kamakura period, 13th c.

Owned by the 8th Tokugawa Shogun Yoshimune.

Inherited by the Tokugawa Shogun Family.

CHAPTER 5 MASAMUNE'S DISCIPLES

*6 swords are exhibited.

Among the Sagami-tradition swordsmiths who carried on Masamune's style, the Nanbokuchō swordsmith Hiromitsu is also deserving of special mention. Hiromitsu built upon Masamune's dynamic blade design and developed a highly decorative blade design with tempered spots scattered throughout. Akihiro and Masahiro inherited Hiromitsu's style, and this tradition of swordsmithing was passed down to Hiromasa, Tsunahiro, and others in the Muromachi period.

During the Edo period, the reputation of swordsmiths from Sagami grew along with that of Masamune. It is believed that this is why the Owari Tokugawa family ended up with collections of Sagami swords that were gifts from the shogun or were actually worn by the daimyo himself.



No.54

Katana Long Sword.

Inscription: Hirotsugu of Sōshū, a day of August Meiō 9.

Muromachi period, 1500.

Owned by Tokugawa Haruyuki, heir of the 9th Owari Tokugawa Munechika.

CHAPTER 6 NATIONWIDE SPREAD OF THE SAGAMI TRADITION

*6 swords are exhibited.

Masamune's style influenced swordsmiths not only in Sagami but also throughout Japan. Among them, a swordsmith named Gō Yoshihiro from Etchū Province (Toyama Prefecture), who was a close follower of Masamune's style in the Kamakura period and is said to have been Masamune's disciple, was ranked on par with Yoshimitsu and Masamune in the Edo period.

The sword collection of the Owari Tokugawa family includes works by Yoshihiro, as well as swords by many other swordsmiths who exhibit Masamune's style, such as Norishige (Kamakura period) of Etchū Province and Kanemitsu (Nanbokuchō period) of Bizen Province. The collection clearly reflects the tremendous popularity of Masamune and the swordsmiths who descended from him in the samurai society of the Edo period.



No.56 **Important Cultural Property**

Katana Long Sword, known as "Samidare Gō."

Attributed to Gō Yoshihiro.

Kamakura period, 14th c.

Owned by Kuroda Nagamasa, the 2nd Tokugawa Shogun Hidetada, the 2nd Owari Tokugawa Mitsutomo and others.



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