Special Exhibition

Touring the Gokaden

— Swordsmithing Traditions of the Five Famed Regions —

The Tokugawa Art Museum Exhibition Rooms 7 to 9
From July 21 (Sat) to September 2 (Sun), 2018



Yamashiro (Kyoto prefecture), Yamato (Nara prefecture), Bizen (Okayama prefecture), Sagami (Kanagawa prefecture), and Mino (Gifu prefecture) were the five great regions of sword production in Japan. The styles shared by the master swordsmiths active in each of these five regions were known as the *gokaden* (literally, "the five traditions"). The rise of each of the *gokaden* was different depending on the unique geographical conditions of each region as well as differences between the areas of production versus consumption, but they all share the fact that they turned out many famous swordsmiths and strongly influenced swordsmithing in other regions of the same period as well as swordsmithing traditions in later periods. This exhibition will focus on swords made in the *gokaden* regions that have been passed down in the Owari Tokugawa family and will home in on the distinctive appeal of these famous swords that fascinated the Warring States generals and *daimyō* lords.

1. The Yamashiro Tradition 山城伝

In Yamashiro Province (today's southern Kyoto), production of swords began in the Heian period and reached its golden age in the Kamakura period. Characteristics of Yamashiro tradition swords were the graceful blade shape with the emphasis of the curvature at the base (*koshizori*), the fine wood grain (*ko-itame*) forging structure of the steel, and the straight (*suguha*) temper pattern. Representative swordsmiths of this tradition include Munechika of the Sanjō School, Yoshimitsu of the Awataguchi School, and Kuniyuki and his son Kunitoshi of the Rai School.

Sanjō and Gojō Schools

These are swordsmithing groups that are descended from the master swordsmith Munechika of the Heian period. In addition to Munechika, other masters included Yoshiie, Chikamura, Arikuni, and Yoshinori. The Gojō School branched off with Kanenaga, who is said to have been an apprentice of Munechika. It got the name because Kanenaga lived on Gojō Avenue in Kyoto. Great masters of this school included Kuninaga, Kanetsugu, and Kaneyasu.

Awataguchi School

This school of master swordsmiths descended from Kuniie established their base in Awataguchi in Kyoto's Higashiyama district in the Kamakura period. Awataguchi was an important transit point located at the entrance to Kyoto from the Tōkaidō and Tōsandō Highways. Kuniie had six children, including Kunitomo, Hisakuni, and Kunitsuna, and Kunitomo had two grandsons, Kuniyoshi and Yoshimitsu, who was also known as an expert craftsman of short swords (*tantō*). Of all the many schools of sword making throughout Japanese history, the Awataguchi School is praised as having the most beautiful surface steel (*jigane)* and it produced swords that fulfilled the aesthetic sensibilities of the aristocrats of the imperial capital.

Rai School

This was a group of swordsmiths descended from Kuniyoshi in the Kamakura period. The term "Rai," meaning "having come from elsewhere" is a reference to Kuniyoshi's ancestry as a descendant of Korean immigrants. Kuniyoshi's son, Kuniyuki, was in actuality the founder of the Rai School and other representative masters of the school include his son Kunitoshi as well as Kunimitsu and Kunitsugu, Ryōkai and Ryōkai's disciple Nobukuni. The Rai School carried on the traditional characteristics of the Awataguchi School with its straight blade patterns and beautiful surface steel, while at the same time including works possessing a powerful air that reflected the burgeoning samurai class with their large tips and thick blades.

2. The Sōshū Tradition 相州伝

Sword making in Sagami Province (today's Kanagawa Pref.) began when the Kamakura shogunate invited Kunimune and Sukezane from Bizen Province (eastern & southern Okayama Pref.) and Awataguchi Kunitsuna from Yamashiro Province (southern Kyoto) to make swords there. It is said that Masamune, disciple of Shintōgo Kunimitsu, brought the Sōshū tradition to its greatest heights. The Sōshū tradition projected the tastes of the Kamakura warriors, with its characteristic large wood grain patterns (*ōita-me*) on the surface and intensely undulating blade pattern dominated by coarse granular temper patterns (*nie*). Masamune's followers included Sadamune, who is said to have been his adopted son, and Hiromitsu.

The Great Master Masamune

Masamune, whose name is virtually synonymous with the idea of the master swordsmith, studied with Shintōgo Kunimitsu, who had come out of the Awataguchi School in Yamashiro Province and moved to Sagami. It was Masamune who fully realized the Sōshū tradition, perfecting a unique style for the swords of Sagami Province. The intense and wild blade patterns were widely appreciated by the rising Kamakura samurai class. Many of Masamune's works are unsigned, but a few do bear engraved inscriptions.

Masamune's Followers

The great master of the Sōshū tradition, Masamune, had ten top disciples, known as the "Masamune jittetsu"—Sadamune who is said to have been Masamune's son, Kunishige and Kunisugu of Yamashiro Province, Kinjū and Kaneuji of Mino Province (today's Gifu Pref.), Yoshihiro and Norishige of Etchū Province (Toyama Pref.), Kanemitsu and Nagayoshi of Bizen Province (eastern and southern Okayama Pref.),and Samonji of Chikuzen Province (Fukuoka Pref.). (Though these are the most commonly named individuals, it should be noted that historical records are not always consistent regarding the identities of Masamune's ten disciples.) After learning from Masamune, they all returned to their respective provinces, where they continued their sword making careers.

3. The Bizen Tradition 備前伝

Bizen Province (eastern & southern Okayama Pref.) was rich in natural iron sand deposits in the Chūgoku Mountains, which supported lively sword production. From the late Heian period onward, this region was fulfilling requests from warriors all over Japan and became the largest sword-producing region in the country. Characteristics of swords in the Bizen tradition were showy blade patterns with irregular clove patterns (*chōji midare*), blade patterns dominated by a fine-grained "mist line" (*nioi*), and the apparent reflection (*utsuri*) of the shadow of the blade patterns. Representative swordsmiths were the Ko-Bizen swordsmith Masatsune, Norimune of the Ichimonji School, Mitsutada and his son Nagamitsu of the Osafune School.

Ko-Bizen

Of the master swordsmiths of Bizen Province, Tomonari, Masatsune, Kanehira, and others who were active from the mid-Heian to early Kamakura periods were later known as Ko-Bizen ("old Bizen") smiths. The characteristic brilliant irregular clove–shaped blade patterns seen in later Bizen swords are not seen in the Ko-Bizen blades and many of them present a gently waving temper pattern with slight irregularity on what at first appearance seems to be a straight blade. In addition, another characteristic that differs from later Bizen swords is the presence of blade patterns dominated by coarse granular temper patterns (*nie*).

Ichimonji School

This group of metalsmiths was formed in the Kamakura period and gets its name from the fact that the smiths engraved their blades with the character "Ichi." Founded by Norimune, the school was based in Fukuoka (Setouchi city, Okayama), thus taking the name Fukuoka Ichimonji School, and produced many famous craftsmen, such as Sukemune, Sukeyoshi, Yoshimochi, and others. Blades of the Ichimonji School were characterized by showy blades dominated by a fine-grained "mist line" (*nioi*) with richly varied irregular clove (*chōji midare*) blade patterns. In addition to the Fukuoka Ichimonji School, Norifusa moved to nearby Katayama and founded the Katayama Ichimonji School; Sukeyoshi moved to Yoshioka, where he founded the Yoshioka Ichimonji School; and Moriie moved to Hatakeda, where he founded the Hatakeda smithy.

Osafune School

This group of swordsmiths established itself in the region of Osafune (in Setouchi city, Okayama) in the late Kamakura period. It produced many great master craftsmen, including Mitsutada's son Nagamitsu, his grandson Kagemitsu, and his great-grandson Kanemitsu. In the Nanbokuchō period, the lineage continued with Nagayoshi; in the early Muromachi period with Yasumitsu and Morimitsu; and in the late Muromachi period Sukesada and Kiyomitsu. However, with the great deluge of the Yoshii River in 1590 (Tenshō 18), the school suffered devastating damage and met its demise. Swords of the Osafune School encompass a wide variety of blades of different styles, including works with brilliant irregular clove blade patterns as well as straight blade patterns.

Kumo School

This is the common name for the Ukai School, a group of swordsmiths living in Ukan Manor from the mid-Kamakura period to the Nanbokuchō period. Unshō, Unji, and Unjū were the principal swordsmiths. Unlike other schools of the same province, they produced swords following in the Yamashiro tradition that are close in style to the Rai School as well as the Aoe School of Bitchū Province.

The Bitchū Tradition

As in Bizen Province, in Bitchū Province (western Okayama Pref.) swordsmithing prospered due to the accessibility of the iron sand that was plentiful in the Chūgoku Mountains. The Bitchū craftsmen lived in Aoe (Kurashiki city, Okayama). Yasutsugu, Noritaka, and others of the early Kamakura period are known as Ko-Aoe (old Aoe); Yoshitsugu and Tsugunao of the mid- to late Kamakura period are known as Chū-Aoe (middle Aoe); and Tsuguyoshi of the early Muromachi period is known as Sue-Aoe

4. The Yamato Tradition 大和伝

The origins of sword production in Yamato Province (today's Nara Pref.) can be traced back to the Nara period. Smiths affiliated with large temples such as Tōdaiji and Kohfukuji produced blades for the warrior monks, who emerged from the late Heian period onward, and swordsmithing here reached the height of its prosperity in the Kamakura period. Yamato tradition swords are characterized by their straight blades (*suguha*) and plentiful blade patterns (*hamon*) and the blades are thick with a high side ridge (*shinogi*), which makes for exceptional practical fuctionality. This tradition is made up of the Senjuin School, Tegai School, Taima School, and others, with representative craftsmen including Kanenaga of the Tegai School and Kuniyuki of the Taima School.

5. The Mino Tradition 美濃伝

Sword making in Mino Province (today's Gifu Pref.) can be traced back to the late Heian period, but it began in earnest in the Nanbokuchō period. The Yamato swordsmith Kaneuji moved to Shizu in Tagi-gun (southwest Gifu Pref.) and established a school there and sword production flourished. Mino blades were in demand from Warring States generals from all over Japan and are characterized by a large curved tip (*kissaki*) and sharp pointed blades. In addition to Kaneuji, representative swordsmiths include Kanesada, who established a base in Seki, Kanemoto, and the generations of Kanemotos who took the name Magoroku, among others.

Dispersal of the Mino Masters

From the Warring States period onward, the master swordsmiths of Mino Province were scattered throughout Japan and produced swords in various other regions. Sword makers came and went between Mino and the neighboring province of Owari (today's Aichi Pref.) and in the Warring States period Masatsune and other swordsmiths moved and established themselves permanently in Owari Province. In addition, Yasutsugu of the Mino tradition moved from Ōmi Province to Echizen Province (Fukui Pref.), and master swordsmiths of the Mino lineage also moved to Ise Province (Mie Pref.).

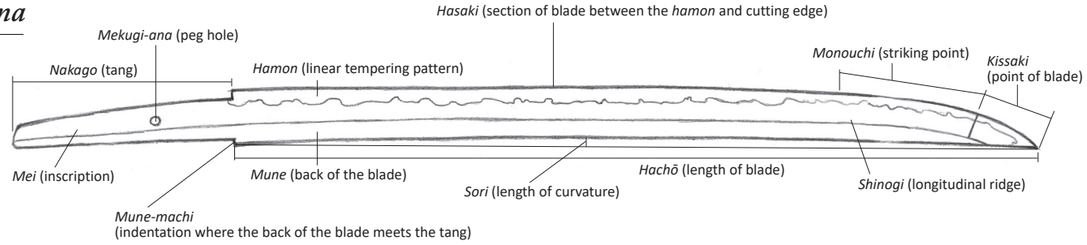
The photographic image below the top title:
[National Treasure]
Tantō Short Sword, known as "Hōchō Masamune"
Traditionally attributed to Masamune
Kamakura period, 14th c.
Owned by Tokugawa Ieyasu

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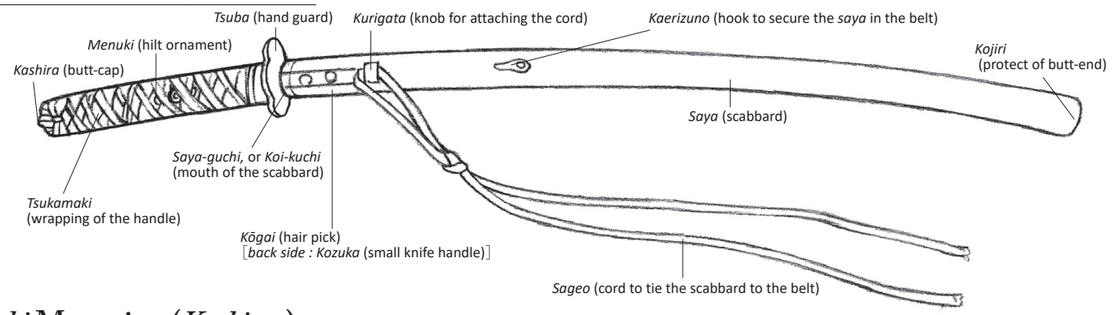
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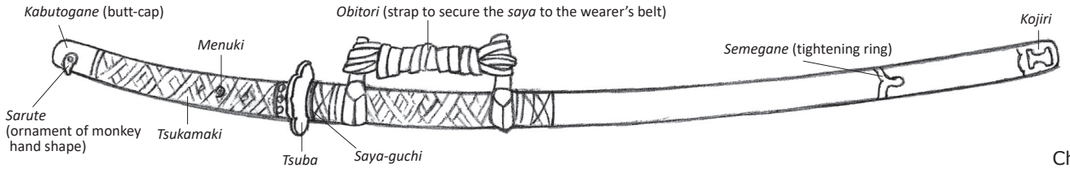
Katana



Katana Mounting (*Koshirae*)



Tachi Mounting (*Koshirae*)



Types of Swords

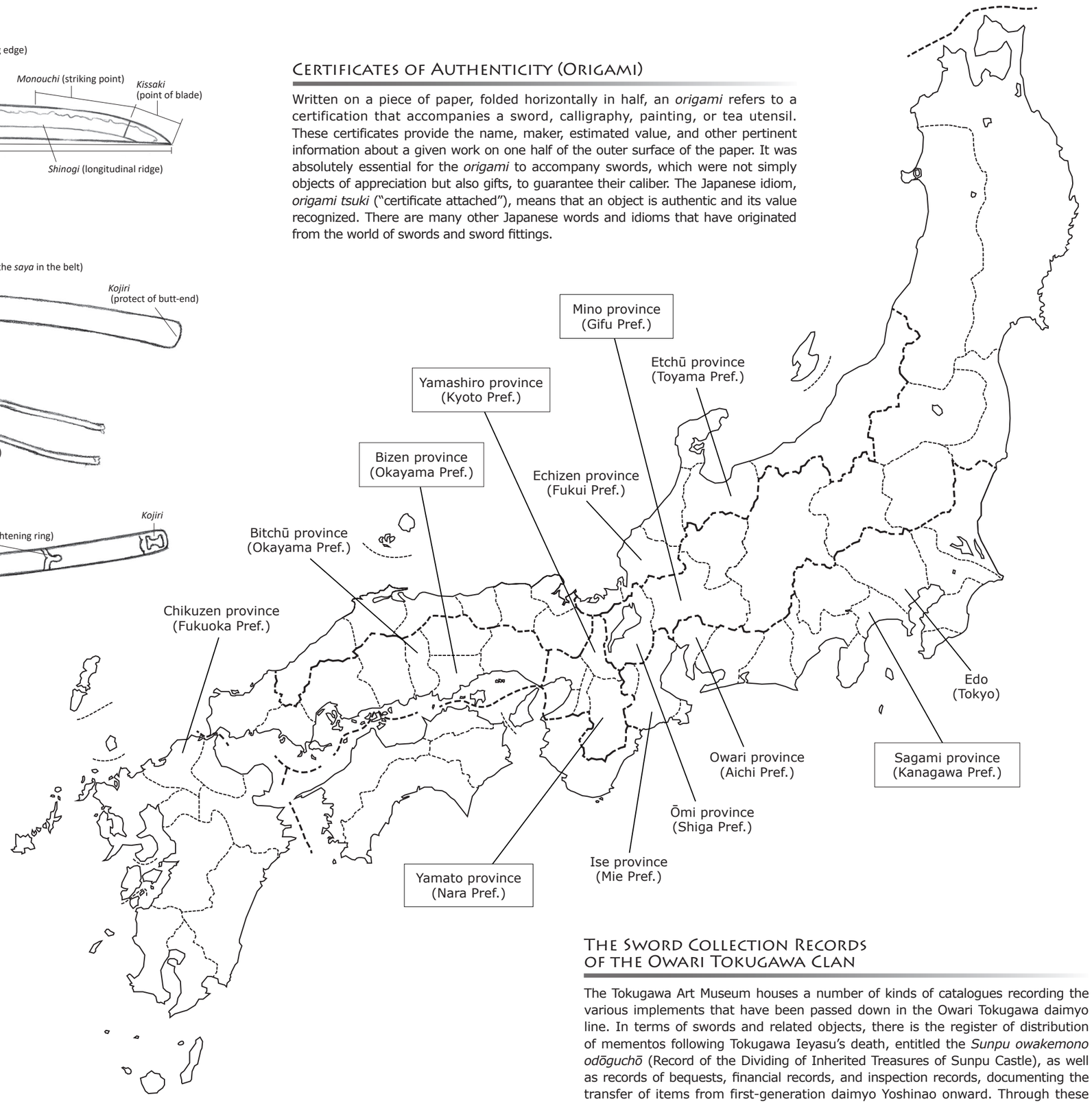
Swords are subdivided according to their formal features and shape. The main types include *tachi*, *katana*, *wakizashi*, and *tantō*. The *tachi*, or long sword, was used primarily from the Heian to the Muromachi period and worn hanging from the hip with the blade facing downwards. In the 17th century, during the Edo period, its function became mainly ceremonial. The *tachi* blade usually measures about 65 to 70 cm in length. The *katana*, or sword, took the place of the *tachi* from the mid-Muromachi to the Edo period. For actual combat, the pre-Muromachi *tachi* was sometimes shortened to a *katana* format. In contrast to the *tachi*, the *katana* was worn tucked into the *kimono* sash with blade facing upwards. Its blade generally measures about 60 cm in length. The shorter *wakizashi*, or "side-inserted" sword, worn together with the *katana*, has blades measuring from 30 to 60 cm in length, while the *tantō* (short sword) blades are about 30 cm long.

Sword Fittings

The wide variety of outer mounting equipment that accompanies the sword for carrying it is referred to as the *koshirae* (mounting). Of the sword fittings that are used in the *koshirae*, the representative ones are the pommel guard (*tsuba*) and the *mitokoromono*—comprised of a set of three items, the *menuki* (hilt ornaments), *kōgai* (small knife handle), and *kozuka* (hair dressing ornament). A distinction was drawn between those fittings that were made by the Goto family of metalsmiths who served the Edo shogunate, which were considered formal fittings, known as *oie-bori* (carved by "the family"), and anything made by any other metal craftsman, which were called *machi-bori* (carved by townsmen).

Certificates of Authenticity (Origami)

Written on a piece of paper, folded horizontally in half, an *origami* refers to a certification that accompanies a sword, calligraphy, painting, or tea utensil. These certificates provide the name, maker, estimated value, and other pertinent information about a given work on one half of the outer surface of the paper. It was absolutely essential for the *origami* to accompany swords, which were not simply objects of appreciation but also gifts, to guarantee their caliber. The Japanese idiom, *origami tsuki* ("certificate attached"), means that an object is authentic and its value recognized. There are many other Japanese words and idioms that have originated from the world of swords and sword fittings.



The Sword Collection Records of the Owari Tokugawa Clan

The Tokugawa Art Museum houses a number of kinds of catalogues recording the various implements that have been passed down in the Owari Tokugawa daimyo line. In terms of swords and related objects, there is the register of distribution of mementos following Tokugawa Ieyasu's death, entitled the *Sunpu owakemono odōguchō* (Record of the Dividing of Inherited Treasures of Sunpu Castle), as well as records of bequests, financial records, and inspection records, documenting the transfer of items from first-generation daimyo Yoshinao onward. Through these materials, it is possible to research the provenance of various items that have come into and out of the family collection.