

—Nagasone KOTETSU—

1 Jū Tōeisan Shinobugaoka Hen Nagasone TORA Nyūdō

Kanbun 11 nen 2 Gatsu Kisshōjitsu

The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame-hada with a tightly packed texture and fine ji-nie, resulting in a clear appearance. The hamon begins with a short suguha at the tang, followed by notare interspersed with gunome and thick ashi. Fine nie activity appears throughout, and the nioiguchi is bright and clear.

From Kanbun 4 (1664) onward, Kotetsu used the character “虎” in his signature. However, there are also examples, such as this sword, in which he used “虎” in combination with a nyūdō-me (monastic signature), and such examples continued into the Enpō era. “東叡山忍岡辺 (Tōeizan Shinobugaoka-atari)” is a residential-place signature used from Kanbun 11 (1671) onward. One theory holds that it refers to the area around Ueno, but the details remain uncertain. In addition to its workmanship, this sword is a valuable example for the study of signature styles and dated inscriptions.

2 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU

This sword has a distinct difference in width between the base and tip, a relatively shallow curvature, and a medium-sized kissaki, displaying the typical feature of a Kanbun Shintō-period sword. The jigane is finely forged with a strong, refined texture. The hamon begins short at the tang and is relatively wide overall, consisting of notare interspersed with gunome. In some sections, the gunome connect to form what is known as a “juzu-ba” pattern, while the occasional irregularities in the hamon appear more gently undulating, giving parts of it a notare-like appearance. The sword also displays thick ashi and the distinctive deep hardening right below the yokote line on the inner side, further exhibiting the characteristic features of Kotetsu’s work. With its many noteworthy features, this is an outstanding sword.

3 Nagasone OKISATO Saku

This powerful wakizashi features katagiriba-zukuri construction, with a wide blade and a large point (ō-kissaki). The well-forged jigane has a ko-itame pattern with abundant ji-nie. The hamon begins with a straight pattern at the tang, followed by relatively large gunome that continue along the blade. In places, the connected gunome form a hyōtan-ba-like pattern, with thick ashi appearing throughout. The rounded nakago-saki (tip of the tang) is also characteristic of Kotetsu’s early work, featuring an iriyamagata shape with a pointed peak. The bright, clear hamon harmonizes with its bold, powerful form, further enhancing its strength. The blade carvings on both sides and the unusual inscription on the back also suggest that this sword may have been made to order.

4 Dōsaku Horu Kore Nagasone OKISATO

(Gold Inlay)Futatsu Dō Setsudan Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa(Monogram)

(Gold Inlay)Mitsudō Setsudan Dō Hitotsu ha Sūdo

Kono Tsurugi Gō Hifumi

Yamano Kanjūrō Naganari(Monogram)

This wakizashi has the same blade construction as No. 3. It clearly displays characteristics of Kotetsu’s early work, including the hyōtan-ba pattern, but what is particularly striking about this piece is its rich and elaborate blade

carvings and the inscription carved in sukidashi-style relief on the tang. The sankotsuka-tsuki-ken (Sword with a three-pronged vajra hilt) motif is remarkable for its powerful carving, while the hairyū (a crawling dragon), although somewhat worn down by polishing, shows features shared with the sword guard of No. 1, including the forms of its dorsal fins, claws, and scales. The distinctive inscription on the tang has only one similar example, found on one of the three daishō sets currently known. The tang also bears a gold-inlaid saidan-meī (cutting test inscription) by the Yamano family. Here, Kanjūrō Yamano uses the name “Naganari (永成)” rather than “Hisahide (久英),” a name he is known to have used only temporarily around Manji 2 (1659). These features make this wakizashi an object of exceptional documentary value.

## **5 Nagasone Okisato KOTETSU Nyūdō**

**(Gold Inlay)Manji 4 nen Uzuki 19 nichi**

**Yamano Kanjūrō Narihisa(Monogram)**

**Mitsudō Setsudan**

This sword displays the characteristic form of a Kanbun-Shintō sword, with a distinct difference in width between the base and the tip and a shallow curvature. The shinogi-ji strongly shows a masame grain, a hallmark of swords made in Edo. The jigane is based on a finely and tightly forged ko-itame hada, while the lower part of the blade incorporates the rougher texture known as tekogane, a feature particular to this swordsmith. The hamon begins with a long, straight yakidashi of uniform width at the tang, known as an Edo-style yakidashi. The prominent “hyōtan-ba” pattern, formed by continuous large and small gunome, and the distinctive Kotetsu-style bōshi, in which the hardened edge is extended below the yokote before turning into a small rounded tip, are characteristic of this period. Taken together, these features make this sword a truly representative example of Kotetsu’s work from his Hane-Tora period. There are areas where the nioiguchi contains abundant nie, and the varied forms of the ashi and yō, together with variations in the way nie-suji appear, give this sword a greater richness of activity than is usually seen in Kotetsu’s early-period works. This diversity is one of the appealing features of this piece.

## **6 Nagasone Okisato KOTETSU Nyūdō**

**Dōsaku Horu Kore Kanbun 1 nen 8 Gatsujitsu**

This wakizashi has a large form often seen in Kotetsu’s work from the early Kanbun period and features katakiriba-zukuri, a construction style he occasionally used. The hamon has a relatively narrow width throughout, yet displays the bright and clear characteristics of the hyōtan-ba pattern, with a nioiguchi that becomes uneven in places and areas of rough nie. The hamon also incorporates Seki-style features, such as tall gunome-chōji and pointed pattern, which are relatively uncommon among Kotetsu’s works. The tang is also distinctive, with an iriyamagata shape rounded toward the edge side and kesho-yasuri (decorative file marks), features characteristic of swords from the Manji and Kanbun eras. The bold ken-tsukami-ryū (a dragon grasping a sword with its claws) carving on the reverse side of the blade, suggestive of an origin in Echizen, is particularly appealing. This is also a rare example in which a long inscription is engraved on the reverse side of the blade. It is an outstanding example of Kotetsu’s early-period work, both in its workmanship and its documentary value.

## **7 Dōsaku Horu Kore Nagasone Okisato KOTETSU Nyūdō**

**(Gold Inlay)Kanbun 1 nen Shimotsuki 25 Nichi**

**Yamano Kaemon 64 Sai Nagahisa(Monogram)**

**Wakige Futatsudō Tabitabi Mitsudō Setsudan**

This wakizashi has a wide sugata and a large tip (ō-kissaki), features often seen in Kotetsu's work, giving it a solid, substantial appearance and considerable weight in the hand. The jigane consists primarily of a finely and tightly forged ko-itame hada, interspersed with areas where the grain is somewhat more prominent. The hamon features the long, straight yakidashi seen in Kotetsu's early-period works, followed by a hyōtan-ba pattern formed by continuous large and small gunome. The bōshi has a form that boldly emphasizes the Kotetsu-style bōshi, with the large tip extending well forward. In this way, the characteristic jigane and hamon of the Hane-Tora period are skillfully rendered in a grand, powerful form. Examples with such a large form are found among Kotetsu's early works from the Manji and early Kanbun eras. The relief carving of Daikoku in the lower part of the reverse side, a motif occasionally seen in Kotetsu's work, also suggests that this was an ambitious work by him.

## 8 Nagasone KOTETSU Nyūdō Okisato

This is a rare naginata among Kotetsu's works. It has a relatively wide blade with a pronounced curvature, and its finely forged ko-itame hada is complemented by abundant ji-nie, resulting in a refined and beautiful jigane. The hamon features a relatively long yakidashi at the tang, followed above by a hyōtan-ba pattern formed by continuous large gunome, giving it the characteristic workmanship of Kotetsu. The abundant nie, together with kinsuji and sunagashi in the temper line and occasional areas resembling nijūba, gives the blade a rich variety of activity. The deep nioiguchi is bright and clear in both the jigane and hamon, adding to the sword's dynamic character and vigorous presence. These features are particularly striking. This piece is said to have been an heirloom of Maeda Yoshinori, the sixth lord of the Kaga Maeda family, and is a fine work with a distinguished provenance.

## 9 Kin Nashi-ji Kamon Makie Saya Naginata Koshirae

## 10 KOTETSU Nyūdō Okisato

### Horimono Dōsaku

Nagasone Kotetsu changed the signature on his swords from “虎徹” to “虎徹” in Kanbun 4 (1664). His style is broadly divided into early and later periods around this time. The early period is characterized by the “hyōtan-ba” pattern, in which gunome of varying sizes and heights form a series of gourd-like shapes, while the later period is known for the “juzu-ba” pattern, in which the heads of the gunome align in a continuous row.

Based on the style of its inscription, this piece is thought to date to around Kanbun 4 and was made shortly after Kotetsu changed his signature to “虎徹.” The jigane features a finely and tightly forged ko-itame hada, while the hamon consists of small notare with accompanying gunome, forming a juzu-ba-like pattern. Abundant ko-nie, together with prominent kinsuji and sunagashi in the hamon and a bright, clear nioiguchi, demonstrates the exceptional quality of the workmanship, making this a masterpiece. The Daikokuten within the recess (hitsu) also displays Kotetsu's distinctive carving skills, demonstrating his outstanding ability not only as a swordsmith but also as a carver.

## 11 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU

This sword is believed to have been made around Kanbun 5 (1665), based on the style of its inscription. The jigane is a tightly forged itame-hada, while the hamon consists primarily of suguha above a short yakidashi, with ko-notare and gunome in succession and prominent ashi. The hamon has a juzu-ba-like appearance, characteristic of the so-called Hako-Tora period. Compared with his usual works, this sword has a stronger nie

presence, with pronounced activities such as kinsuji and chikei, giving it a powerful and impressive appearance. The signature is carved on the hoki-omote side, indicating that the sword was originally made as a tachi. Very few extant works by Kotetsu bear a tachi-style inscription, making this sword particularly valuable as a historical reference.

## 12 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU

Based on the style of its signature, this sword is believed to have been made around Kanbun 5 (1665), around the time Kotetsu began using the signature “**糸徹**.” The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame-hada with a tightly packed texture and abundant ji-nie. The hamon consists of successive gunome forming a juzu-ba-like pattern, with abundant nie, relatively long ashi, kinsuji, and sunagashi. The nioiguchi is bright and clear, displaying the distinctive characteristics of Kotetsu and demonstrating his outstanding skill. The hamon also partially exhibits a major characteristic of his early-period works: large and small gunome forming a series of gourd-like shapes (hyōtan-ba). This sword thus combines features of both his early- and later-period styles.

## 13 Nagasone OKISATO

### Kanbun 7 nen 2 Gatsu Kichijitsu

This wakizashi has a slender blade with a relatively thin kasane, a pronounced difference in width between the base and tip, and a deeply curved shape. The jihada is a refined ko-itame-hada with flowing areas of itame and abundant ji-nie, while the hamon combines notare with gunome and ko-gunome. Both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear, demonstrating a high level of craftsmanship.

What is particularly noteworthy about this piece is the hamon, with its wide nioiguchi and abundant, sparkling nie that gives the blade a bright, clear appearance. Long kinsuji and sunagashi appear throughout, with sections taking on the appearance of kuichigai-ba and nijū-ba. The varied activity both along and within the hamon gives the blade a dynamic, vigorous character, demonstrating the swordsmith's exceptional skill.

The Boshi forms an ichimai-like style, with heavy hakikake sweeping up into a flame pattern. The bold and powerful workmanship suggests that his aim was to emulate Go.

## 14 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU(Nabeshima KOTETSU)

Although this sword bears no date of manufacture, the style of its signature suggests that it was made around Kanbun 8 (1668). According to the sayagaki (Inscribed attribution on the scabbard) by Dr. Satō Kanzan, the sword was passed down in the Nabeshima family of Hizen Province.

The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame-hada with a tightly packed texture, abundant ji-nie, and fine, well-defined chikei, giving it a bright and clear appearance. The hamon has a wide nioiguchi and consists of a broad suguha with shallow notare and successive gunome, forming a juzu-ba-like pattern. These features clearly express the characteristic qualities of Kotetsu's work. With its bright, clear jigane and hamon, along with a healthy sugata it has been preserved in excellent condition, this is a masterful piece by Kotetsu that perfectly showcases the finest of his capabilities.

## 15 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU

This wakizashi is believed to have been made around Kanbun 10 (1670), based on the style of its signature. The difference in width between the base and tip, together with its shallow curvature, gives it a distinctly Kanbun Shintō appearance. The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame-hada, and the abundant fine ji-nie gives it a bright, clear

appearance. The hamon is a broad suguha with shallow notare and interspersed gunome, forming a juzu-ba-like pattern, with a wide nioiguchi. The boshi continues in notare and turns back in ko-maru (round turnback), further displaying the characteristic features of Kotetsu's work. Fine sunagashi appear within the hamon, while ko-nie are abundant along the habuchi, making this wakizashi an impressive work.

## 16 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU

This sword is believed to have been made around Enpō 2 (1674) and was designated an Important Art Object in Shōwa 16 (1941).

The sword has a somewhat wide blade with a taper from the base to the tip and a shallow curvature, displaying the typical feature of a Kanbun Shintō sword. The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame-hada with a tightly packed texture, abundant fine ji-nie, and chikei. The hamon has a wide nioiguchi and consists of gunome in a shallow notare, with both the jigane and hamon appearing bright and clear. Abundant nie-suji appear within the hamon, while fine kinsuji can be seen near the habuchi. Rich in features of interest, this is an outstanding work that fully demonstrates Kotetsu's skill.

## 17 Nagasone Okisato Nyūdō KOTETSU

Although this sword bears no date, it is believed to have been made around Kanbun 11 (1671). The jigane is a finely forged ko-itame-hada with a tightly packed texture and abundant fine ji-nie. The hamon is a broad suguha with shallow notare, containing round-headed gunome with thick, frequent ashi. The nioiguchi is wide, and both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear. The bōshi is deeply tempered across the yokote, immediately turning back near the tip in a distinct komaru (small round shape). The hamon features the distinctive juzu-ba pattern of interconnected gunome said to have been originated by Kotetsu. Together with the refined and robust jigane, this sword fully displays the characteristic qualities of Kotetsu's work.

## 18 Nagasone OKISATO

This wakizashi has a wide blade, a thick kasane, and a large tip (ō-kissaki), giving it a particularly bold and imposing form. The hamon begins with a broad suguha at the tang, followed by ko-notare interspersed with ō-gunome and gunome. Thick ashi appear frequently, resulting in a wide nioiguchi, with kinsuji and sunagashi also present. This is a work in which Kotetsu's full ability is displayed to great effect. The carvings on both sides of the blade are also believed to have been carved by Kotetsu himself, although they bear no accompanying signature. In particular, a broad sanko-tsuka-ken (Sword with a three-pronged vajra hilt) motif is carved in relief within the recess (hitsu) on the front side. Together with the imposing form of the sword itself, the carving gives the work a powerful presence. It is also worth noting that swords from this period often have keshō-ana (second peg hole), as seen on this sword.

## 19 Nagasone OKISATO

This wakizashi is thought to date from around Enpō 3-4 (1675-1676), judging from the style of its inscription. It has a wide blade with little difference in width between the base and the tip, a shallow curvature, and an elongated kissaki, a shape sometimes seen in this swordsmith's wakizashi. The jigane has a tightly packed ko-itame-hada with fine chikei. The hamon begins with a suguha at the tang and features thick nie and a bright, clear nioiguchi, characteristics of his work. The bōshi also displays his distinctive style, with a narrower area of temper above the yokote. Of particular note is the abundance of activity within the hamon, including numerous kinsuji. The carvings on both sides of the blade are simple yet skillfully done with effective chisel work, harmonizing with the blade.

## 20 Nagasone OKISATO Shintan Saku

This wakizashi has a very robust shape, with a blade that is wide for its length and noticeably thick in kasane. The jigane is a tightly forged ko-itame hada resulting in a bright and clear appearance. The hamon is predominantly a broad suguha-like temper line, with small notare and small gunome mixed in around the base and the monouchi, giving it a juzu-ba-like pattern. The blade is powerful and full of vigor, and its bright, clear appearance is particularly impressive. The mitsumune (three-sided ridge) construction is also unusual.

The second peg hole (mekugi-ana) on this blade is a “kiku-ana”, a type of ornamental peg hole (keshō-ana) shaped like a chrysanthemum. Kotetsu occasionally made swords with such ornamental peg holes, including “tsubo-ana”, shaped like a pot viewed from the side, and peg holes formed by overlapping two ordinary round holes to create a gourd-like shape.

## 21 Oite Bushū Edo Nagasone OKISATO

This kabuto (helmet) bears a signature Nagasone Okisato and is believed to have been made during the Meireki era (1655–1658), based on the style of the inscription. The bowl’s raised profile at the rear (kōshōzangata), the technique used to wrap the ridges of the bowl, the fitting around the hole at the top of the helmet bowl (hachiman-za) and traces of silver brazing along the fukurin (metal border) of the babisashi (helmet visor) reveal features shared with the work of other armorers of the Nagasone school and armorers from Kaga.

Although the helmet has a rugged overall appearance, the plates forming the helmet bowl have been forged to a remarkably uniform thickness. The raised shinog-suji running along the front center of the bowl and the square-shaped fukurin of the mabisashi also demonstrate his considerable skill as an armorer.

## 22 Enpō 2 Kinoe Tora nen Kichigatsu Kittan

Minamoto-no-Yoshisada Kabuto wo Mochiite Ki-no-KAZUTERU Kore wo Mosu  
Nagasone OKIHIRO Tsukuru

This helmet bowl was made by Nagasone Okihiro, an armorer of the Nagasone school. It is constructed from twelve well-forged iron plates joined together. The helmet visor sharply crafted in oroshi-mabisashi shape also demonstrates his high level of skill.

The inscription can be interpreted as stating that the helmet was made by someone named Kino Kazunori as a copy of a helmet belonging to Nitta Yoshisada. However, the style of this helmet bowl dates to the late Muromachi period, rather than the Nanbokuchō period, when Nitta Yoshisada was active. It is therefore thought that the tradition handed down at the time contained an error. Nevertheless, the fact that this helmet was modeled on an old object is intriguing, as it connects to the revivalist style of armor that developed more fully from the mid-Edo period onward.

## 23 Oite Bushū Edo Saku

Nagasone OKISATO

This is a type of kote (armed sleeves) known as fukube-gote or Oda-gote, in which gourd-shaped plates are arranged among the chain links. The inscription on the reverse of the crown plate indicates that it was made by Nagasone Okisato. The characters of the signature are generally rounded, and the upward flick of the left-hand dot in the character read as “okisato” is also seen on the tsuba in Nos. 1 and 5 and on the Oda-gote in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum.

The Oda-gote in the Tokyo National Museum’s collection is a carefully crafted example of uchimawashi-gote, a style

that covers the arms up to the armpits and features extensive kirigane decoration. However, its chain links are single-layered and do not cover the undersides of the arms. Although this work has more restrained kirigane decoration, its chain links are double-layered and extend to the undersides of the arms, giving it a sturdy construction designed with practical use in combat in mind.

## 24 Nagasone OKISATO Nyūdō Dōsaku Horu Kore

This is a rare daishō set in which the shōtō and its tsuka (hilt) form a single continuous piece. The shōtō features Fudō Myōō surrounded by Garuda flames, carved within the recessed area. On the front of the hilt, “shimuja” (思無邪), meaning “harboring no evil thoughts,” is carved in relief. On the back, the signature is carved into a shallow recess, while the butt of the hilt features an openwork boar-eye (inome) motif. Three daishō sets of this type are currently known. The other two are one with the words “Ryūko Baichiku” (龍虎梅竹) carved on the hilt, and the other with Totō Tenjin (渡唐天神) carved on the shōtō. This daishō set strongly evokes Kotetsu’s spiritual character through the flames of Fudō Myōō, which burn away worldly desires and all evil, and the words “Omoi yokoshima nashi.”

## 25 Nagasone Saiichi MOTOTOSHI Saku

Jō'ō 3 nen Kinōe Uma 9 Gatsu Kichijitsu

This is a door fastening fitting bearing the signature of Nagasone Saichi Mototoshi. The Nagasone Saichi Mototoshi named in the inscription is thought to have been a member of the Nagasone Saichi family, known for forging architectural fittings and locks in Edo and for having also worked on metal fittings for Nikkō Tōshōgū Shrine. This fitting, together with the fitting in No. 34, is said to have been used at Ueno Tōshōgū Shrine. The butterfly and cicada motifs serve as handles: they are grasped and lowered to secure the door. The fitting is an elaborately crafted piece, with a hanabishi-mon-tsunagi pattern engraved in kebori (fine-line engraving) on a brass Nanako-ji, an aoi-mon (hollyhock crest) inlaid at the top, and inlay decoration on the wings of the butterfly and cicada handles.

## 26 Bushū Edo Jū Nagasone Saiichi MOTOTOSHI Saku

Jō'ō 3 nen Kinōe Uma 9 Gatsu Kichijitsu

This is a door fastening fitting bearing the signature of Nagasone Saichi Mototoshi. Since the head of the Nagasone Saichi family traditionally bore the name “Saichi”, this fitting is thought to have been made by one of the family heads. Like the fitting in No. 33, it is said to have been used at Ueno Tōshōgū Shrine. This tradition is supported by the fact that both fittings bear inscriptions dated Jōō 3 (1654) and have very similar shapes.

As with the fitting in No. 33, this piece features a cicada ornament on the central handle, but differs in having a floral arabesque pattern inlaid in silver on an iron ground. The veins of the cicada’s wings are rendered with remarkable delicacy using inlay in three materials—gold, silver, and shakudō—on a shakudō ground.

## 27 Nagasone OKISATO Saku

This tsuba (sword guard) is made in a round shape from well-forged iron, with a finely carved dragon rendered in openwork. The style, featuring a single large dragon in openwork, is commonly seen in Echizen metalwork, including Kinai, subtly suggesting that Kotetsu was from the region. The character “興” in the signature is shaped somewhat like “奥,” which also suggests that this is an early work by Kotetsu. This piece is an important example demonstrating that Kotetsu’s skill was not limited to swordmaking but was also evident in his work on sword guards. In addition, several tsuba makers in Echizen are known to have used the surname Nagasone,

including Saiichi, Shigetaka, and Masanori. As they, too, produced iron tsuba with relatively similar designs, a connection with Kotetsu may be inferred.

## **28 Nagasone OKISATO Saku**

This round iron tsuba (sword guard) features a dragon rendered in relief and openwork. Swordsmiths who also made sword guards are occasionally known, but sword guards by Kotetsu are extremely rare. The design of the dragon is reminiscent of the Echizen tradition, reflecting the characteristics of his place of origin. Sword guards made by swordsmiths tend to have simpler carving than those made by professional tsuba makers, but this piece is particularly finely crafted, with detailed chiselwork even on the dragon's whiskers and scales. It showcases Kotetsu's skill in working iron beyond swordmaking, rooted in his background as an armorer. Based on the inscription, this sword guard is thought to date to around Meireki 2 (1656) or earlier.

—Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO—

## **29 Echizen-no-Kami Minamoto-no SUKEHIRO**

Based on its inscription, this sword is thought to have been made by the second-generation Sukehiro around the Manji era (1658–1661), and is considered an early work by the swordsmith. The hamon consists mainly of suguha, with shallow notare. The ko-itame hada is tightly packed and has a beautiful texture, while fine ji-nie forms densely across the jigane. The hamon has a wide nioiguchi with abundant ko-nie, and both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear, demonstrating the high quality of the work. Sukehiro is best known for producing midare-ba hamon, especially his distinctive tōran-ba. However, examples such as this wakizashi show that he was also highly skilled at producing suguha throughout his career.

## **30 Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO**

### **Motte Jigane Togi Zō Kore**

This is a bold, imposing wakizashi with a wide blade, measuring as much as 3.4 cm in width at the tang. The ko-itame hada jigane is tightly packed, with abundant ji-nie and prominent chikei, although the grain stands out, giving the surface a somewhat rough, open appearance.

The hamon alternates between gunome of varying sizes forming gourd-like shapes, box-shaped patterns, and gunome with rounded heads. The hamon is consistent on both sides, with a wide nioiguchi and abundant nie. The bōshi has a wide temper line that turns back in a rounded form. A notable feature of this wakizashi is a round tobiyaki area about 15 cm below the yokote, clearly suggesting an intentional evocation of waves. This work may therefore be regarded as showing the beginnings of the tōran-ba that Sukehiro would later develop. Similar examples featuring large gunome and tobiyaki can also be found in other works dating to around Kanbun 3–5 (1663–1665). Judging from the style of its inscription, this wakizashi is also thought to date to around Kanbun 5 (1665).

## **31 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO**

### **Kanbun 7 nen 8 Gatsujitsu**

This work features a large ō-notare that rises as high as the shinogi, evoking the surface of the open sea. It also displays an unusually strong presence of nie, revealing a style that differs from his usual work. In terms of the blade's overall shape, the difference in width between the base and the tip is pronounced, and it has the shallow curvature characteristic of Kanbun-shintō, along with a somewhat elongated kissaki, reflecting the characteristics of Ōsaka-

shintō. The forging features a finely and tightly packed ko-itame hada, producing beautiful jigane. The fine ji-nie is abundant and thick, while both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear. With a wide nioiguchi, this sword fully demonstrates the mastery of the second-generation Sukehiro.

**32 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO Motte 37 Sai Sakari Zō**

**Kanbun 12 nen 2 Gatsujitsu**

**Isa Shigeyoshi Tegake Kesa 1 no Dō Dō Ha Hirado made Otsu Ha**

**Motte Shō Matsuse no Takara tosu Yue Iwa Kudaki to Meisu Kore**

This work features a beautiful, ō-gunome-midare in the tōran style. The forging displays beautiful jigane with a finely and tightly packed ko-itame hada, with very fine ji-nie forming thickly. The nioi is deep, the nie is abundant and evenly distributed, and the nioiguchi is bright and clear. The workmanship is exceptionally fine, fully demonstrating the skill of the second-generation Sukehiro. The tang bears not only a date inscription but also an inscription recording the swordsmith's age at the time. These inscriptions establish that he was born in 1637 (Kanei 14), making this sword an extremely valuable source for research into Sukehiro's birth and death dates.

The date inscription was originally on the reverse side of the tang. However, after the sword demonstrated extraordinary cutting ability in a test cut performed by Isa Shigeyoshi, a cutting-test inscription was added to the reverse side, and the date inscription, having been removed, is thought to have been recut on the front side.

**33 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO**

**Kanbun 12 nen 8 Gatsujitsu**

The date inscription establishes that this work was made when Sukehiro was 37 years old. The forging displays beautiful jigane with a finely and tightly packed ko-itame hada, and the hamon features a tōran-ba with a wide nioiguchi with abundant nie evenly distributed. The nioiguchi is bright and clear, demonstrating exceptional workmanship. As a typical and representative work by Sukehiro, who pioneered the tōran-ba style and greatly influenced later swordsmiths, this sword fully demonstrates the distinctive qualities of his work.

**34 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO**

**Kanbun 12 nen 8 Gatsujitsu**

This sword is a distinguished work with a notable history, having been passed down through the Aoyama family, who served as Osaka Castle governors during the feudal period. The jigane features a tightly packed ko-itame hada, with very fine ji-nie forming thickly. The hamon has a wide nioiguchi and displays a tōran-like undulating pattern, formed by large gunome and gunome with rounded heads, connected by shallow ko-notare and sugu-like sections. Fine kinsuji and sunagashi run through the hamon, and both the jigane and hamon are exceptionally bright and clear. This sword has a slightly altered machi position. This is thought to have been done at a later date to move the machi past the section where the yakidashi begins, as the yakidashi had come to be considered undesirable. Such alterations are occasionally found on swords by swordsmiths whose work features a yakidashi as in Sukehiro's work.

**35 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO**

**Kanbun 12 nen 8 Gatsujitsu**

The jigane of this work features a finely and tightly packed ko-itame hada, with very fine ji-nie forming thickly and numerous fine chikei. The hamon is a suguha with a wide nioiguchi and a slight undulating tendency, with ko-nie distributed thickly and evenly. Both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear. Along the habuchi, fine activities

create an appearance resembling torn hōsho paper. The bōshi becomes somewhat deeper as its width increases from around the yokote downward, then continues in a sugu-like form before turning back in a relatively long, komaru. Overall, the work clearly displays the characteristic features of Sukehiro. The jigane is particularly refined, making this an excellent work that demonstrates the high level of his forging skill.

### 36 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

#### Enpō 2 nen 2 Gatsujitsu

According to *Kokon Kajibikō*, “In the year of Kinoe-tora of Enpō (1674), an order was given to a retainer of the domain, named Tashio Kichibē Yasuyoshi, to write the inscription in the Konoe style, and it was presented to Sukehiro.” From February of that year, Enpō 2 (1674), onward, Sukehiro changed the calligraphic style of his signature from the angular Tsuda-style cursive hand to the rounded Tsuda-style grass hand.

This work features a beautiful, finely forged jigane with a tightly packed ko-itame hada and abundant ji-nie. Its hamon consists of large gunome with a wide nioiguchi, undulating in the tōran style. Both the jigane and hamon are exceptionally bright and clear. This sword fully demonstrates Sukehiro’s vigorous spirit and technical mastery at a major turning point in his career, when he changed the calligraphic style of his signature.

### 37 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

#### Enpō 5 nen 2 Gatsujitsu

This sword has a predominantly straight hamon with a wide nioiguchi and a slight undulating tendency, interspersed with a few small gunome. Slight hotsure appears in the lower half, while the nioiguchi becomes even wider from the monouchi upward. The hamon displays a variety of changes throughout the blade.

Sukehiro is known for having produced relatively few works with blade carvings. However, this sword has some grooves, a bō-hi and soe-bi on the front, and futasuji-hi on the reverse. Apart from works believed to have been carved by specialist sword carvers, such as “Murasame”, handed down in the Aoyama family and designated a Special Important Sword at the 17th designation session, examples among Sukehiro’s works in which the carvings differ between the two sides of the blade are particularly rare.

### 38 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

#### Enpō 5 nen 2 Gatsujitsu

This wakizashi has a tightly packed ko-itame hada, with fine, abundant ji-nie, resulting in a clear, bright jigane. The hamon begins straight at the tang, above which large gunome form a tōran-style pattern. The tōran midare includes angular, irregularly shaped elements. The nioiguchi is wide and accompanied by fine nie, while coarse nie and unevenly distributed nie are scarce. Activity within the hamon, such as kinsuji and sunagashi, is also relatively limited. These characteristics are typical of Sukehiro’s tōran midare, and this work exemplifies them well.

### 39 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

#### Enpō 7 nen 2 Gatsujitsu

This work dates to when Sukehiro was 43 years old. It features a highly accomplished tōran midare, displaying the maturity of his fully developed style. The nioi is deep and the nioiguchi soft, giving the hamon an air of dignity and refinement. The ko-itame hada is tightly packed, with abundant, fine ji-nie, resulting in a jigane whose texture resembles fine silk cloth. This is one of the notable features of Sukehiro’s work, and it is fully realized in this piece. The sword has well-balanced proportions, with a moderate difference in width between the base and the tip and an

appropriate curvature, exemplifying the typical form of an Edo-period uchigatana without excess or deficiency. The bright, clear hamon represents the very essence of Sukehiro's craftsmanship. Combined with its bold, large-scale pattern, it gives the work a powerful presence. As Sukehiro died three years later, this piece belongs to the later part of his career.

#### 40 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

Enpō 7 nen 2 Gatsujitsu

Although relatively few of Sukehiro's works feature a suguha hamon, most of these are characterized by five very shallow undulations. As seen in this work, he also had a characteristic tendency to widen the hamon from around the area just below the yokote. The exquisite control of the hamon's height gives these works a sense of refinement and has earned them a high reputation.

This sword has the typical shape characteristics of the Kanbun-shintō style, with a moderate difference in width between the base and the tip and a chū-kissaki, reflecting the characteristics of its period. It exemplifies Sukehiro's suguha style, in which he demonstrated his skill to the fullest. The ko-itame hada is tightly packed, with abundant, extremely fine ji-nie, giving the well-forged jigane a fine, refined texture. In harmony with the jigane, the hamon is equally sharp and clear with deep nioi. Both the jigane and the hamon are bright, and the work offers many noteworthy features.

#### 41 SUKEHIRO

Like the work listed as No. 55, this sword features a suguha hamon. The nie particles along the hamon are extremely fine, evenly distributed, and well ordered. Fine activity can also be observed along the habuchi, which is often described as resembling the "torn edge of hōsho paper". These features clearly demonstrate Sukehiro's distinctive style. This work fully reveals Sukehiro's true mastery. Compared with his usual works, kinsuji and nie-suji are more prominent, the nioi is particularly deep, and both the jigane and the hamon are exceptionally bright and clear. These qualities make it an outstanding example among his works. Although the sword is unsigned with no date, its signature style suggests that it dates to around Enpō 8 (1680). Furthermore, two-character signatures are rare, with only about three other examples known. This rarity, together with its exceptional quality, further enhances the importance of this work.

#### 42 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

Enpō 8 nen 2 Gatsujitsu

Yori Asao Hiromitsu Nozomi Saku Kore

This wakizashi is notable for its deeper curvature than is usual in Sukehiro's works, giving it a somewhat unusual shape among his works. The hamon also appears to emphasize the tōran midare pattern more strongly than usual, creating a lively and varied effect. The nie is coarser as well, contributing to an overall sense of dynamic movement. The coarse nie creates the effect of fine spray scattering from the surging waves, adding a striking visual quality to the blade, much like a painting. Although very few of Sukehiro's works bear the name of the person who commissioned them, a sword featuring a tōran midare hamon, made for the same person in the same year as this wakizashi, is designated an Important Art Object. It is therefore highly likely that the two were made as a daishō pair.

#### 43 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

Enpō 8 nen 8 Gatsujitsu

This wakizashi was formerly owned by Taromatsu Okano, a renowned sword enthusiast of the Shōwa era. It features a beautifully forged jigane, with a tightly packed ko-itame hada and abundant, extremely fine ji-nie. The hamon is a bold, large-scale tōran midare, characterized by prominent ō-gunome. The nioiguchi is exceptionally wide, with abundant, evenly distributed ko-nie, and both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear, making this a fine-quality work. The yakidashi is short, and angular elements appear among the undulations of the hamon. The hamon also includes tama-yaki, which evoke splashes of water. Sunagashi are not particularly prominent. The komaru-bōshi is deep, but does not extend beyond the ko-shinogi. These features demonstrate Sukehiro's characteristic workmanship to the fullest.

#### 44 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

##### Enpō 9 nen 8 Gatsujitsu

Sukehiro's works occasionally include swords with a blade length of around 76 cm (2 shaku 5 sun), whose form appears to be an enlarged version of the Kanbun-shintō style. This sword is also longer and wider than his usual works, yet it displays characteristic features of the Osaka-style Kanbun-shintō, including a shallow curvature, a noticeable difference in width between the base and the tip, and an elongated kissaki, a feature commonly seen in Osaka-made swords. Swords with such large proportions are thought to have been made to special order, and many are of exceptional quality. This work is no exception. Its bright, refined ko-itame hada complements its large proportions, which are used to full effect in a bold, large-scale tōran midare. The short yakidashi, a hakoba-like pattern, and tama-yaki resembling scattered waves all exemplify Sukehiro's distinctive style. Nie is beautifully distributed along the nioiguchi, giving the hamon a brilliant clarity and an impressive sense of grandeur.

#### 45 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO

##### Ten'na 1 nen 12 Gatsujitsu

With a blade length of around 70 cm (2 shaku 3 sun), this sword is of standard length, with well-proportioned width and thickness. Its shallow curvature, noticeable difference in width between the base and the tip, and somewhat elongated chū-kissaki are characteristic of swords made by Osaka swordsmiths active during the Kanbun-shintō period. The ko-itame hada is tightly packed, with abundant ji-nie and fine chikei, resulting in a beautifully forged jigane. The chū-suguha hamon, with a wide nioiguchi and abundant ko-nie, closely resembles those of the works listed as Nos. 55 and 56. It features five shallow undulations, and both the jigane and hamon are bright and clear. Other characteristic features of Sukehiro's work include a widening of the hamon from around the area just below the yokote and a deeply tempered bōshi. The work displays his distinctive characteristics throughout. Made one year before Sukehiro's death, this outstanding sword fully demonstrates the mastery he had attained at the height of his artistic maturity.

#### 46 Tsuda Echizen-no-Kami SUKEHIRO Saku

##### Ōmi-no-Kami SUKENAO Soemei

##### Ten'na 2 nen 8 Gatsujitsu

This is an outstanding work, with a finely forged jigane with tightly packed ko-itame hada and a bright, clear chū-suguha hamon composed of ko-nie. On close inspection of its wide nioiguchi, one can also discern a characteristic feature of Sukehiro's suguha: fine ko-nie spilling over onto the jigane, creating a slightly hazy appearance, like the torn edge of hōsho paper. Sukehiro died on March 14, Tenna 2 (1682). The inscription and date on this sword indicate that it was approved by his student Sukenao as a work by his master after Sukehiro's death. Other examples of such

added inscriptions are also known on swords featuring a tōran midare hamon. Perhaps reflecting the special circumstances of this case, the cursive style of the signature on the front is more pronounced than usual. It is also noteworthy that his name is inscribed as “介直” rather than the usual “助直.”