

The 29th Newly Designated Special Important Swords And Fittings Exhibition

-swords-

1. Two-character Kunitoshi

Kunitoshi is said to have been the son of Rai Kuniyuki, and there exist both the so-called “two-character Kunitoshi (国俊),” in which the character Rai (来) is omitted, and works signed with the three-character signature “Rai Kunitoshi (来国俊).” While some differences in workmanship can be observed between the two, making it possible to distinguish them, there have long been theories both identifying them as the same individual and as separate smiths. In recent years, however, renewed study of their styles and signatures has led to a growing consensus that they are by the same hand, prompting reconsideration of the separate-smith theory.

This sword displays the refined and tightly forged jigane characteristic of Yamashiro work, together with a hamon combining chōji and gunome, in which a rich variety of activities can be seen. These features clearly reflect the characteristics of the two-character Kunitoshi. The bright nioiguchi is particularly pleasing, and the powerful bōshi and hamon are in fine harmony with the robust appearance, resulting in an imposing work filled with dignified vitality.

2. Rai Kunitoshi

The Rai school, founded in effect by Rai Kuniyuki, flourished from the Kamakura to the Nanbokuchō period. Among its leading figures, Rai Kunitoshi played a central role in the late Kamakura period, establishing a firm foundation for the school’s development. As with earlier discussions, there have long been differing views as to whether the two-character Kunitoshi (国俊) and the three-character Rai Kunitoshi (来国俊) represent the same individual or separate smiths; while no definitive conclusion has been reached, renewed study has led to a growing consensus that they are by the same hand, prompting reconsideration of the separate-smith theory.

This tantō exhibits a graceful appearance of standard width with a slightly extended length and an elegant uchi-zori curvature. The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame, dense and refined, in which vivid nie-utsuri appears. The hamon is a gently undulating notare, bright and clear, and rich in activity along the hamon, resulting in a blade of exceptional elegance and refinement. In addition, the piece is accompanied by a tantō mounting of gold nashiji raden-makie with scattered hollyhock crests (kin-nashiji raden-makie aoi-mon-chirashi-zaya aikuchi tantō koshirae), and it is known to have been handed down within the Tokugawa family during the

feudal era.

3.Rai Kunitsugu

Rai Kunitsugu is said to have been a disciple of Rai Kunitoshi and, according to one theory, a cousin of Rai Kunimitsu. As his workmanship strongly reflects the influence of the Sōshū tradition, he has long been counted among the *Masamune Jittetsu* (Ten Great Disciples of Masamune) and is known by the appellation “Kamakura Rai.”

This sword exhibits a finely forged ko-itame jigane, densely packed and bright, with fine ji-nie. The hamon is a chū-suguha with strong nie, within which ashi, yō, and sunagashi are active. The bōshi continues the midare before ending in a strong hakikake (brushed effect), with abundant nie. The pronounced strength of nie throughout both the jigane and hamon vividly expresses a strong Sōshū character.

Although greatly shortened (ō-suriage), it remains a bold appearance, and together with the vigorous jigane and hamon, this piece conveys an impression of formidable power and presence.

4.Hasebe **Kunishige**

In the mid-Nanbokuchō period, active around the same time as Hiromitsu and Akihiro of the Sōshū tradition, the Hasebe school of Yamashiro is noted for its brilliant hitatsura style.

Although the Hasebe school is said to have resided at Gojō Bōmon Inokuma in Kyoto, no extant works bear signatures indicating Yamashiro province. In recent years, the prevailing view holds that the school originated in Yamato, reached maturity in Sōshū, and only later settled in Kyoto. This tachi displays a slender and graceful appearance with pronounced curvature and a small kissaki. The jigane shows areas of flowing hada both toward the hamon and the mune, while the hamon, based on gunome, incorporates tobiyaki, muneyaki, and yubashiri, in places forming a hitatsura-like pattern that vividly expresses the characteristics of the Hasebe school. Both the shape and the jigane and hamon are of exceptionally refined quality, making this an elegant and highly dignified work. Moreover, as a rare signed example of a tachi, it is of considerable importance.

5.Kaneuji

Works by Shizu Saburō Kaneuji from his Yamato period, when he signed “包氏 (Kaneuji),” are traditionally referred to as Yamato Shizu. Today, however, the term is also broadly applied to works by members of the lineage who remained in Yamato and succeeded to the name Kanauji. This example is considered not to be by Kaneuji himself in his earlier phase, but rather by a

successor who inherited the name.

This wakizashi shows a wide mihaba with shallow curvature, typical of the Nanbokuchō period. The jigane is a pure masame-hada with a thick covering of ji-nie, while the hamon is a notare-based pattern that becomes broader toward the middle, where the nie breaks down into active formations, creating a bold and unrestrained impression. The spirited workmanship displays a forceful presence characteristic of Yamato Shizu, and as a signed piece bearing a Jōji date, it is an exceptionally valuable and fine example.

6 則長

Norinaga, regarded as the de facto founder of the Shikkake school—one of the five Yamato traditions—bears a name that was passed down from the Kamakura to the Muromachi period. The workmanship of this school is known for its characteristic small gunome that appear in a continuous pattern, and the appearance of the hamon is noted in the *Funkiyoron* to bear similarities to that of the Taima school of the same province.

This tachi is constructed with a high and relatively wide shinogi. The jigane shows a strongly flowing itame tending toward masame, and both the jigane and hamon are richly covered in nie. The bōshi is strongly hakikake (brushed effect) with a yakitsume tip, featuring typical characteristics of Yamato work. In addition, the continuous small gunome running evenly from the base to the tip clearly indicates the characteristics of the Shikkake school. The nioiguchi is bright yet soft, while fine kinsuji and sunagashi are elegantly applied throughout, resulting in an outstanding example of Shikkake workmanship.

7 行光

Yukimitsu inherited the Sōshū tradition of the Kamakura period from his teacher Shintōgo Kunimitsu and brought its techniques to completion. His workmanship ranges widely, from gentle suguha-based styles to notare and gunome patterns, as well as hitatsura. In all cases, a strong presence of nie and vigorous activity in the jigane and hamon are distinctly evident. This sword features an itame with a thick covering of ji-nie, in which large and small chikei appear, creating a highly expressive jigane. The hamon is primarily gunome, mixed with ko-notare, ko-gunome, and angular elements, showing considerable variety in form. Activities such as ashi, yō, kinsuji, and sunagashi further enhance the hamon, while the densely formed nie sparkles throughout. The combination of a robust jigane and a richly varied hamon achieves the full expressive potential of nie and the ultimate refinement of midare-ba, making this an outstanding work attributed to Yukimitsu.

8 行光

Yukimitsu is regarded as slightly senior to Masamune, the great master of the Sōshū tradition. His workmanship is varied, ranging from suguha-based styles to hitatsura-like creations. However, signed works are extremely scarce and limited to tantō, with only two other examples designated as Tokubetsu Jūyō Tōken (Especially Important Sword) besides this work. This tantō exhibits a strongly forged itame with a prominent surface texture. The hamon consists of a large notare mixed with gunome, with abundant nie. Within the hamon appear activities such as ashi, yō, sunagashi, and kinsuji, together with yubashiri, tobiyaki, and muneyaki. The lively activity created by the nie extends throughout, resulting in a splendid hitatsura-style workmanship that clearly demonstrates the wide range of Yukimitsu's work. As most of his signatures consist of two characters, the addition of "Kamakura jūnin" is extremely rare, and, as it allows his period of activity to be confirmed, this piece holds exceptionally high documentary value for the study of the Sōshū tradition.

9 行光

Yukimitsu is known as a master of the Sōshū tradition, comparable to Masamune and Sadamune. Inheriting the refined suguha of Shintōgo Kunimitsu, he went on to develop a new and diverse range of midare-ba. His workmanship ranges from calm suguha-based styles to large, flamboyant midare. This tantō shows an itame-hada forging densely covered with fine ji-nie, in which thick chikei appear, producing a bright and clear jigane. The hamon is based on a gentle suguha, with a thick covering of ha-nie and a wide nioiguchi. Various activities can also be observed, including kuichigai-ba-like elements and yubashiri. While the overall impression is restrained, the activities, which respond to the strong nie in the jigane and hamon as well as to the forging, reveal a distinct Sōshū character, making this a highly appealing work.

10 貞宗

Sadamune is regarded as a disciple of Masamune. His workmanship is characterized by the strong nie in the jigane and hamon typical of the Sōshū tradition. The hamon, composed of notare mixed with gunome and forming a midare pattern, is generally more restrained than that of Masamune. Most extant works are attributed pieces without signatures. This is a wide sword with an extended kissaki, presenting a form typical of the Nanbokuchō period. The jigane is itame, in which the lower portion shows prominent dark chikei. The

hamon is well-balanced based on a gently undulating notare with a restrained pattern, mixed with numerous small gunome; fine ashi appear frequently, and a refined layer of nie forms over a nioi-based structure. Beneath the yokote, a large kuichigai-ba-like element is visible. Altogether, this sword is composed in an elegant and dignified manner, characteristic of Sadamune's restrained style, while also incorporating an engaging variety of activities. Notably, it is accompanied by an old scabbard indicating its provenance from the Tokugawa shogunal family.

11. Shizu

Shizu refers to a group of swordsmiths that flourished in Shizu, Mino Province, centering on Kaneuji, who moved there from Yamato during the Nanbokuchō period. Among them, Kaneuji is recognized as a leading smith of the Mino tradition of the time, noted for a Sōshū-influenced style characterized by strong nie in both the jigane and hamon, with notare mixed with gunome. This sword, although greatly shortened (ō-suriage), retains the large-scale proportions typical of the Nanbokuchō period. The jigane, with its overall flowing itame-hada, conveys a sense of its Yamato origins, while the hamon, composed of gunome mixed with ko-notare and pointed elements, is rich in nie, with frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. These features clearly reflect Sōshū characteristics, while also revealing a fusion with Yamato elements. It is vividly expressing the historical development of the Shizu school.

12. Norishige,

Norishige, a swordsmith from Etchū Province, is traditionally counted among the Masamune Jittetsu (Ten Great Disciples of Masamune). His workmanship is regarded as the closest to that of Masamune among the Sōshū masters, often revealing even more pronounced variations in nie than Masamune's.

This work exhibits an uchizori curvature with a tapering fukura, forming what is known as a "takenoko-zori" (bamboo-shoot curvature), and is further distinguished by a mitsumune construction with a steeply sloping ridge. The jigane shows a standing itame mixed with masame, with prominent chikei running throughout, forming the distinctive texture known as "matsukawa-hada" (pine-bark grain). The hamon is based on notare, richly accompanied with kinsuji and sunagashi, and displays abundant internal activity, including instances of nijūba, clearly expressing the characteristics of the Sōshū tradition. Altogether, it represents a characteristic example of Norishige's workmanship.

13. Hōjōji

Hōjōji refers to a group of swordsmiths active in the Nanbokuchō period, based in Hōjōji in Tajima Province, with Kunimitsu counted among its leading figures. Signed works by Kunimitsu are rare, and although no signed naginata by his hand are known, he has long been regarded as a master of that form.

This piece was originally a naginata that has been substantially shortened (ō-suriage) and remade as a sword, though it is thought to have once possessed a bold form with a relatively wide mihaba and a large kissaki. The jigane shows prominent itame mixed with mokume and ō-itame, with a pronounced surface texture and visible utsuri. The hamon combines chōji with gunome to create a somewhat flamboyant pattern, recalling in places the Bizen works of the Ichimonji school. As a whole, it is an excellent example of superior workmanship.

14. Fukuoka Ichimonji

The two principal streams of Bizen workmanship in the Kamakura period are the Ichimonji and Osafune schools. The Ichimonji school continued to flourish into the Nanbokuchō period in areas such as Fukuoka, Yoshioka, and Iwato, leaving behind a great number of works. Its style is characterized by chōji-midare, and in particular the Fukuoka Ichimonji school of the mid-Kamakura period is renowned for its large-scale chōji and jūka-chōji, displaying a sumptuous and brilliant quality.

In this work, the jigane exhibits a vividly defined midare-utsuri, while the hamon combines chōji, ko-chōji, and ko-gunome, with abundant ashi and yō, along with tobiyaki and yubashiri, resulting in a lively and flamboyant pattern. It is an outstanding example that fully demonstrates the defining characteristics of the school.

15. Ichi(Yoshioka)

The Ichimonji school, alongside the Osafune school, represents one of the principal streams of Bizen workmanship in the Kamakura period, flourishing in areas such as Fukuoka, Yoshioka, and Iwato. The Yoshioka Ichimonji school, active from the Kamakura into the Nanbokuchō period following the Fukuoka Ichimonji, generally produced works of a somewhat more restrained character in comparison.

In this work, the jigane is a refined itame-hada mixed with mokume, with midare-utsuri clearly visible. The hamon is primarily a narrow suguha with ko-gunome, containing ko-ashi and yō, and showing fine ko-nie with a bright and tight nioiguchi. The emphatic termination of the “一 (ichi)” character in the signature, together with the gentle hamon, clearly reflects the characteristics of the Yoshioka Ichimonji school. Altogether, it is an excellent and well-preserved

work, with both jigane and hamon in fine condition.

16. Nagamitsu

Osafune Nagamitsu, the son of Mitsutada, founder of the Osafune school, is the Kamakura-period swordsmith with the largest number of extant signed works. His high-ranking pieces show almost no unevenness in quality, and he was also an excellent teacher, playing a central role in developing the Osafune lineage into the largest school of swordsmiths in Japan. This sword is *ō-suriage* and unsigned, bearing instead a *kinzōgan-meī* inscription on the tang that reproduces an origami issued by Honami Kōjō in Genroku 6 (1693). The jigane is composed of itame mixed with mokume, covered with a fine and dense layer of *ji-nie*, and displays *midare-utsuri*. The hamon is a *nioi*-based *ko-chōji* mixed with *gunome*, with abundant *ashi* and *yō*, and a soft, bright, and clear *nioiguchi*. Altogether, it is a fine work that well exhibits the characteristic features frequently observed in Nagamitsu's workmanship.

17. Kanemitsu

Kanemitsu, the leading figure of the Osafune school following Kagemitsu, produced dated works that span a long period of approximately 45 years, from Genkō 1 (1321) in the late Kamakura period to Jōji in the Nanbokuchō period. His earlier works, up to around the Kōei era in the early Nanbokuchō period, closely follow the style of his father Kagemitsu. However, from around the Jōwa and Kannō eras, his works become larger in scale, and a *notare*-based hamon which was not found in his earlier work, begins to appear.

Although this sword is greatly shortened (*ō-suriage*), it retains a wide *mihaba*, deep curvature, and a large *kissaki*, displaying the bold and powerful appearance characteristic of the Nanbokuchō period. The hamon is primarily *notare*, incorporating slightly reversed *gunome*, *ko-gunome*, and angular elements, creating a richly varied pattern that clearly reflects Kanemitsu's distinctive style. Accompanying the sword is an origami by Honami Kōchū, appraising it at sixty gold coins.

18. Kanemitsu

Kanemitsu was the leading figure of the Osafune school following Kagemitsu. Works produced up to the early Nanbokuchō period generally follow the style of his father, Kagemitsu. However, from around the Jōwa and Kannō eras, his swords became larger in shape, and a *notare*-based hamon which was previously unseen in his work, began to appear, becoming particularly prevalent around the Bunna and Enbun eras.

This sword exhibits an even wider mihaba and, although greatly shortened (*ō-suriage*), retains a relatively deep curvature. It also has a grand construction with a large kissaki, consistent with an original production date that is thought to have been inscribed as the first year of Bunna. The hamon is based on notare, intermingled with gunome, small *chōji*, angular elements, and pointed forms, and is further enriched with *ashi* and *yō*; it is *nioi*-based with *ko-nie*. Altogether, this is a typical and well-preserved work that clearly displays the characteristic features of Kanemitsu in both *jigane* and hamon.

19. Motomitsu

Motomitsu, a swordsmith of the Bizen-Osafune school during the Nanbokuchō period, is said to have been either a son or a disciple of Kanemitsu. Extant dated works range from Kōei to Eiwa, clearly indicating the period of his activity. His style follows that of Kanemitsu, typically centered on gunome, with variations that include mixed, irregular elements as well as more orderly, consistently aligned gunome patterns.

This tachi has a wide mihaba with little difference between the base and tip widths, and a large kissaki, clearly reflecting the style of the Nanbokuchō period. As it has been shortened only slightly—by just over one sun—it retains a form very close to *ubu*, preserving much of its initial shape and characteristics, which is a particularly valuable point. The hamon is based on *kataochi-gunome*, incorporating pointed and angular elements to create a varied pattern, and, combined with the blade's imposing shape, conveys a powerful and spirited impression.

20. Shigezane

Shigezane is said to have been the younger brother of Motoshige, and his workmanship generally closely resembles that of Motoshige, with a forging style that incorporates Aoe characteristics.

This work is particularly valuable as a signed example by Shigezane. Although shortened (*suriage*), it still retains a powerful *sugata* of approximately 2 shaku 5 sun, and from the position of the signature near the tip of the tang and the original peg hole, it can be inferred that it was originally an exceptionally long tachi of over 2 shaku 8 sun. The *jigane* shows *midare-utsuri*, and while the *nioi*-based hamon is characteristically Bizen in style, the slightly darkish tone of the steel, together with a *chū-suguha* base mixed with somewhat angular gunome and elements resembling *saka-ashi*, clearly reveals the distinctive traits of Shigezane, in which Aoe characteristics are also interwoven.

21. Nagashige

Among the Osafune swordsmiths of the Nanbokuchō period, the group of brothers Nagashige and Chōgi stands out for exhibiting a particularly strong Sōshū-style influence. While Nagashige's extant works include dated examples from Kenmu 1 and 2 and Kōei 1, no works by Chōgi are known to predate Jōwa 6 (Shōhei 5), and for this reason Nagashige is generally considered the elder brother.

This sword has a wide mihaba and a large kissaki, and despite being greatly shortened (ō-suriage), it clearly reflects the characteristics of the Nanbokuchō period. The jigane shows a prominent itame with a well-raised surface and visible chikei, while the hamon combines ko-notare, gunome, and chōji-style undulations, with abundant ashi and yō. The nioiguchi is wide and firmly nie-based, with frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, strongly expressing the features of Sōden-Bizen. The interior and boundary of the hamon are also richly active, presenting a highly varied and visually engaging appearance.

22. Chōgi

Chōgi ranks alongside Kanemitsu as one of the most outstanding swordsmiths among the many Bizen craftsmen of the Nanbokuchō period associated with the so-called Sōden-Bizen style. His works can be broadly divided into those that are nioi-based and those with strong nie in both jigane and hamon. In particular, the latter type shows an even more pronounced Sōshū influence than that of Kanemitsu. For this reason, it has long been said that "among Bizen swordsmiths, none departs further from Bizen traditions than Chōgi."

This tachi, though shortened (suriage), retains a long and imposing sugata with a deep curvature. The hamon is based on notare mixed with gunome, with active ashi, yō, and kinsuji, and displays the characteristic mountain-shaped gunome-midare associated with Chōgi. As a signed work bearing a Kōryaku date, it is extremely rare and of high documentary value.

23. Kanenaga

This work is by Kanenaga, who is regarded as a member of the school of Osafune Chōgi, and it presents the powerful appearance characteristic of the Nanbokuchō period, with a wide mihaba and a markedly extended kissaki. The jigane is a fine ko-itame mixed with flowing hada, accompanied by a faint midare-utsuri. The hamon consists of gunome with an open base, mixed with chōji and pointed elements, with abundant ashi and yō, and is strongly covered in ara-nie. With its bold and imposing form and a highly varied, strongly nie-based hamon, the sword conveys a powerful impression and may be regarded as an excellent work that clearly

demonstrates the characteristics of Kanenaga.

24. Kanenaga

Kanenaga is said to have been a member of the school of Osafune Chōgi. Among his relatively few signed works are a wakizashi dated Jōji 5 (1366) designated an Important Art Object, as well as tantō dated Shitoku 4 (1387) designated Jūyō Tōken (Important Sword) and Kakei 2 (1385) designated Tokubetsu Jūyō Tōken (Especially Important Sword). In the case of katana, however, most are attributed works with no signature (mumei). His workmanship includes examples that closely resemble Chōgi, with particularly strong nie and active hataraki within the hamon, as well as pieces featuring chōji-style elements and large-patterned midare.

Although this sword is ō-suriage and mumei, it exhibits typical Nanbokuchō-period appearance, and both the jigane and hamon remain in their original condition. While it displays workmanship reminiscent of Chōgi, the somewhat restrained and smaller-patterned midare is a key point in attributing it to Kanenaga.

25. Yasumitsu

A group of swordsmiths who flourished in Osafune during the Ōei era in the early Muromachi period are collectively referred to as Ōei-Bizen. Yasumitsu, together with Morimitsu, is regarded as one of the leading smiths of this group. The school's workmanship includes both flamboyant midare-ba with open-based gunome mixed with chōji, and calm suguha.

This work has a slightly slender tachi shape with a curvature toward the base reminiscent of the Kamakura period. However, it also shows typical features of the early Muromachi period, such as a relatively thick kasane compared to its mihaba and a slight saki-zori. The hamon is a brilliant midare-ba combining chōji, gunome, and open-based patterns characteristic of Yasumitsu, and also shows midare-utsuri, fully expressing the distinctive features of Ōei-Bizen.

26. Hidetsugu

Hidetsugu is a swordsmith of the Ko-Aoe school, with dated works from the Kagen, Enkei, and Shōwa eras. In signature references, inscriptions such as “Bitchū no kuni Manju no shō jū Saemon no jō Hidetsugu” and “Bitchū Manju no shō jū Saemon no jō Hidetsugu” are recorded. This tachi has a somewhat wide mihaba with a slight difference between the widths at the base and the tip. Although shortened (suriage), it retains a curvature toward the base with additional curvature toward the tip, forming a chū-kissaki. The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame that is tightly compacted, with a thick ji-nie, and displays midare-utsuri and suji-utsuri. The hamon is

based on a chū-suguha mixed with ko-gunome and some gunome, with well-developed ashi, including areas of saka-ashi. Altogether, it is an excellent work that clearly exhibits the characteristics of the Aoe school, and it also holds high value as a reference for its inscribed court title Saemon no jō and dated signature.

27. Kunihiro(国弘)

Kunihiro, a member of the Samonji (Sa) school that emerged in the early Nanbokuchō period, is known through only a small number of signed works. However, a tantō dated Shōhei 2 provides a general indication of his period of activity. Traditionally, the Honami family has tended to attribute the most vigorously midare works within the Sa school to Kunihiro.

Although this sword is greatly shortened (ō-suriage) and unsigned, it exhibits a wide mihaba and a large kissaki, presenting the bold and powerful sugata characteristic of the Nanbokuchō period. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, flowing and standing out prominently. The hamon is notare-based with gunome, with frequent ashi and yō, and is further enriched with kinsuji and sunagashi. The bōshi turns sharply upward to a pointed tip. Altogether, it is a highly engaging work that displays many of the characteristic features of the Sa school.

28. Kunihiro(国広)

Kunihiro was originally a samurai who served the Itō family of the Obi domain in Hyūga Province. After the family fell into decline, he traveled throughout various regions while refining his sword-making skills, producing works in different locations along the way. From Keichō 4 (1599), he settled in Ichijō Horikawa in Kyoto, where he trained many outstanding disciples. He is said to have died in Keichō 19 (1614).

This wakizashi dates from his later years. The jigane shows a zanguri-hada, with a clearly visible mizukage near the hamachi, and is decorated on both sides with finely carved designs of a staff and Daruma. In addition, the tang bears a long signature as well as an ownership inscription of Mukai Shōgen Tadakatsu, a Tokugawa retainer active from the Momoyama to the early Edo period, who later became a hatamoto with a stipend of 6,000 koku.

29. Yasutsugu

The first-generation Yasutsugu was born in Shimosaka-gō, Sakata District, Ōmi Province, and initially known as Shimosaka Ichizaemon. He later moved to Echizen, where he entered the service of Yūki Hideyasu. In his early career, he signed “Higo Daijō Shimosaka,” but in the Keichō era he was summoned to Edo and forged swords before Tokugawa Ieyasu and Hidetada.

In recognition of his skill, he was granted the use of the hollyhock crest (aoi-mon) and the character “康 (Yasu),” whereupon he changed his name to Yasutsugu.

During the fall of Osaka Castle, Yasutsugu retempered the famous Osaka treasure “Shishi Sadamune”, which had been damaged by fire, and also produced several copies; this wakizashi is considered to be one of them. The dark-toned steel, the somewhat subdued nioiguchi, and the coarse nie clearly reflect the characteristics of his work, while the blade carving in the style of Kinnai is also superbly executed.

30. Sa Yukihide

Sa Yukihide was born in Bunka 10 (1813) in Asakura-Hoshimaru-no-Sato, Jōza District, Chikuzen Province, as the legitimate son of Itō Matabei Morishige. In Tenpō 1 (1831), he went to Edo, where he studied swordsmithing under Shimizu Hisayoshi, a disciple of Hosokawa Masayoshi. In Ansei 2 (1855), he entered the service of the Tosa domain. From around the end of Manen 1 (1860) to the beginning of Bunkū 2 (1862), he again went to Edo, where he worked while residing at the Tosa domain’s residence in Sunamura, Fukagawa.

The well-forged ko-itame jigane and the bright, vividly clear nioiguchi of this work shows the high level of his skill. While many of his works from the late Edo period exhibit a wide mihaba and large kissaki, this sword is unusually slender, suggesting that it was modeled after an earlier classical example.

31. Munetsugu

The first-generation Iyo no Jō Munetsugu, who went by the name Sakai Sanemon, is said to have come from a family that served as Shintō priests at Tenmangū Shrine in Nagase Village, the birthplace of Tadayoshi. He later moved to Nagase-machi in the castle town of Saga, where he took up swordsmithing, and subsequently relocated to Isahaya in Hizen Province. His workmanship is characterized by well-developed nie in both the jigane and hamon, with lively midare incorporating kinsuji and sunagashi, and he is particularly known for producing works in the Shizu style within the Sōshū tradition.

This sword displays a brilliant midare hamon incorporating a variety of elements, and the bōshi continues the midare before ending in a strong hakikake (brushed effect), clearly reflecting the characteristics of this smith. In addition, its blade is wide and long, and deep curvature give it a robust and powerful shape. Overall, this is an outstanding work that fully demonstrates the true capabilities of the first-generation Iyo no Jō Munetsugu.

-Fittings-

1. Mizu Ko Take Zutsu Zu Mitokoromono(Bamboo WaterBottle)

(Attached)Origami by Enpō 4 nen Dai 150 Kanmon KŌRO (1676)

Kōjō, the fourth-generation head of the Gotō family, was the legitimate son of the third-generation Jōshin. He initially served the Ashikaga shogunate and later entered the service of Oda Nobunaga. Highly esteemed as a master metalworker, he is often regarded as second in skill only to the first-generation Yūjō.

Teijō, the ninth-generation master of the Gotō family, served the Maeda family of Kaga and made a significant contribution to the flourishing of Kaga-hyakumangoku culture.

This set of matching fittings (soroi-kanagu) bears an attribution and accompanying origami by the tenth-generation Renjō (Mitsutomo), identifying the kōgai and menuki as works of Kōjō, and the kozuka as a work of Teijō. Executed in refined shakudō Nanako-ji ground with lustrous high relief carving, it is an outstanding example that fully demonstrates the sophisticated metalworking techniques of the distinguished Gotō lineage.

2. Chasen Zu Tsuba

The main lineages representing Higo metalwork are the four families of Hayashi, Hirata, Nishigaki, and Shimizu. Their respective founders were all retained by Hosokawa Sansai Tadaoki and worked under his patronage and guidance. The first-generation Shimizu Jingo is said to have been a nephew of Hirata Hikozō, and his style displays an especially striking individuality even within the Higo tradition.

This work is an iron tsuba (sword guard) featuring, on the obverse, a large tea whisk rendered in bold brass suemon-zōgan, while on the reverse a feather duster is depicted in much smaller scale using the same technique. The dynamic composition—placing a dominant motif on the front and a more restrained design within ample space on the reverse—is characteristic of Jingo’s work, resulting in a piece that conveys both strength and a refined sense of wabi-sabi.

3. Musashino Sukashi Tsuba(The Wilderness CalledMusashino)

Yasuchika studied under Shōami Chinkyū and Nara Tatsumasa, and was taken under the wing of Matsudaira Daigaku no kami, the feudal lord of Moriyama in Ōshū with a fief of 20,000 goku. In the 16th year of the Kyōhō era (1731), at the age of 61, he took monastic vows and adopted the name Tōu. He left behind numerous masterpieces and is now celebrated, along with Nara Toshinaga and Sugiura Jōi, as one of the “Three Masters of Nara.”

The ground of this tsuba is made of brass, retaining a textured surface that lends it a sense of strength, while also evoking the transparency of dewdrops resting on lush reeds. The fluttering dragonflies are rendered in gold paint, creating an exquisite composition that skillfully captures the sense of space. This is a magnificent work that encapsulates Anchin's artistic world, with the base metal, carving technique, and composition all executed to the highest standard.

-Special Exhibit-

1. Rai Kunitsugu

Rai Kunitsugu is said to have been a disciple of Rai Kunitoshi and, according to one theory, a cousin of Rai Kunimitsu. Since early times, he has been counted among the Ten Great Disciples of Masamune and is known by the appellation "Kamakura Rai." This reflects a style characterized by midare-based hamon with strong nie, as well as a jigane with thick ji-nie and prominent chikei, showing considerable influence from the Sōshū tradition.

This tachi is one of the few extant examples by this smith that remain in their original ubu state and are signed. In contrast, it displays a calm and restrained hamon that appears to adhere closely to the traditional Rai style. Combined with its slender and graceful shape, the overall impression is one of refined elegance.

2. Shikkake Norinaga

The Shikkake school flourished from the late Kamakura period. Although the names of its members, including Hironori, who is regarded as its founder, appear in old records, signed works by these smiths are rarely seen. In practice, Norinaga is considered the de facto founder, and it is known that the lineage continued intermittently into the Muromachi period, with later generations bearing the same name.

The workmanship of this school is characterized by a wide and high shinogi, with a jigane of flowing itame, and a hamon based on suguha—features common to Yamato works. A distinctive trait, however, is the presence of ko-gunome arranged in succession within the hamon, which is clearly seen in this sword. This sword is also of great documentary importance, bearing a kinzōgan-meī (gold-inlay signature) by Honami Kōjō as well as an origami by Kōon.

3. Sadamune ※6.6(Tue)-7.5(Sun)

Sadamune is said to have been a disciple of Masamune and later adopted by him, and his period of swordmaking spans from the very end of the Kamakura period into the early Nanbokuchō

period. While he most faithfully inherited his master's style, differences can be seen in his comparatively gentle workmanship and larger overall shape.

This sword, although greatly shortened (*ō-suriage*), shows a form characteristic of the Nanbokuchō period, with a wide *mihaba*, little difference between the width at the base and tip, and a large *ō-kissaki*. The well-forged *jigane* is densely worked with *chikei*, and the *hamon*, based on *notare*, displays variations in the strength of *nie* and in the width of the *nioiguchi*, clearly demonstrating the characteristic features of this smith. According to the *Kyōhō Meibutsuchō*, it is described as “*Ōsaka no gyobutsu; kore saku tō no jōjō nari,*” and is also known as “*Ōsaka Sadamune.*”

4. Chōgi※7.7(Tue)-7.20(Mon)

Chōgi ranks alongside Kanemitsu as one of the most outstanding swordsmiths among the many Bizen craftsmen of the Nanbokuchō period associated with the so-called Sōden-Bizen style. His works can be broadly divided into those that are *nioi*-based and those with strong *nie* in both *jigane* and *hamon*. In particular, the latter type shows an even more pronounced Sōshū influence than that of Kanemitsu. For this reason, it has long been said that “among Bizen swordsmiths, none departs further from Bizen traditions than Chōgi.”

This sword exhibits a form characteristic of the Nanbokuchō period, with a wide *mihaba* and a large *ō-kissaki*. The *hamon* features large-scale patterns incorporating *ō-gunome*, *chōji*-like elements, and *ko-notare*, with well-developed *ha-nie* and marked variations in height. The *bōshi* continues in *midare*, rising sharply and turning back in a pointed manner, clearly demonstrating the distinctive features of this smith.

5. Morimitsu

The group of swordsmiths who flourished in Osafune during the Ōei era in the early Muromachi period are collectively referred to as “*Ōei Bizen,*” among whom Morimitsu is regarded as a leading figure. Many of his works are characterized by brilliant *chōji*-based *hamon* that at first glance recall Kamakura-period Osafune or Ichimonji works; however, a distinctive feature is the presence of elements in which the base of the *midare* opens out in a characteristic manner.

This *tachi* shows a *jigane* of *itame* mixed with *chikei*, with well-defined *utsuri*, and a flamboyant high *chōji* *hamon*, incorporating areas where the base of the *midare* opens out. The *bōshi* continues in *midare* and turns back in a pointed manner, clearly demonstrating the characteristics of Ōei Bizen workmanship. In particular, the gently rounded heads of the *midare*

well express the distinctive qualities of Morimitsu. This is an excellent work that was formerly preserved in the collection of the Kishū Tokugawa family during the feudal period.

6. Ryōsai

Ryōsai is regarded as the founder of the classical tradition in Chikuzen. Since a tachi dated to the Einin era exists by Nyūsai, who is considered either his disciple or younger brother, Ryōsai's period of activity is thought to fall in the late Kamakura period.

This tantō shows a very slight inward curvature (uchizori) and a pointed kissaki with little fukura. The jigane consists of flowing itame tending toward masame, while the hamon, which ends before reaching the tang (yakiotoshi), is composed of a narrow suguha mixed with a shallow ko-notare, with a somewhat subdued nioiguchi. Both the jigane and hamon clearly display the classical style characteristic of Kyūshū works. As no other extant examples by Ryōsai are known, this piece is extremely rare and of great documentary importance.

7. Kinnashi-ji Kirimon Makie Saya Chīsagatana Koshirae

The hilt is of ray skin without tsukamaki (dashizame-tsuka), featuring a large and exceptionally well-formed oyatsubu (a node of ray skin). The scabbard is finished with a gold nashiji ground, over which gold flakes have been applied and polished (kin-hirame), and is further decorated with scattered paulownia crests in gold maki-e.

Elements that are typically made of lacquered horn—such as the kashira, koikuchi, kurigata, uragawara, and kaerizuno—are here elaborately rendered in a kinikakeji finish and decorated with paulownia arabesque designs in maki-e, resulting in a highly refined work. The matching fittings, including tsbokasa menuki, fuchi, tsuba, and kozuka, all unified with paulownia motifs, are of fine workmanship, and the bold shaping of the scabbard is also excellent. Together with the mellow patina acquired over time, this mounting conveys a sense of age and is both magnificent and dignified.

The sword mounted in this koshirae is the tantō signed Ryōsai (Special Exhibit No. 6).

8. Shinkan Hiden Shō(Tenshō 19 nen Hon)(1591)

This text is one of the appraisal manuals (mekikisho) of the Takeya family, who were engaged professionally in polishing and connoisseurship, and is considered to have been compiled in the Tenshō period. Multiple textual lineages have been identified, and some of these served as the base texts for early printed editions such as *Honchō Kokon Meizukushi*, published in the Keichō era. As such, it is an important source that captures the process by which knowledge of swords

spread during the transition from the medieval to the early modern period.

In the section describing the workmanship of Sadamune, it notes that the itame is dense, the jigane appears bluish yet also reddish in tone, and that the hamon is whitish in appearance, featuring notare and tama-ba, with abundant nie. It also notes, “Kuden ni iu, futasuji-hi wo konomu” (“According to oral tradition, he favored futasuji-hi (parallel double grooves)”).