1980 - 1981
BULLETIN

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FOR THE PRESERVATION, STUDY AND APPRECIATION
OF THE JAPANESE ART SWORD AND RELATED ITEMS

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Contents

1980-1981 Bulletin

Ron Hartmann - Editor

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PREFACE

This issue of the Society's annual publication, called the **1980-81 Bulletin,** is a well-rounded and informative presentation. Something is to be learned from this edition which is the reason for its being.

Our thanks to contributing authors for their sharing of knowledge with us. Articles range from general interest material such as Bob Coleman's experiences with the master swordsmith Masatoshi (with the printing of Masatoshi sensei's catalogue being a significant piece of research material), to Han Bing Siong's article about a rare Kinmichi signature. Andrew Quirt's paper on the history of sword fittings is presented in a brief but thorough manner. The discussion on Oei Bizen swordsmiths, although a reprint, is also of great interest to the student. The article pertaining to modern tsuba makers is unique in that it shows the accomplishments of today's craftsmen. The material on a masterpiece koshirae will hopefully serve to stimulate a better and more full appreciation of koshirae. The footnotes to the article entitled "On the Study in Europe of Japanese Swords" is presented here in conjunction with the printing of the serialized article presently being presented by Nippon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai (NBTHK) in their English **Token Bijutsu** journal.

This edition of the **Bulletin** is also a milestone in that it concludes ten years of editorship for me. With the growing demands as editor of the Society **Newsletter** along with other Society duties and personal obligations, the position on bulletin editor is being turned over to Mr. Arnold Frenzel of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. Arnold is well known by most of the memership and has long been a contributor to the success of the Society. It is not without great thought that this position is being put into the hands of Arnold. It is felt that he will be an excellent editor and one who will continue to improve the **Bulletin** with each edition. The past ten years have been fun and a learning experience. With the cooperation of the membership, the future will be equally enjoyable to Arnold as your new editor.

Ron Hartmann

OZAWA MASATOSHI - MASTER SWORDSMITH

by Robert Coleman, Jr.

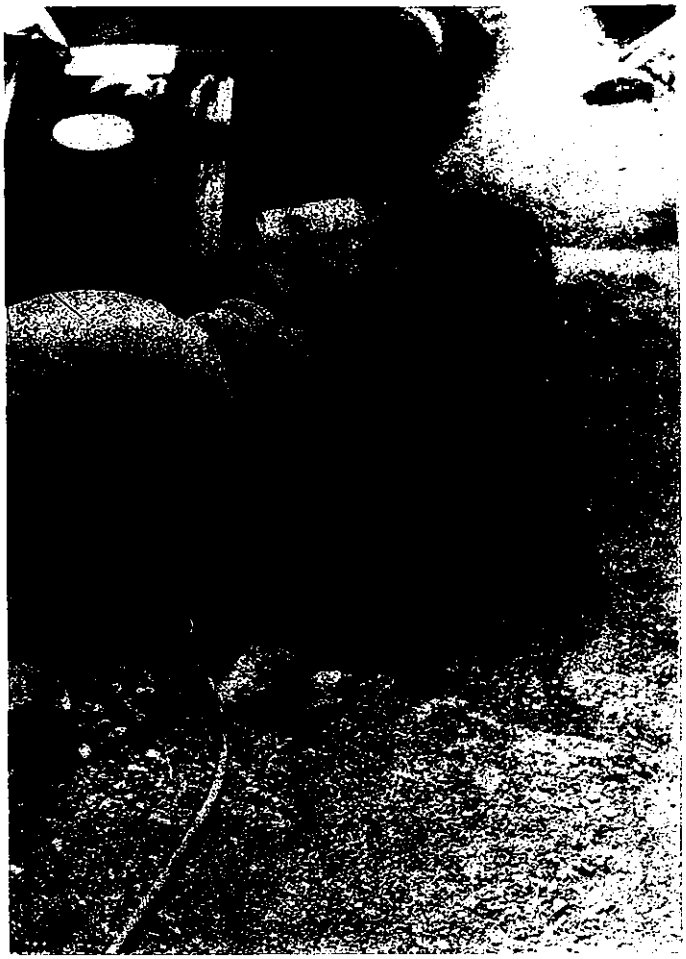
During my last visit to Japan in 1980, I had the opportunity to renew a friendship that began at Token Taikai '79. While visiting N.B.T.H.K. headquarters, I met Ozawa Masatoshi, one of the finest swordmakers in Japan. He asked me to visit his home in Hano City, Saitama Prefecture. Unfortunately, the day of my intended visit found me flat on my back with a 102° temperature. Sadly, I had to cancel my visit hoping that a new date could be scheduled. Ten days later I was invited to a dinner party at Yoshikawa sensei's home. Among the guests that evening was Ozawa sensei. I was quite surprised to hear that he had expected me to visit him two days previously! After apologizing for the mistake, we rescheduled for March 19th. Ozawa sensei told me that if I missed again my head would come off. Knowing that he practised tameshigiri, I noted the date carefully!

I awoke on the 19th with a relapse of my fever. However, since I coveted my head, I let nothing stand between me and the train. During the two and one half hour ride into the mountains, I looked forward to this visit with great anticipation. Ozawa

sensei met me at the station and we walked up a winding road to his house. I was immediately taken by the beauty of the setting of his house. It was built on the side of a hill with his kajiba built behind the house much as a garage is located in a western house. Below this was a narrow winding stream. This entire setting was completely surrounded by the Sukuba Mountains. I remember thinking at the time that one could not find a more peaceful place to harmonize body and spirit for the making of swords.

We entered his house and after meeting his wife and son, I enjoyed watching two video tapes - one which was on Ozawa sensei and his sword making technique and the other on sword making, tsuba making, shirazaya and tameshigiri (which was demonstrated by Ozawa sensei). Following the tapes I was treated to a lunch of cold udon which had been homemade by his wife. During lunch we discussed one segment of the first video tape that had surprised me. It showed Ozawa sensei visiting various antique stores in search of old iron tools and impliments. He explained that he used this material in sword making because the quality of the ancient iron was vastly superior to contemporary material.

Following lunch, I was treated to a rare opportunity - a private exhibition of swordmaking by Ozawa sensei assisted by his son. A chair was set up near the hearth and I watched with great interest as his son picked out pieces of pine charcoal while Ozawa sensei fit pieces of tanahaganie on a spatula. Unlike many modern swordsmiths, Ozawa sensei's bellows were completely manual. He explained that he had built his kajiba by himself and he did not feel that the temperature of the charcoal could be adequately controlled by using an auxillary electric motor for the bellows. During the two hour demonstration, I witnessed the beginning of a sword - small pieces of tamahaganie being welded, folded, cooled and slowly drawn into a long slender ingot. At the conclusion of the demonstration, I knew that this would be a day I would remember the rest of my life.



PREPARING THE CHARCOAL

SELECTING PIECES OF TANAGAHANIE

THE FORGE WITH SPATULA IN PLACE UNDER CHARCOAL

POUNDING OF IRON FRESH FROM THE FIRE

MIXING ASH WITH THE IRON

THE FOLDING PROCESS

STILL MORE POUNDING

THE METAL IS DRAWN OUT

Following the demonstration, I had the opportunity of studying several of Ozawa sensei's works. The first was an early work done in Showa 15 (oshigata #1). The second was a copy of a Kiyomaro Nambokucho style katana. The third was a tanto he had made as a wedding gift for his daughter. I was amazed at the high quality of his work since most of the Gendaito available in the West are Worl War Two era swords which seldom deserve a second glance. The realization that the modern masters such as Ozawa sensei are virtually unknown among western sword students led me to write this article. Through the assistance of Ozawa sensei, I present the following biographical material and oshigata of his works.

Ozawa Masatoshi was born May 25, Taisho 9, into a family whose work was blacksmithing and implement making. At the age

of thirteen, he began working in the family. During these early years he became fascinated with the art of the sword and over the objections of his family, decided to become a swordmaker. About the age of eighteen, he moved to Tokyo and became a student of Miyaguchi Toshihiro. Because of his previous experience in his family business, he became the teacher's chief assistant after only a few days. After six months study, he made his first katana using the mei Minamoto Masayuki. In Showa 15, Ozawa sensei was inducted into the army and sent to Manchuria. He was later transferred to Myako Island near Okinawa. When the hostilities ended in that area and his garrison surrendered, Ozawa sensei was near death with malaria. His life was saved by some anonymous American medic who treated him and then gave him some medicine.

Upon his repatriation in Showa 21, Ozawa sensei returned to the blacksmithing business since swordmaking was illegal. In Showa 24, he was able to return to the study of swordmaking under the instruction of Sukamoto Okimasa. After several difficult years during which he was assisted by some friends who understood his dedication to his art, Ozawa sensei received an award for notable effort for a sword made for the 6th annual New Sword Competition (see oshigata #2).

Ozawa sensei took his name Masatoshi in honor of his two teachers. Through many years of hard work, the student has become the master. Recently, he received high praise from Homma Sensei for a copy of the famous "Hotarumaru" of the Aso Shrine which he made at the request of a customer.

The following oshigata are taken from an exhibition catalogue from a display of his work exhibited in 1977.

1. KATANA - Length: 61.5 cm Sori: 1.5 cm
   Mei: (Omote) NITE TOBU GOYA JU NIN MINAMOTO MASAYUKI
   (Ura) KIGEN NISEN ROTSUPIKAKU NEN AKI
   Made at age 20, Autumn Showa 15 (1940)
   ATARI NIYUAE TOMON KITAE
   Becoming a man, going to Manchuria

2. KATANA - Length: 70.5 cm Sori: 1.8 cm
   Mei: (Omote) MASATOSHI
   (Ura) SHOWA SAN JU GO NEN SAN GATSU PI
   Showa 35, February (1960)

3. KATANA - Length:77.4 cm Sori: 2.4 cm
   Mei: (Omote) BUSHU GOYA JU OZAWA MASATOSHI
   (Ura) SHOWA YON JU NEN SAN GATSU PI
   TAME NAKASATO SUSUMO SHI
   Showa 40, February (1965)

4. KATANA - Length:77.0 cm Sori: 3.0 cm
   Mei: (Omote) MOTSUTE SHIRASAGI JO FURU TETSU
   BUSHU GOYA JU OZAWA MASATOSHI
   (Ura) SHOWA YON JU NEN SHIN GATSU PI
   TAME INAGAKI KE JU DAI
   Showa 40, March (1965)
   This sword was made from old iron from the Shirasagi Castle for the Inagaki Family.

5. TACHI - Length:76.8 cm Sori: 2.4 cm
   Mei: (Omote) BUSHU GOYA JU MASATOSHI
   (Ura) TAME TANABE KE JU DAI
   SHOWA YON JU NEN GO GATSU PI
   Showa 40, May (1965)

6. WAKIZASHI - Length: 32.1 cm Sori: 0.4 cm
   Mei: (Omote) MOTSUTE SHIRASAGI JO FURU TETSU
   OZAWA MASATOSHI SAKU
   (Ura) SHOWA YON JU NEN HACHI GATSU PI
   Showa 40, August (1965)

7. WAKIZASHI - Length: 29.7 cm Sori: 0.1 cm
   Mei: (Omote) KOBAYASHI ICHISHIN SENSEI OZAWA MASATOSHI SAKU
   (Ura) SHOWA YON JU NEN JU ICHI GATSU PI
   Showa 40, November (1965)

8. KATANA - Length: 76.3 cm Sori: 1.9 cm
   Mei: (Omote) TAME OKADA YOSAKU SENSEI BUSHU GOYA JU
   OZAWA MASATOSHI

8. continued

(Ura) SHOWA YON JU ICHI NEN NI GATSU PI

Showa 41, February (1966)

9. WAKIZASHI - Length: 30.0 cm Sori: 1.9 cm

Mei: (Omote) MOTE SHIRSAGI JU FURU TETSU MASATOSHI SAKU

(Ura) SHOWA YON JU ICHI NEN HATSU HARU OH ISHI SHIGERU SHI JU

Showa 41, Spring(1966)

10. KATANA - Length: 71.1 cm Sori: 2.2 cm

Mei: (Omote) BUSHU GOYA JU OZAWA MASATOSHI

(Ura) SHOWA YON JU ICHI NEN CHUSHU O OGAWARA YOSHIO SHI JU

Showa 41 (1966)

11. KATANA - Length: 70.2 cm Sori: 1.6 cm

Mei: (Omote) BUSHU GOYA JU OZAWA MASATOSHI

SHOWA YON JU NI NEN CHUSHU Showa 42 (1967)

(Ura) TANE JU DAI OH SUGIYAMASHI

12. TANTŌ - Length: 27.8 cm Sori: 0.2 cm

Mei: (Omote) MASATOSHI

(Ura) SHOWA INO TOSHI SAN GATSU PI

This tantō is a copy of Aoe school work

13. TACHI - Length: 74.3 cm Sori: 2.6 cm

Mei: (Omote) MASATOSHI SAKU

DAI HACHI KAI SHIN SAKU

MEITO TEN DORYOKU SHO JU SHO NO SAKU

(Ura) SHOWA YON JU ROKU NEN JU ICHI GATSU PI

Showa 46, November (1971)

This sword was aimed at the work of Rai Kunimitsu for the Eigth New Best Sword Exhibition.

14. KATANA - Length: 68.7 cm Sori: 2.5 cm

Mei: (Omote) BUSHU GOYA JU OZAWA MASATOSHI SAKU

(Ura) SHOWA USHI NO TOSHI HARU OH OGAWARA YOSHIO SHI JU

15. KATANA - Length: 70.8 cm Sori: 2.2 cm

Mei: (Omote) 20 OZAWA MASATOSHI

SHIN SAKU MEITOTEN SHOREI SHO JU SHO SAKU KORE

(Ura) SAITAMAKEN HANO SHI JU KUN OHJU HOSODA EINOSUKE

SHOWA GO JU ICHI NEN CHUSHU

Showa 51 (1976)

16. KATANA - Length: 69.6 cm Sori: 1.8 cm

Mei: (Omote) BUSHU GOYA JU OZAWA MASATOSHI SAKU

(Ura) OHJU OKUBO MITSUKAZU SHI SHOWA GO JU NI NEN GO GATSU PI

Showa 52, May (1977)

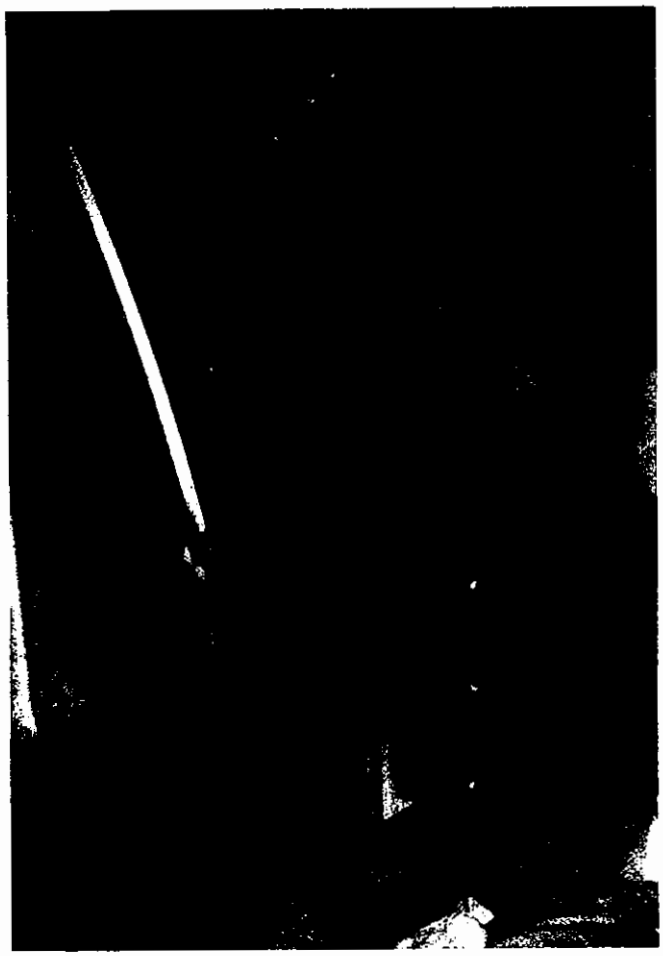
17. WAKIZASHI - Length: 39 cm Sori: 0.5 cm

Mei: (Omote) SHOMARUTOGE JU MASATOSHI SAKU

(Ura) YAKAZE (?) JU TAME SANO MASA YASU KUN NI JU NANA SAI

SHOWA GO JU NI NEN CHU SHU

Showa 52 (1977)



MASATOSHI SENSEI HOLDING
ILLUSTRATED SWORD NO.1

刀

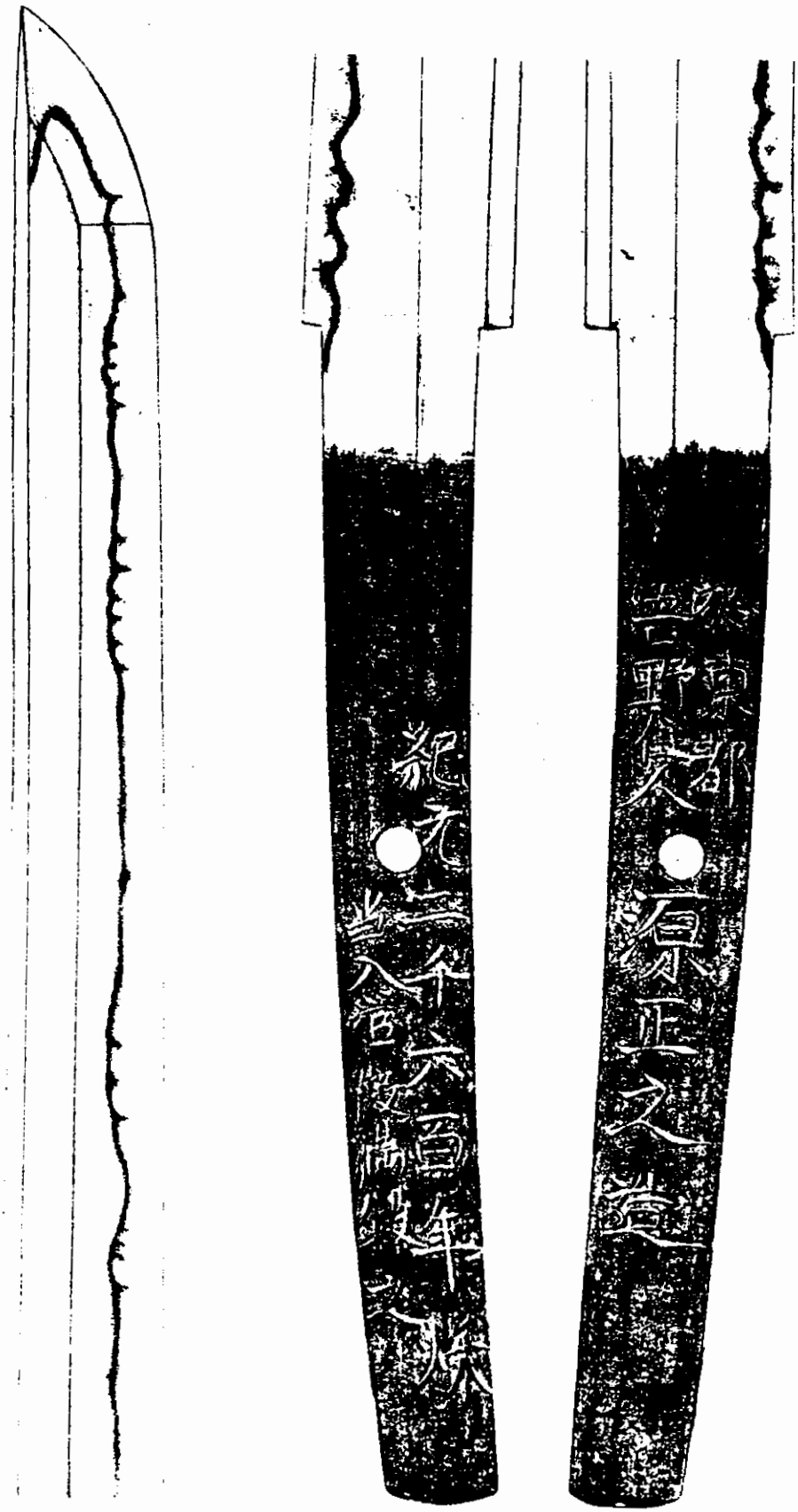
銘

（表）於東都吾野住人　源正之造

（裏）紀元二千六百年秋　当入営渡満鍛之

鎬造　庵棟

刃長　六一・五センチ　反り　一・五センチ



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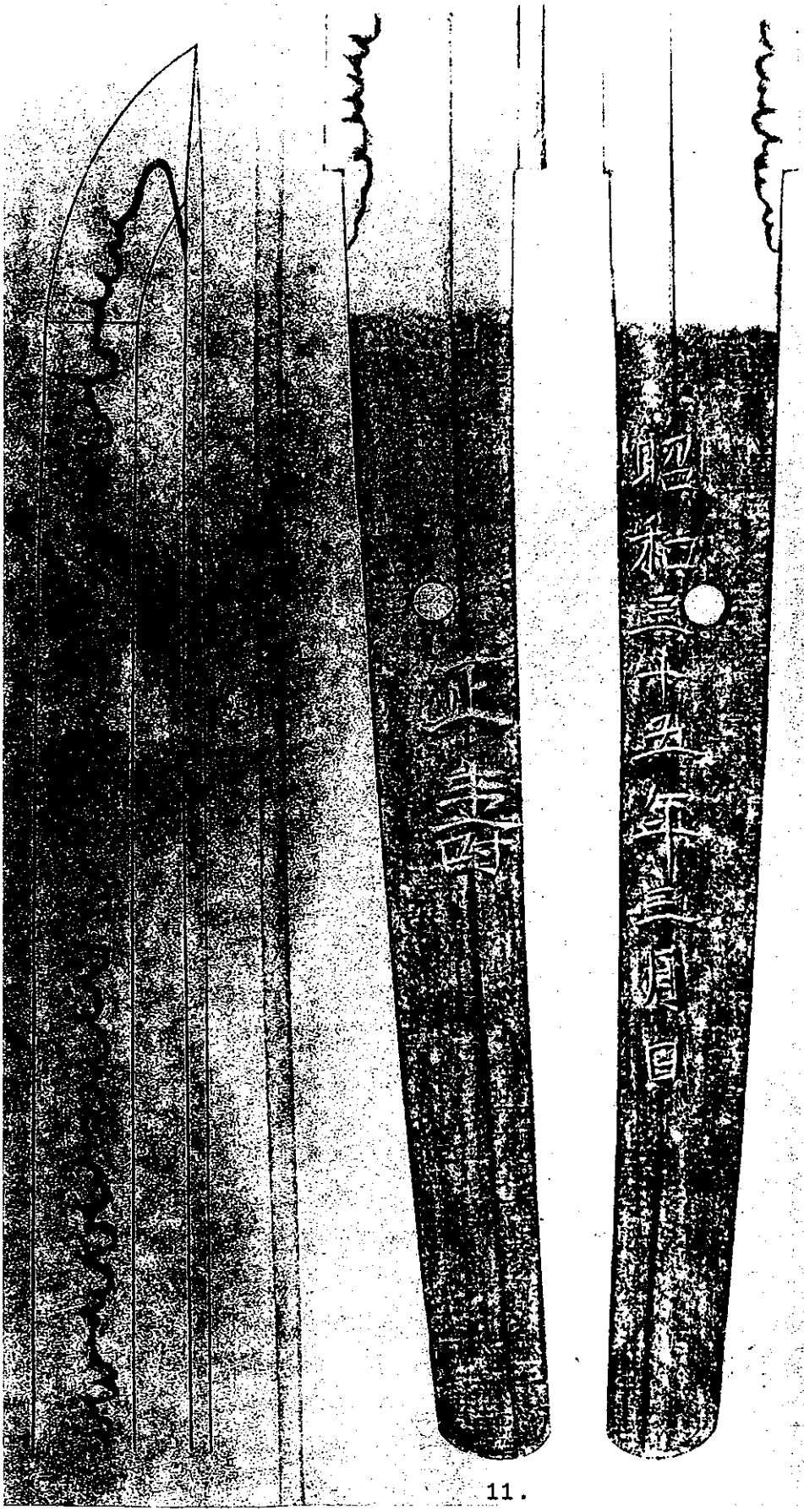


刀

銘　（表）正壽

（裏）昭和三十五年三月日

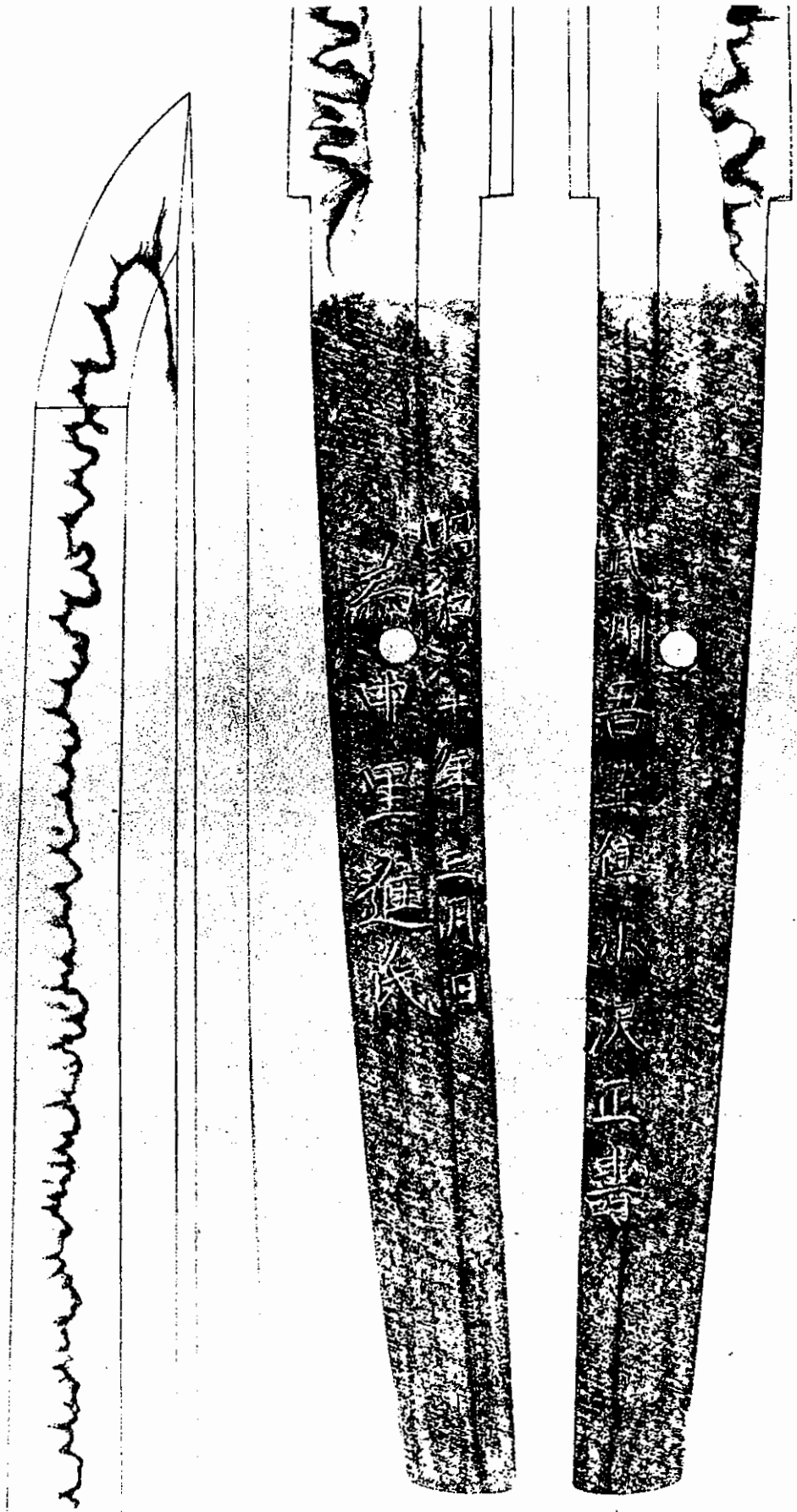
鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七〇・五センチ　反り　一・八センチ

昭和三十五年　新作刀展努力賞受賞の作品。

東京の塚本起正師匠の鍛刀所における作品。

Sword #2



刀　銘　（表）武州吾野住　小沢正壽

（裏）昭和六十年三月日　為中里進氏

鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七七・四センチ　反り　二・四センチ

Sword #3

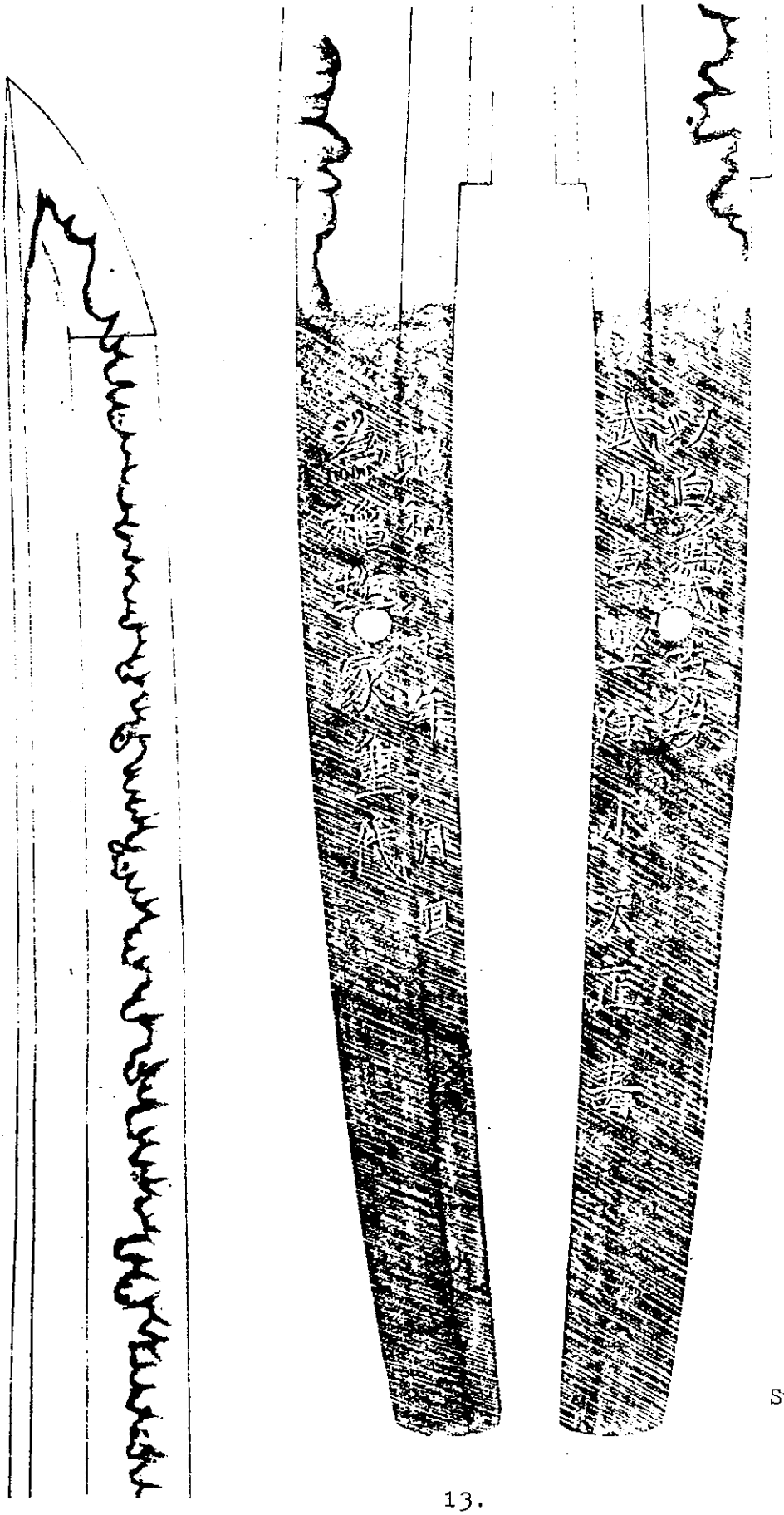
刀

銘　（表）以白鷺城古鉄　武州吾野住　小沢正壽

（裏）昭和六十年六月日　為稲垣家重代

鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七七・〇センチ　反り　三・〇センチ



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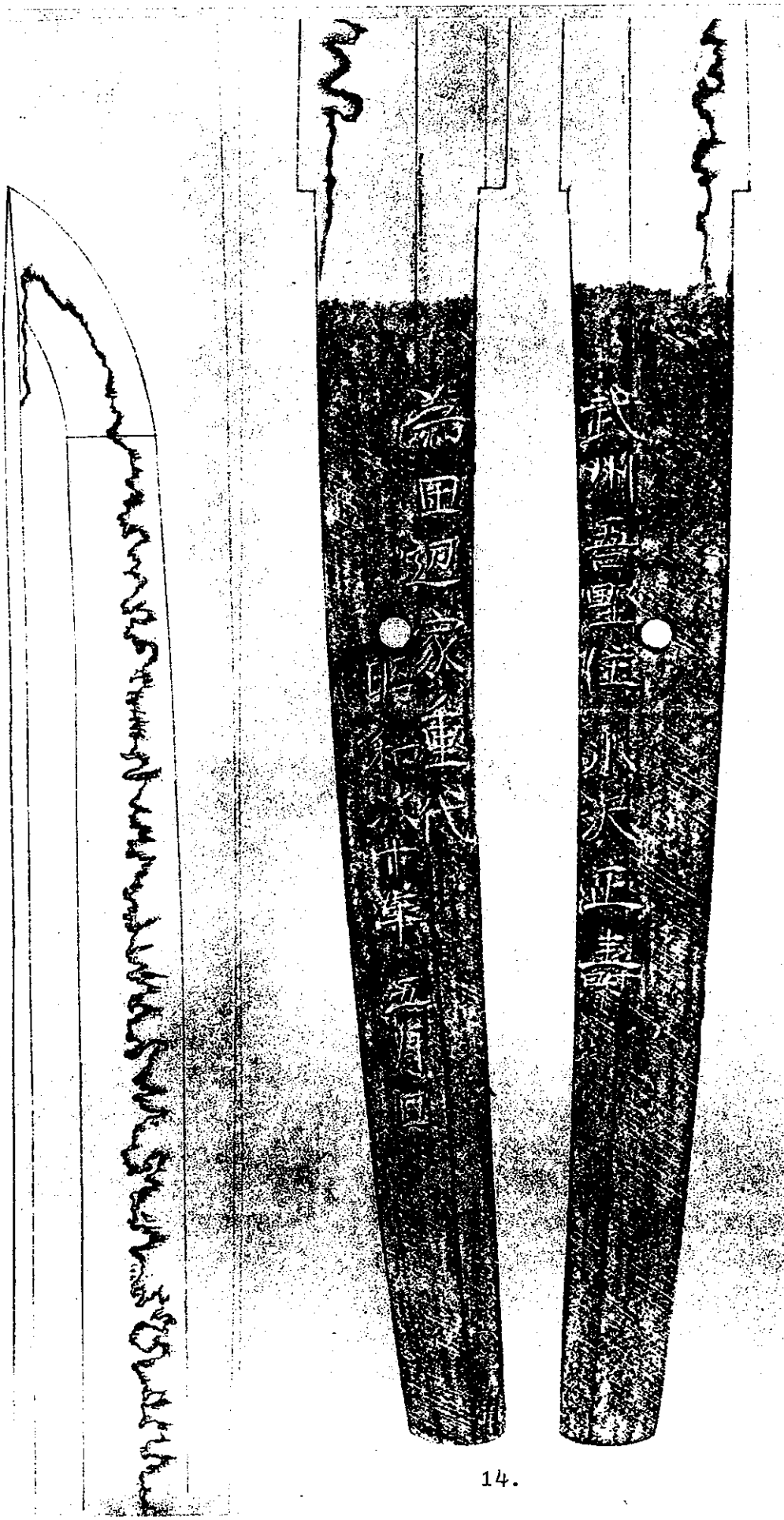


太刀銘　（表）武州吾野住　小沢正壽

（裏）為田辺家重代　昭和六十年五月日

鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七六・八センチ　反り　二・四センチ

Sword #5

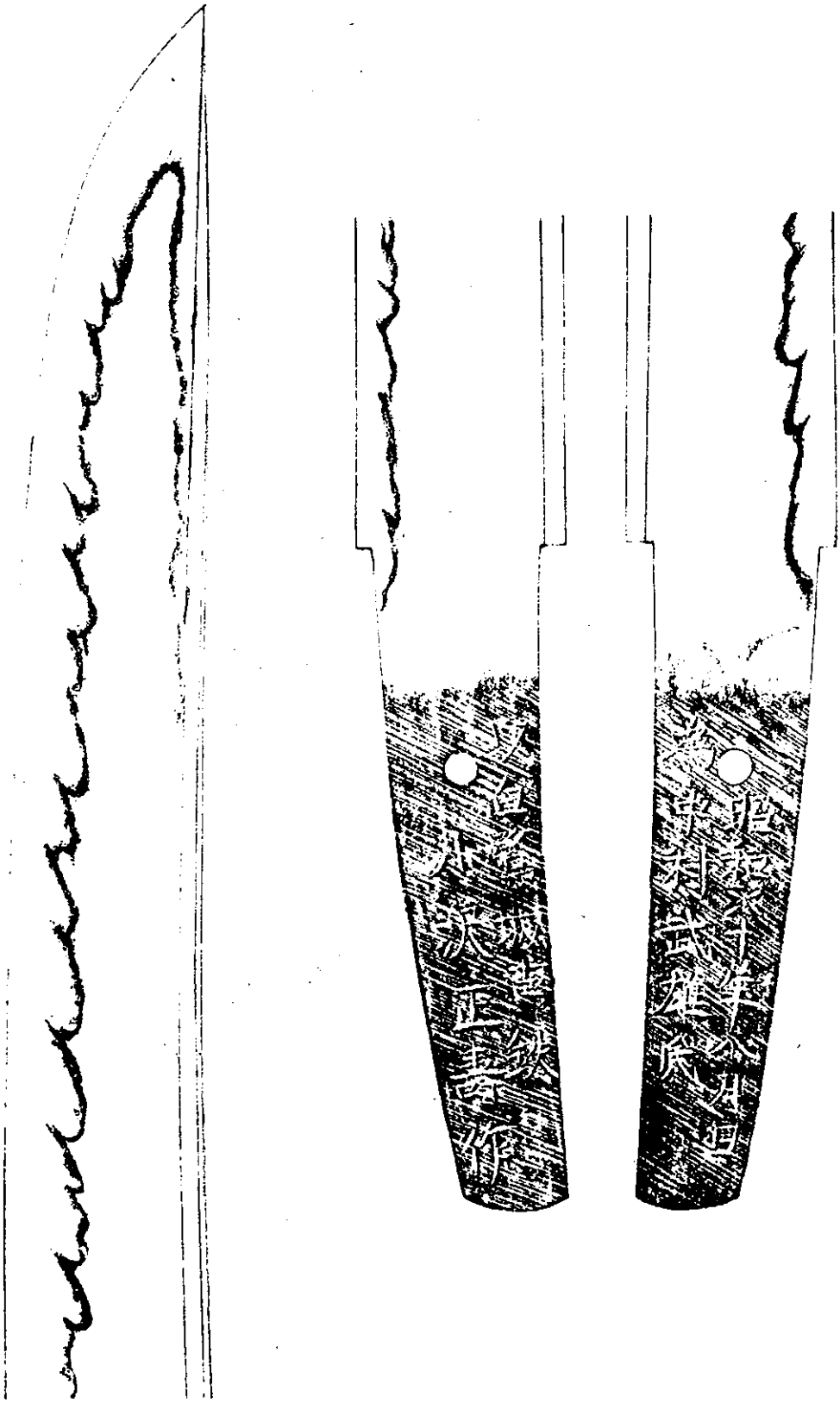
脇指　銘

（表）以白鷺城古鉄　小沢正壽作

（裏）昭和六十年八月日　為中村武雄氏

平造　三ッ棟

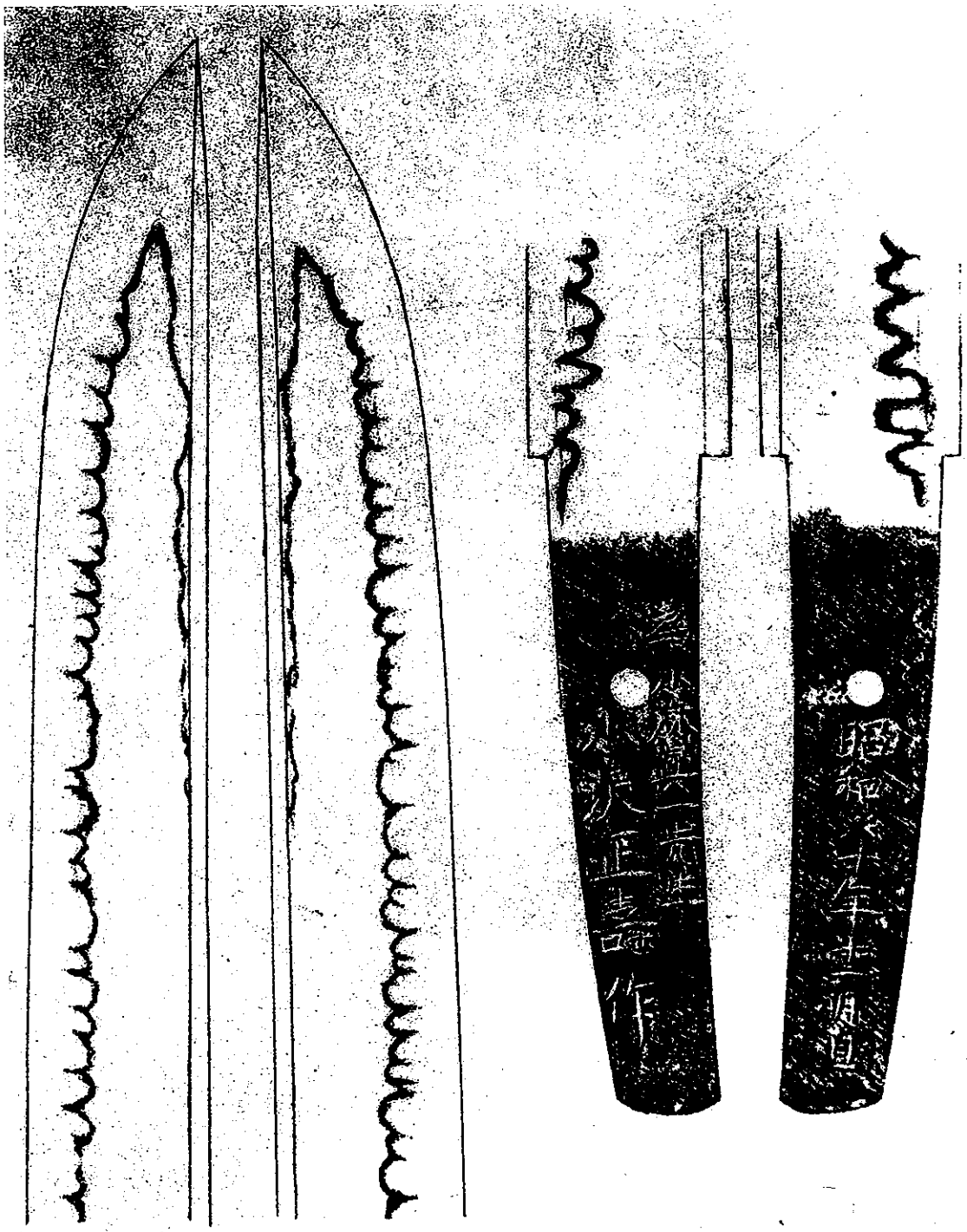
刃長　三二・一センチ　反り　〇・四センチ



Sword #6

脇指　銘　（表）小林眞一先生　小沢正壽作

（裏）昭和六十年十一月日



平造　三ッ棟

刃長　二九・七センチ　反り　〇・一センチ

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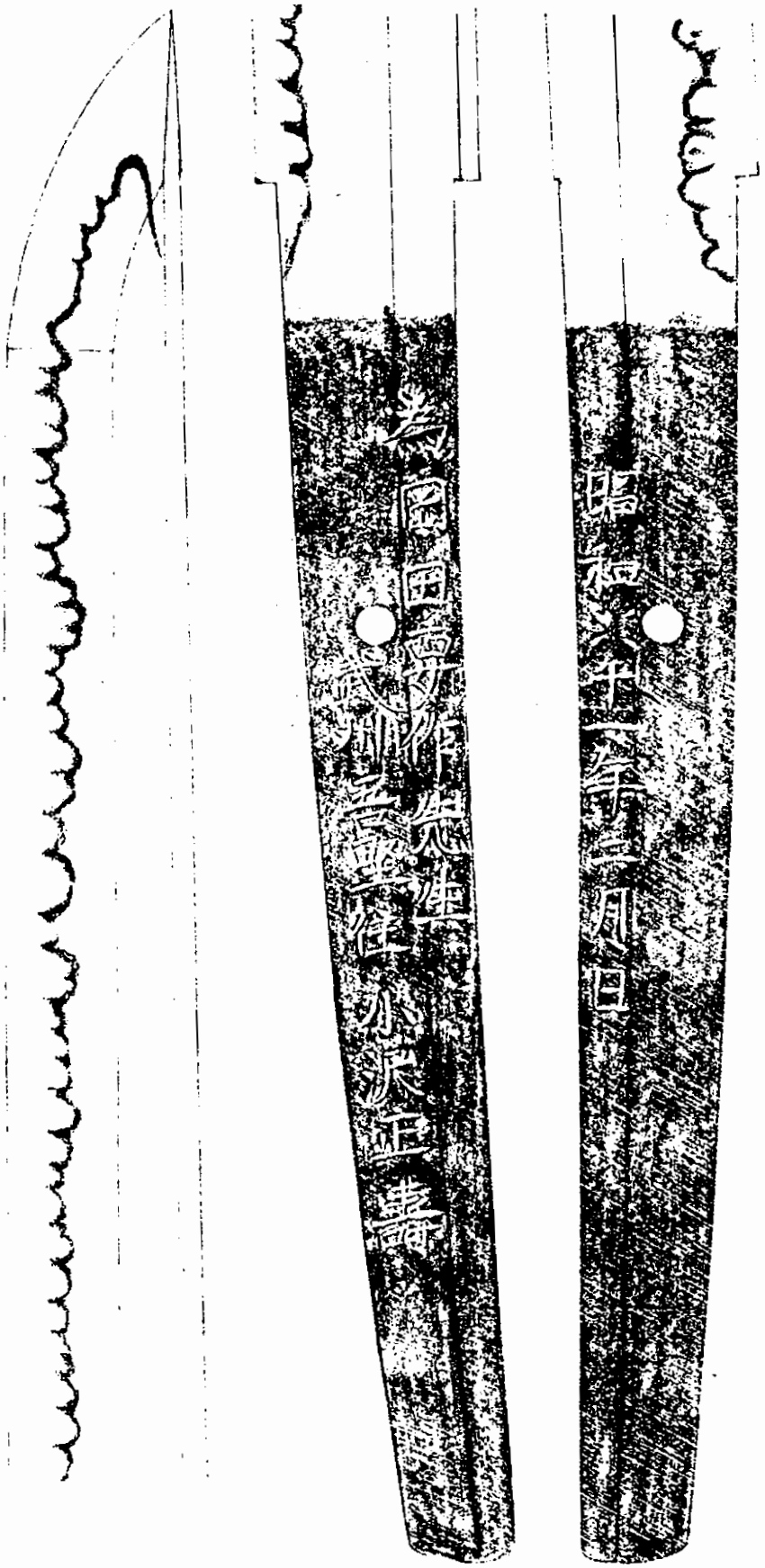


刀　銘

（表）為岡田要作先生　武州吾野住　小沢正壽

（裏）昭和六十一年二月日

鍋造　庵棟

刃長　七六・三センチ　反り　一・九センチ

昭和四十二年　第二回新作名刀展奨励賞受賞の作品

Sword #8

脇指　銘

（表）以白鐘坂古鉄　正壽作

（裏）昭和十一年初春　應石井茂氏需

平造　三ツ棟

刃長　二〇・〇センチ　反り　一・九センチ

Sword #9

刀

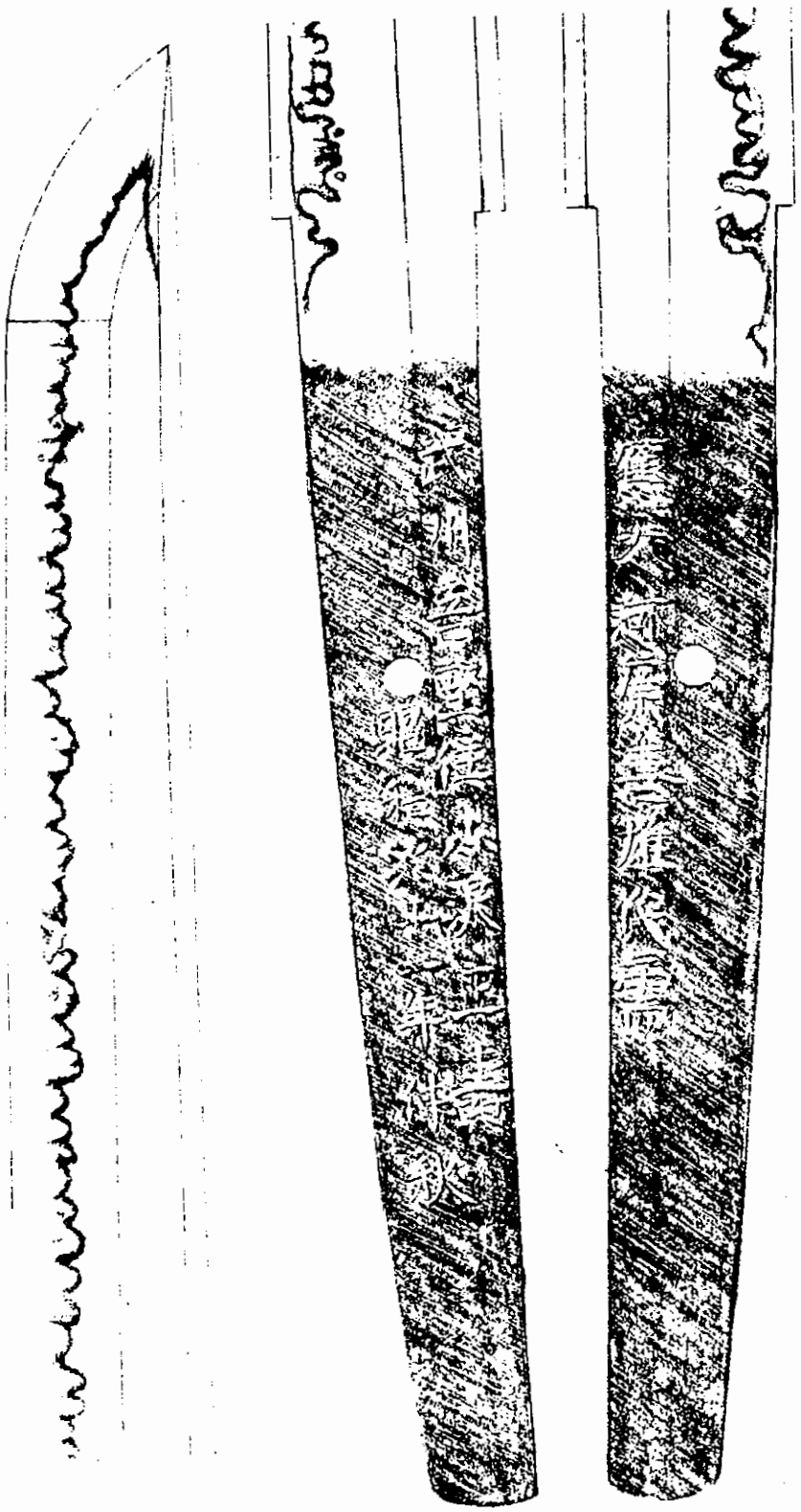
銘

（表）武州吾野住　小沢正壽　昭和六十一年仲秋

（裏）應大河原喜雄氏需

鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七一・一センチ　反り　二・二センチ



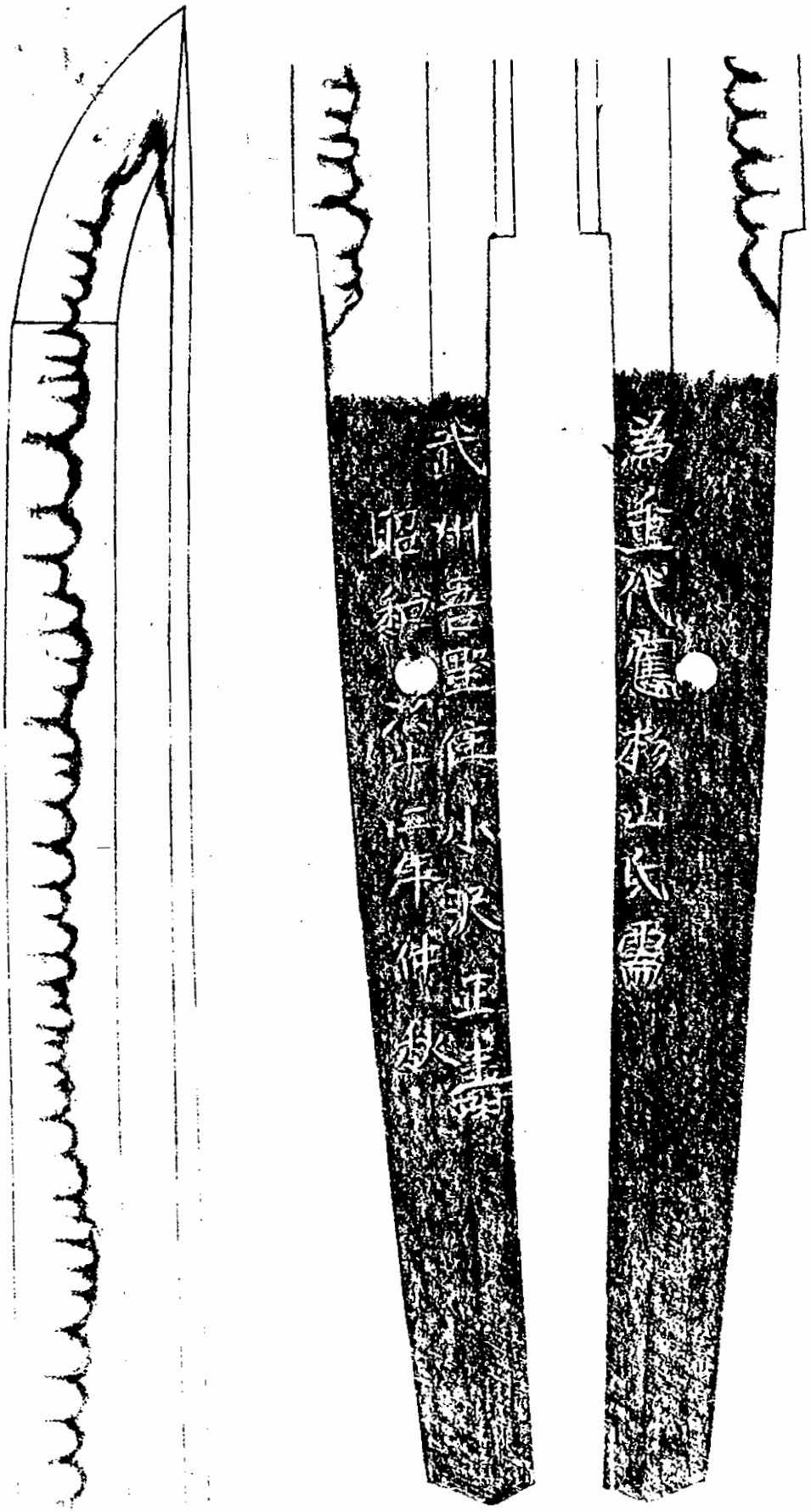
Sword #10

刀

銘

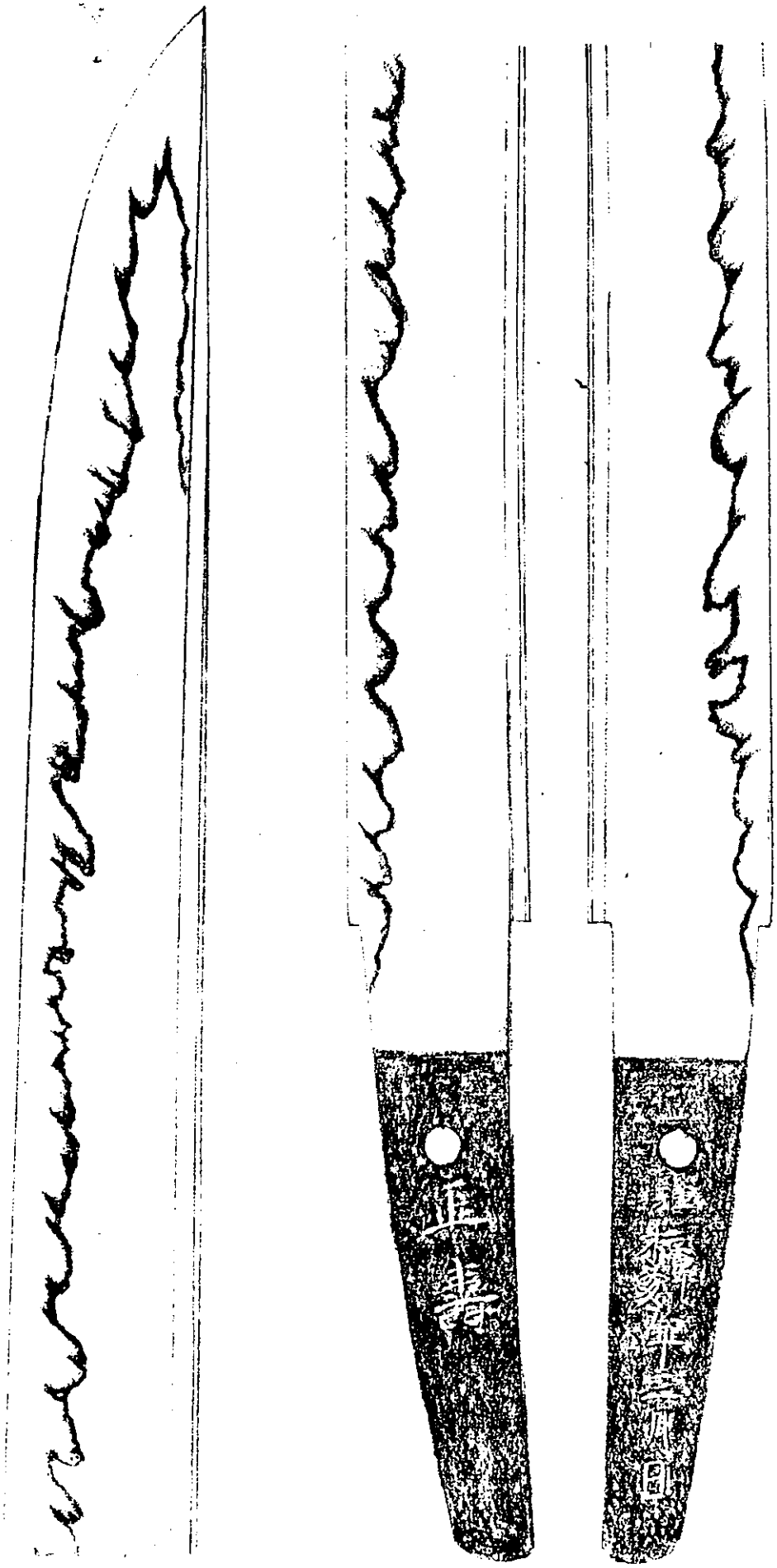
（表）武州吾野住　小沢正壽　昭和六十二年仲秋

（裏）為重代　鷹杉山氏需



鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七〇・二センチ　反り　一・六センチ



短刀銘

（表）正壽

（裏）昭和辛亥年三月日

平造　三ッ棟

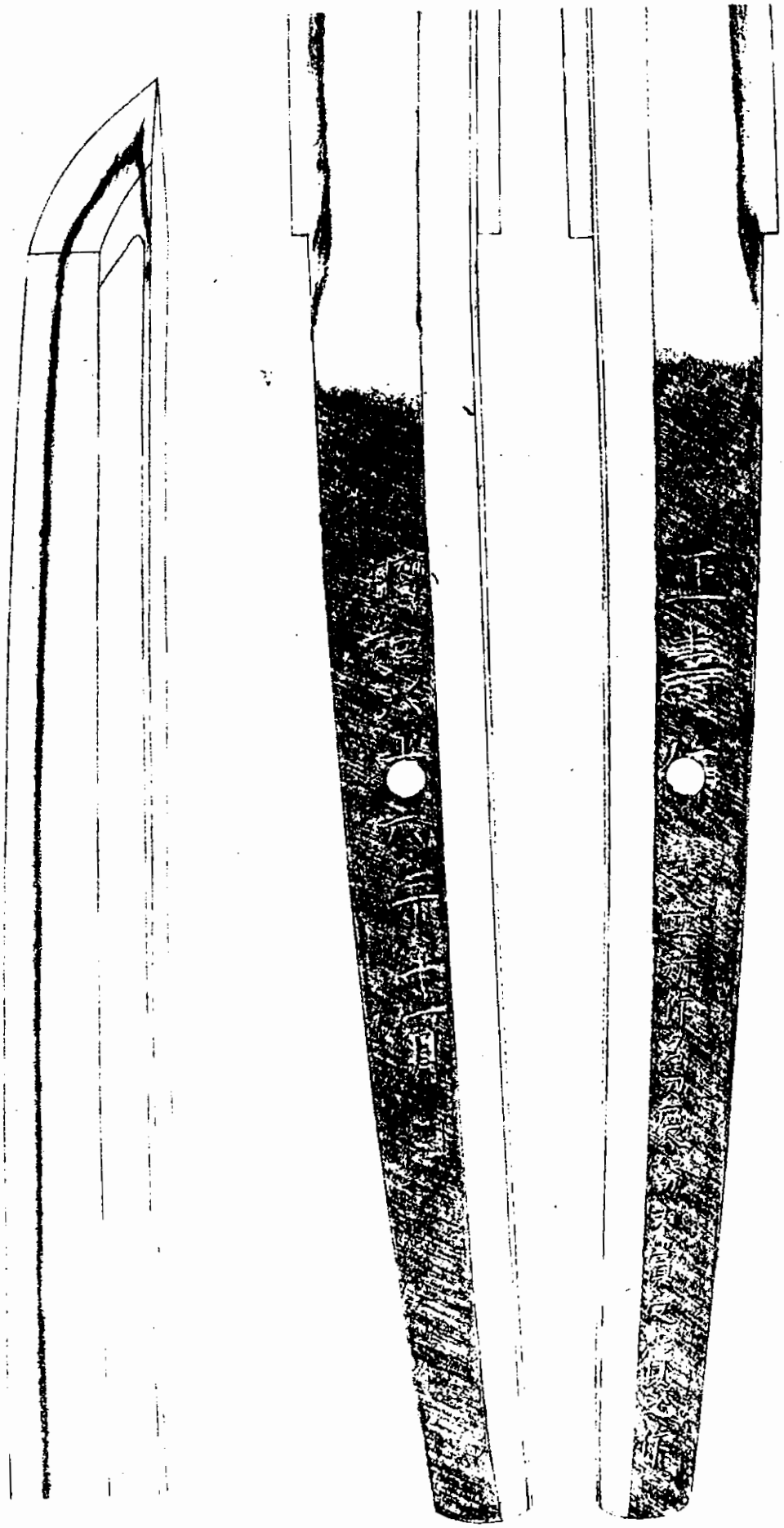
刃長　二七・八センチ　反り　〇・二センチ

青江を狙っての作品。

Sword #12

太刀銘　（表）正壽作　第八回新作名刀展努力賞受賞之作

（裏）昭和六十六年十一月日



鎬造　庵棟

刃長　七四・三センチ　反り　二・六センチ

来国光を狙っての作品。

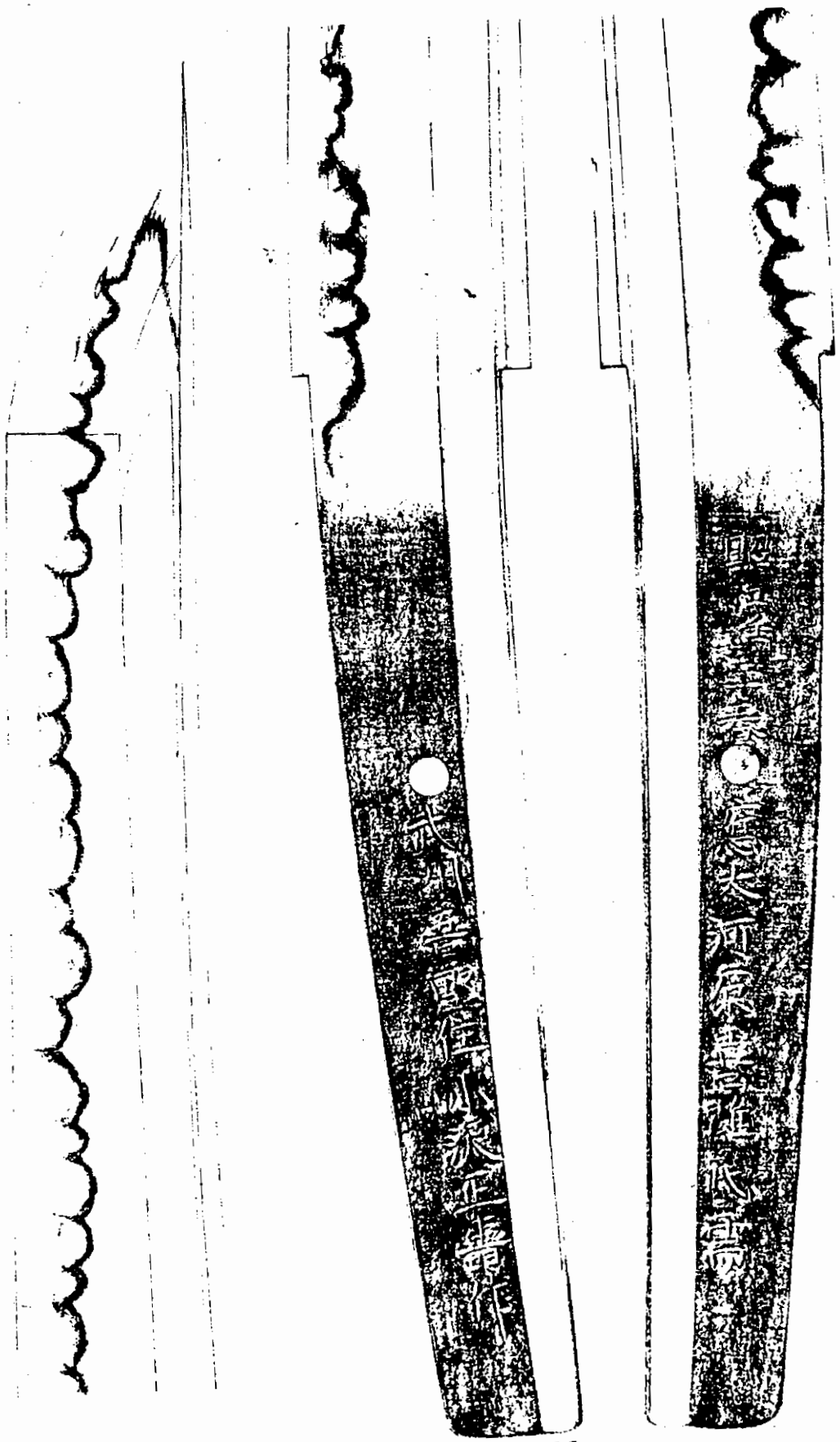
Sword #13

刀

銘

（表）武州吾野住　小沢正壽作

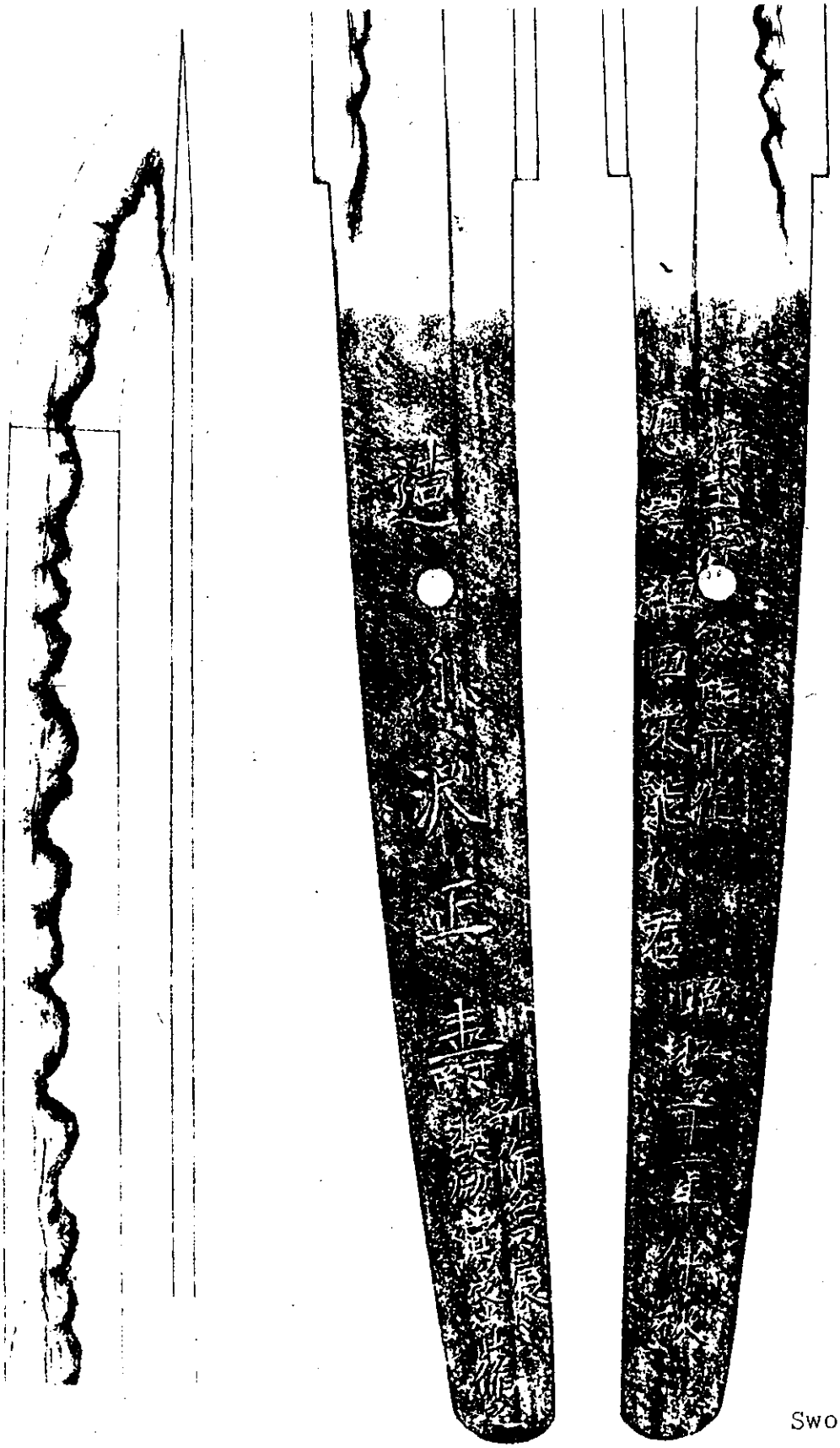
（裏）昭和壬子年春　應大河原喜雄氏需



鎬造　庵棟

刃長　六八・七センチ　反り二・五センチ

Sword #14



刀

銘

（表）造小沢正壽　新作名刀展奨励賞受賞作之

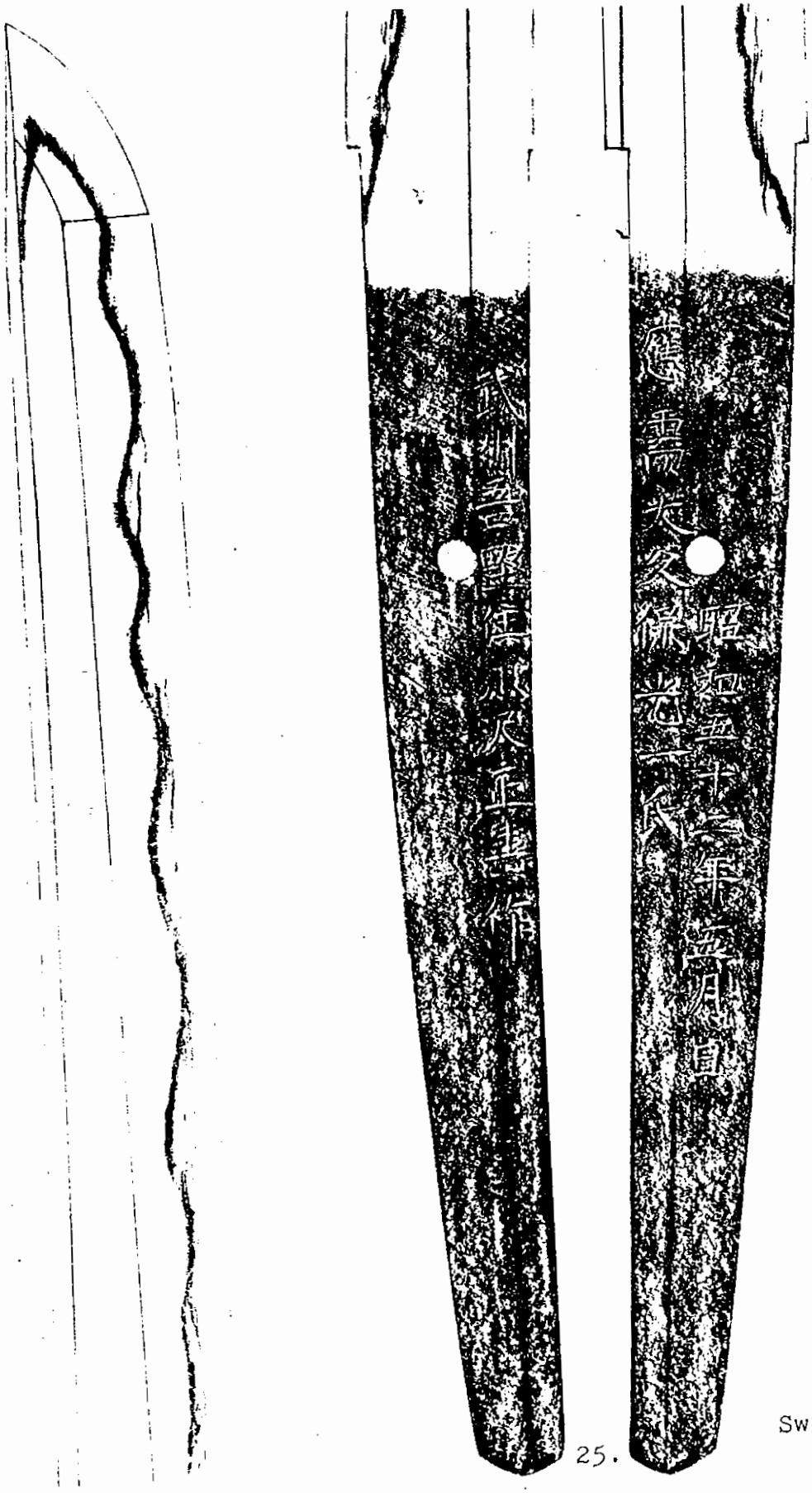
（裏）埼玉県飯能市住

應需細田栄能介君　昭和五十一年仲秋

鍋造　三ッ棟

刃長　七〇・八センチ　反り　二・二センチ

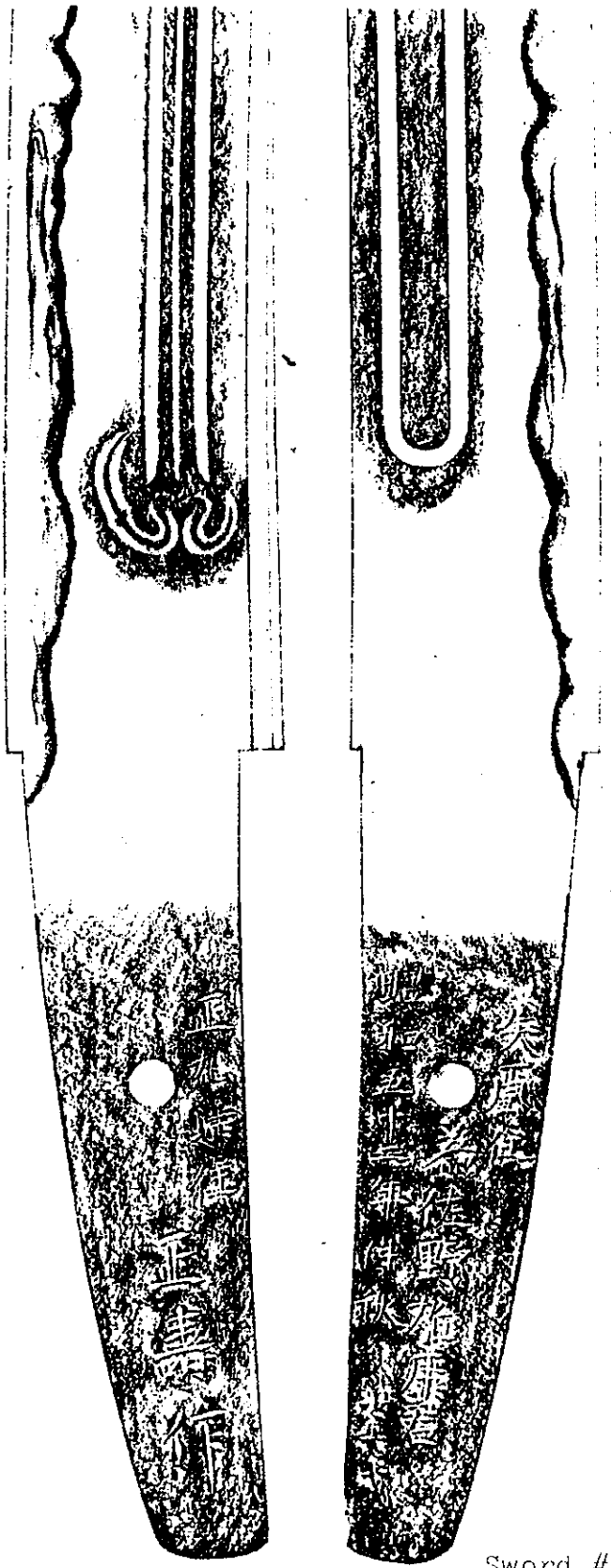
Sword #15



刀銘　（表）武州吾野住　小沢正壽作
（裏）應需大久保光一氏　昭和五十二年五月日

鎬造　庵棟
刃長　六九・六センチ　反り　一・八センチ

Sword #16



脇指　銘

（表）正丸峠住　正壽作

（裏）矢颪住為佐野雄康君　廿七才　昭和五十二年仲秋

平造　三ッ棟

刃長　三九・〇センチ　反り　〇・五センチ

Sword #17

A BRIEF HISTORY OF JAPANESE SWORD FITTINGS

by Andrew Quirt

The scholarly study of Japanese sword fittings is realitively new, and was started in the late nineteenth century by Akiyama Kyusaku. After Akiyama's death in 1936, three of his students have promlegated the study of tsuba and kodogu.

Prior tc Akiyama's time, kantei was a carefully guarded secret of the appraisal family Honami, sword dealers, and of course the artisans. Chief among the artisan families was the Goto, who would authenticate Goto objects of past generations, and after examining them would put a secret chisle mark on the object for the benefit of future Goto appraisers.

Since the study of sword fittings is realitively new, most of the work done so far, especially with pre-Edo pieces, is largely theoretical. Accurate dating, origins, and geneologies are just not available for much of the existing materials. Add to this the many forgeries of popular smiths and styles and you have an almost impossible mess to unscramble. In fact most tsuba are only dated as far back as the mid-Muromachi period, unless an item had been given to a temple or shrine and was documented as perhaps Heian piece.

With this in mind we shall take a look at what is demonstrably a history of Japanese sword furniture, and primarily tsuba.

It is generally accepted that the art of sword making and mounting was originally introduced from the Asian mainland. Counterparts of the jokoto, or most ancient swords of Japan, can be found in Han period Chinese burials (see figure #3). In the year 756, when giving a sword to the Shoso-in, Emperor Shomu described his sword as "one large Chinese sword adorned with gold and silver...".

The history of the sword and its fittings is as old as the history of Japan itself. The earliest examples are archeological pieces dating from the Dolmen period, second century B.C. to eigth

century A.D. There are two main varieties of swords to be found: short double-edged blades of stone or bronze which resemble the latter day ken (figures #1 and #2), and the tachi, a long single-edged sword worn slung at the waist with the cutting edge down (see figure #5). At this time the tachi was straight, and developed the distinctive curve of the samurai sword by the late ninth or early tenth century. These early tachi had three basic handle styles: the bulb type (figure #5), the bird head, which dipicted two mythical Ho-o or phoenix holding a jewel (figure #6) and the crown handle (figure #7). The two former styles disappeared with the Dolmen era, and the latter was modified and used, as the kabuto-gane (metal helmet), from the Nara period to modern times.

It is important to note that the earliest form of tsuba, found in the dolmens, is very close in format to its latter day counter part. These early tsuba were eliptical metal disks decorated with simple lozenge piercings or a flush inlay of soft metal in geometric patterns. The plate itself was of iron or guilt copper, (figure #8). The only important difference between this tsuba and the tsuba of following centuries is the shape of the central hole through which the blade was passed. In the Dolmen swords there was a cylindrical extension on the handle over which the tsuba was fitted and secured by a metal sleeve called the habaki. On swords from the Nara period onward the tsuba was fitted directly onto the blade through a central opening corresponding to the shape of the blade in cross section.

With the tremendous impact that continental culture had on all aspects of Japanese life, it would be surprising if there had been no mark left on the sword. It must be remembered that weaponry has social as well as military functions and is subject to vogues. This was especially true in Japan.

In the year 552, the king of Paikcha sent the gift of Buddism to Japan. It was an on-again off-again situation for quite awhile but the way of Budda was in full bloom by the Nara period, and a new style of sword was on the scene, the ken. The ken was a double edged blade quite a bit shorter than the tachi and resembled

some of the prehistoric Japanese blades. However, the point of interest is that the handle was in the form of a Buddist lightning bold, the vajra (figure #4).

Another item that appeared at about this time was the shitogi tsuba (figure #11), so called due to its resemblance to a rice cake by that name used in a Shinto ritual. The shitogi tsuba is conceptually a bar guard, a form so totally unsuited to the Japanese method of sword play that one must assume that it was either not intended for fighting or that it was not Japanese in origin. Both assumptions are correct.

The shitogi tsuba underwent an evolutionary process, and ended up as a guard simular to the Domen form. The first step was to add rings to the simple shitogi tsuba (figure #12). Then the rings were enlarged and the body flattened (figure #13). The designes which had been on the sides of the simple shitogi tsuba (figure #11) became rim designs and began to move inward toward the rim (figures #14 and #15). Notice that even in figure 15, where the rings are almost completely filled, the only parts of any consequence are the outline of the rim and the rim design; there is no central body to the tsuba. Even so the trend toward the wholeness found in Dolmen pieces had been established, and the tachi tsuba return to the Dolmen format but exhibited the influence of the shitogi tsuba. The outline and some motifs remained, but the design was concerned with the body of the tsuba as well as the rim; a wholeness of design had returned (figure #16). Like the ken, true shitogi tsuba survived the ages and are used ceremonially even today.

The Dolmen tsuba developed much as one would predict, after modification of its central hole. The simple lozenge piercings were abandoned for more varied designs. New methods of inlay were developed, textures introduced, new and varied subjects were employed. The eliptical outline was changed; rounded, squared, and lobed. Although early examples are extremely rare, it is evident

that by the end of the Heian period truly artistic guards were being produced. Figure #17 is a fourteenth century example of what must be classified as an "art tsuba". The fact that the central opening is pointing up, rather than down as in the other tsuba on the page, is the result of a new style for wearing the sword which developed from the kuro no dachi of the Heian period. The kuro no dachi was not worn, but rather carried by an attendent, and so it lacked hangers. As the years passed it became to be worn thrust through the belt with edge upwards. As such it was called a katana.

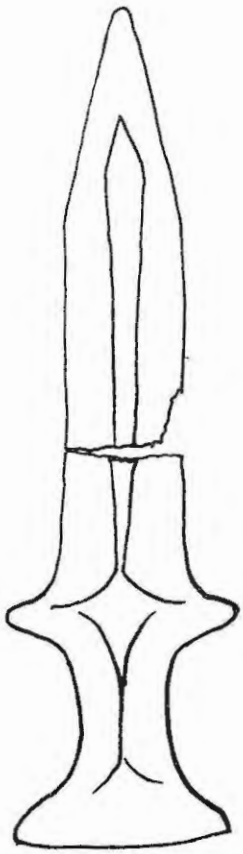


fig.#1
STONE SWORD FROM
A CHIKUZEN DOLMEN

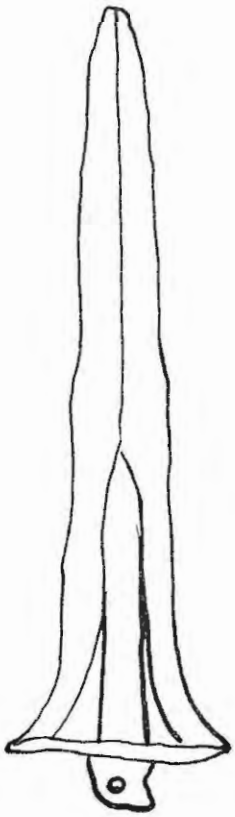


fig.#2
BRONZE SWORD

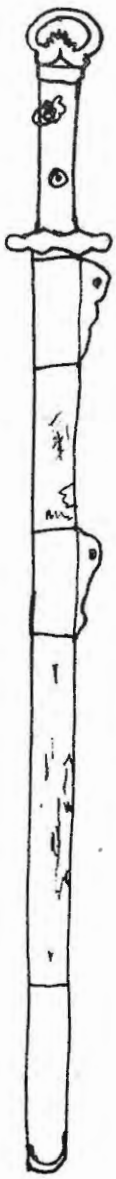


fig. #3
CHINESE SWORD, HAN PERIOD
IMPERIAL TOMB AT PEI-
CHUEU-SHAN.

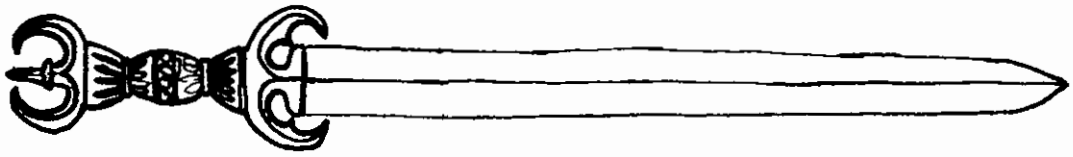


fig.#4
KEN OR TSURUGI WITH A
VAJRA HILT

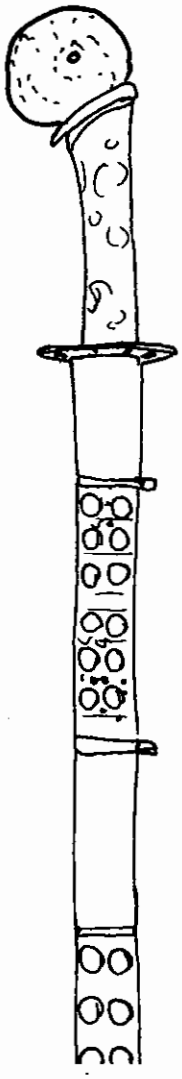


fig.#5
BULB HANDLED TACHI

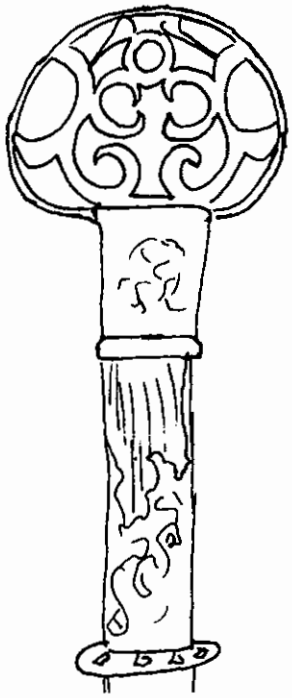


fig.#6
BIRD'S HEAD HANDLE

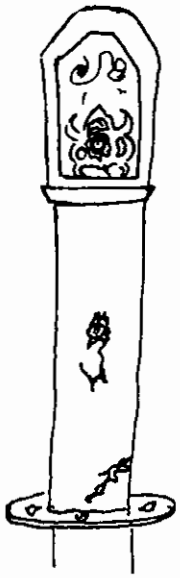


fig.#7
PROTO TACHI HANDLE

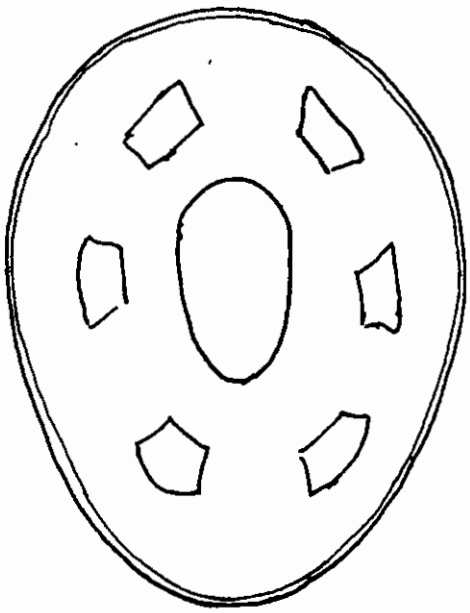


fig.#8
DOLMEN TSUBA WITH RIM

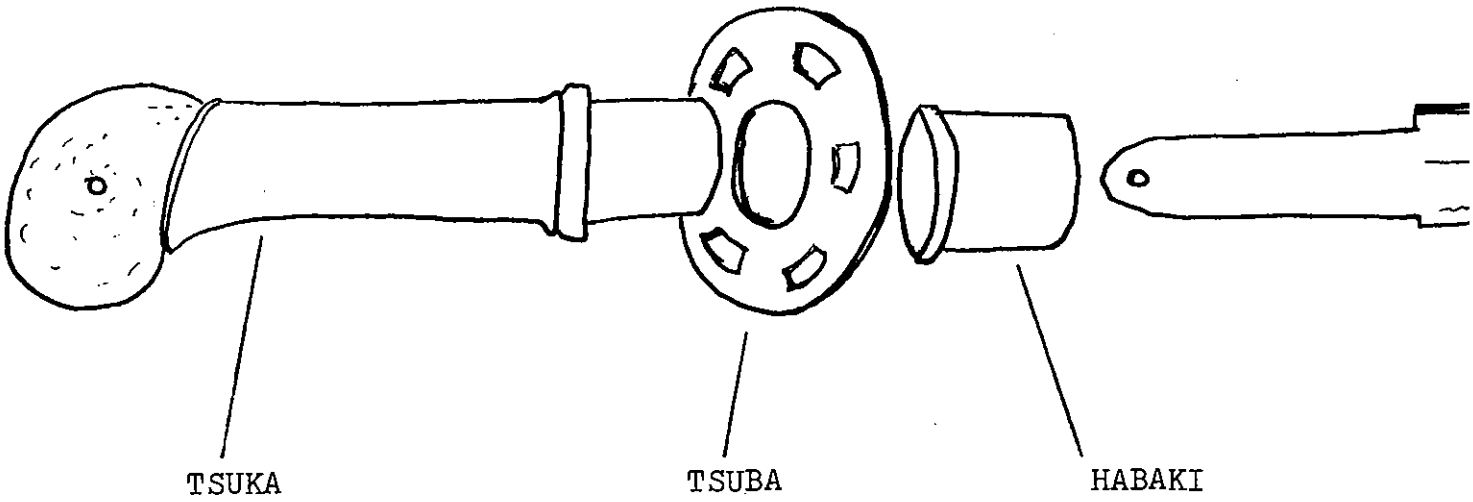


fig.#9
DOLMEN SWORD

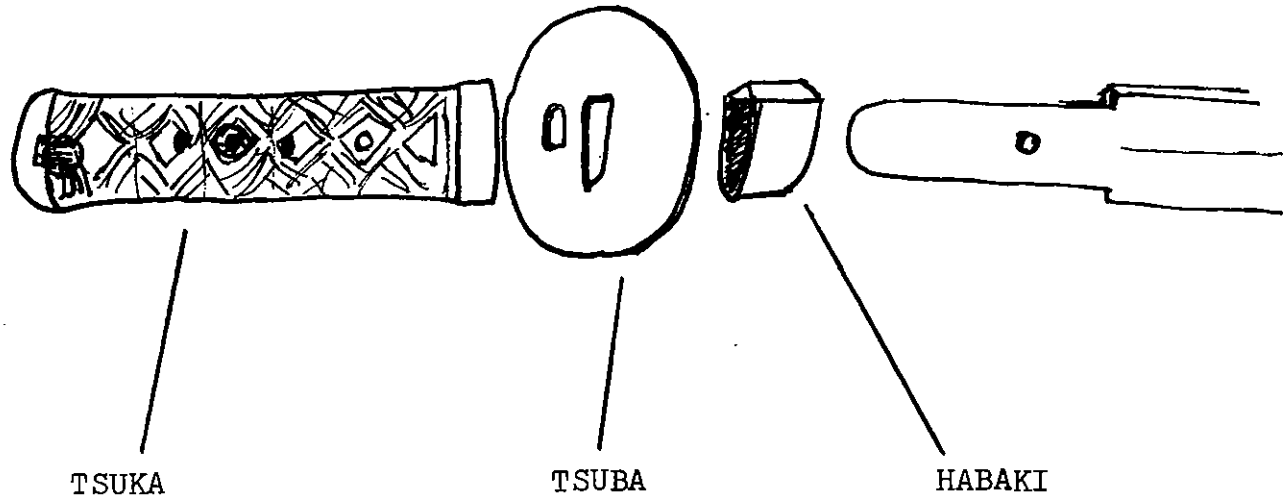


fig.#10
POST DOLMEN SWORD

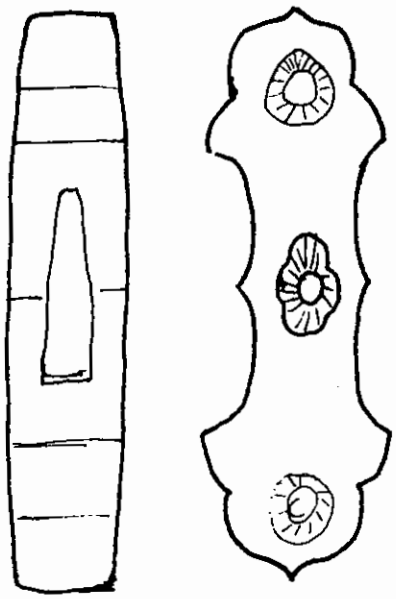


fig.#11
SHITOGI TSUBA
NARA PERIOD

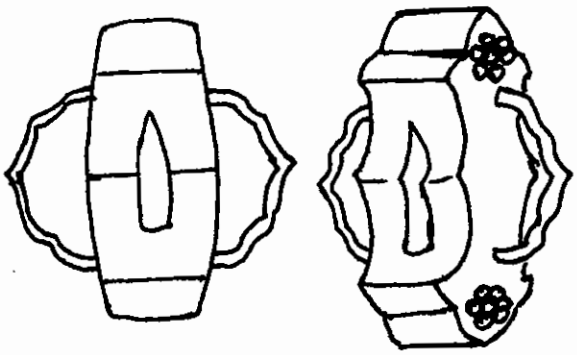


fig.#12
SHITOGI TSUBA WITH RINGS
EARLY HEIAN PERIOD

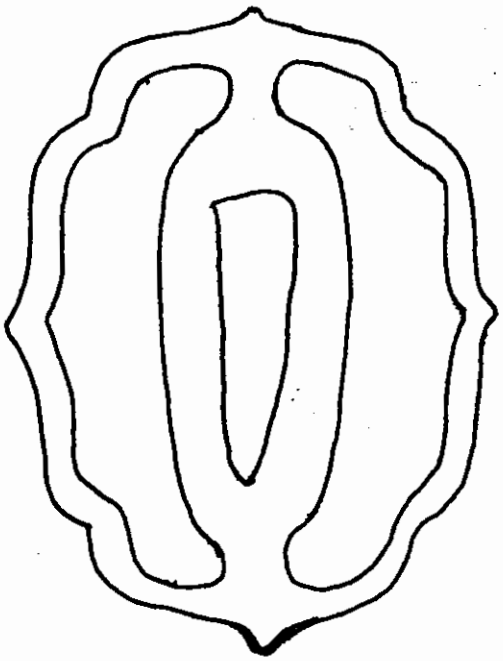


fig.#13
TACHI TSUBA
HEIAN PERIOD

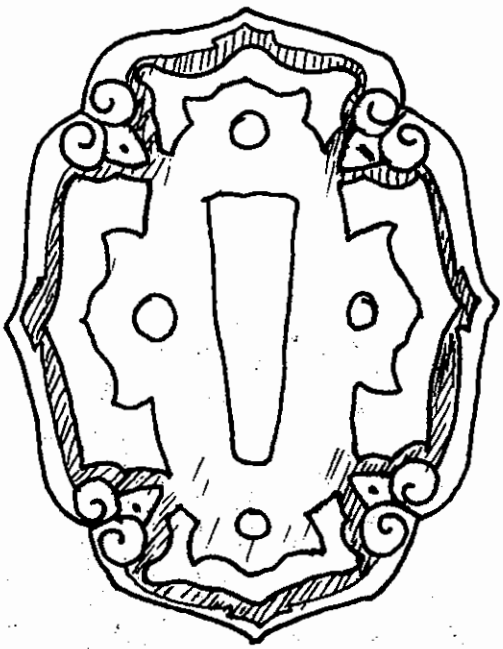


fig.#14
TACHI TSUBA
HEIAN PERIOD

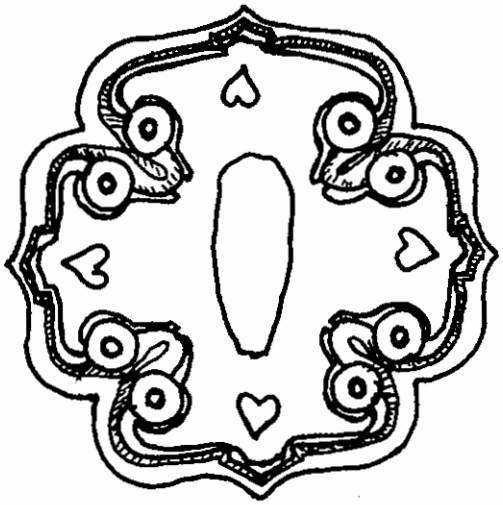


fig.#15
TACHI TSUBA
LATE HEIAN

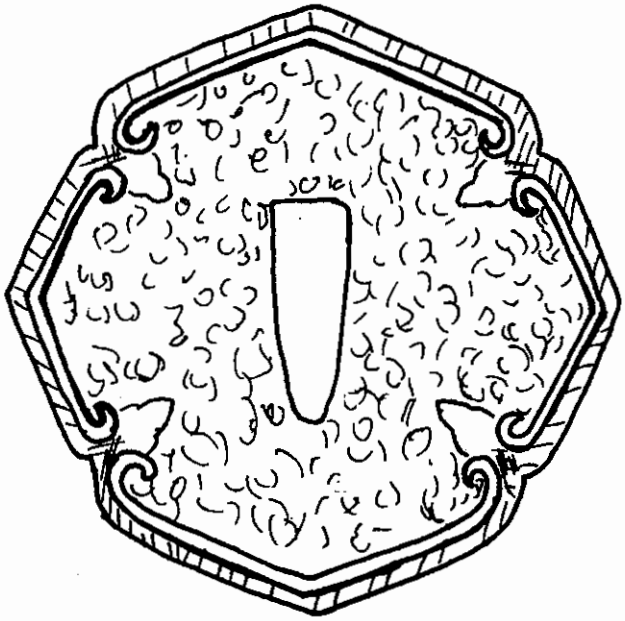


fig.#16
TACHI TSUBA
KAMAKURA PERIOD TO
NORTH-SOUTH DYNASTY
PERIOD

fig.#17
KATANA TSUBA
NORTH-SOUTH DYNASTY PERIOD

AN EXTREMELY RARE BLADE BY SHODAI IZUMI NO KAMI RAI KINMICHI

by Han Bing Siong

In September 1979 with the cooperation of the Tōken Society of the Netherlands I started a project of cataloguing the Japanese swords present in Holland. Since then, more than one hundred and twenty swords have been described. The descriptions are consecutively numbered and published in sets of 15 or 20 under the heading Japanse zwaarden in Nederlands bezit (Japanese swords in Dutch collections).

In this connection I came across an ō mi yari with the tang bearing the inscription "IZUMI NO KAMI RAI KINMICHI". It is 55 cm. long, hira sampaku tsukuri with bō hi. The blade very unfortunately is completely covered with light rust, so no details are discernible apart from a very faint suggestion of a sugu ha hamon.

Beside describing each sword as detailed as its condition permits, I also try to give my opinion on the identity of its smith by carefully comparing the inscription with the Japanese references I have at my disposal. One glance in the Nihon Tōkō Jitten, Shintōhen of Fujishiro Yoshio sensei was enough to know that the inscription on the ō mi yari was not the signature of nidai, sandai nor yondai Rai Kinmichi. I therefore concentrated upon the signatures of shodai.

The signature of shodai illustrated on p.395[1] is one without a title. So I could only use it for checking the last three characters "Rai Kinmichi" of the inscription on the ō mi yari. Although the characters are not identical, there is a clear similarity in the style the chisel was used. So I went on looking for other signatures of shodai Rai Kinmichi. In Fujishiro Yoshio sensei's Shintō Shū (Hamon to mei ji) p.22, I found a signature "Echigo no Kami Fujiwara No Rai Kinmichi". The last three characters of this signature increased my belief that the

1) also in Shintō Shū, p.22, Nihontō Taikan VolI/plate 99 and in Shibata Mitsuo sensei's Nippon no Meitō, p.220.

inscription on the ō mi yari must be a genuine signature of shodai. I became fully convinced after checking the Tōkō Taikan, p.166 of Mr. Tokunō Kazuo. The last three characters of this "Echigo no Kami Fujiwara No Rai Kinmichi"- signature[2] are almost identical with the corresponding characters on the ō mi yari.[3]

As I had to draw my conclusion on the strength of only three characters, I expressed my opinion on the authenticity of this ō mi yari in description No.060 with due reserve as follows:

"Judging from the last three characters of this signature this smith is the second son of Kanemichi from Seki in the Province of Mino and thus brother of Iga no Kami Kinmichi, Tamba no Kami Yoshimichi and Etchū no Kami Masatoshi of the Mishina School. He re-established the House of Rai in the province of Yamashiro. According to the genealogy of the Mishina family he first had the title of Izumi no Kami, which he received in 1595. Afterwards he had the title of Echigo no Kami. Mr. Tokunō Kāzuo places him in the Keichō period (1596-1615), Fujishiro Yoshio sensei mentions the Genwa period (1615-1624), in the Nihontō Meikan of Homma Kunzan sensei and Ishii Masakuni sensei he is placed in the Kanei period (1624-1644). According to Fujishiro sensei he belongs to the jō saku (superior) class of swordsmiths.

In the literature I have at my disposal I only found illustations of signatures with the title of Echigo no Kami. I have not found any signature with the title of Izumi no Kami. My opinion on the authenticity of this signature is therefore solely based on the last three characters. If my judgment proves to be correct, this signature is extremely important."

2) The same signature is also illustrated in Kyōto no Tōken, p.148 by Fukunaga Suiken sensei. However, according to this sensei Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi and Echigo no Kami Rai Kinmichi were two different persons.

3) I found three other signatures, all with the title Echigo no Kami in Shibata Mitsuo sensei's Nippon no Meitō, p.380, Rei No.12, p.16 (which is particularly convincing), and Nihontō, Genson no Yuhin No.7, p.20.

When writing down my opinion I did not realise the full impact of this last sentence. I just assumed that shodai Rai Kinmichi had signed his swords in two ways, either with the title Izumi no Kami or with Echigo no Kami, probably due to the information KI-44 provided by Mr. W.M.Hawley in his Japanese Swordsmiths. The fact that I had not found any signature of shodai Rai Kinmichi with the title Izumi no Kami had not struck me at all. I believed that just by pure chance no illustrations were available of this kind of signature. Moreover, my library of Japanese swordbooks is very limited. I considered it quite possible that the signature would be present in some book which I do not have. Without being able to translate and comprehend the Japanese texts in the books referred to above, I had just seen that the title Izumi no Kami was mentioned in those texts. I simply assumed that those texts explained that shodai Rai Kinmichi also had that title. I completely overlooked the specific information placed between quotation marks provided by the Nihon Tōkō Jitten and the Tōkō Taikan on the way each recorded smith signed. According to those signature-indications shodai Rai Kinmichi exclusively used the title Echigo no Kami in his signatures. Iimura Kashō sensei's Tōken Yōran, p.389 (3rd edition) and the Tōkō Zenshū, Shintōhen, p.26 by Mr. Shimizu Kyoshi give the same signature-indications without mentioning signatures with the other title. This is most interesting because Mr. Hawley who gives different information in his book, has based it on this Tōkō Zenshū.

Only after a while I started wondering why I had not succeeded in finding any illustration of the Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi signature. Even in the Tōken Bijutsu series, which I checked for the greater part, I could not find any. I rechecked the books that I had consulted. This time I asked a qualified translator for help[4]. Then a totally different picture emerged!

4) I thank Drs. W.G.Snellen for his translation of the texts in Nihon Tōkō Jitten, Shintō Shū, Tōkō Taikan, Nihontō Taikan and Nihontō, Genson no Yuhin.

The translation of Fujishiro sensei's opinion in Shintō Shū is as follows: "True, the first generation called himself Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi, but this author has not yet seen a sword of the first generation with the signature Izumi no Kami, therefore he believes that the first generation Rai Kinmichi was Echigo no Kami."

Mr. Tokunō Kazuo is of the same opinion. In his Tōkō Taikan he says: "According to the genealogy of the Mishina family the title of Izumi no Kami only began as from the second generation Kinmichi. The first generation signed with Echigo no Kami, and that Rai Kinmichi has received the title of Izumi no Kami must therefore have been confused with his acquiring the title of Echigo no Kami."

No person less than the late Satō Kanzan sensei has confirmed these opinions. Though in his work on Yamashiro Kaji[5] he still mentioned Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi as one of the four Mishina brothers, in the Nihontō Taikan, Volume I on Shintō, p.23 he wrote: "According to the Shintō Bengi this Rai Kinmichi who was the second son of Kanemichi, has received the title of Izumi no Kami during the Bunroku period. However, a sword made by this person signed Izumi no Kami does not exist at present. Now and then there has been one with the title Echigo no Kami Kinmichi. That he acquired the title of Izumi no Kami presumably is a mistake."

Mr. Ogasawara Nobuo in his work on Shintō[6] put it in almost the same way as Satō sensei.

5) No.107 of the series Nippon no Bijutsu, on p.92.
6) No.155 of the series Nippon no Bijutsu, on p.23.

Considering that these eminent sword experts with their vast experience have never seen one single sword by shodai Rai Kinmichi signed Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi, the ō mi yari discussed here must indeed be of the greatest importance, provided it being genuine.

Impressed by the statements of these authorities I begun doubting the correctness of my analysis and my conclusions as to the genuineness of the signature on this ō mi yari. But I wondered, what is the use of faking a signature of a swordsmith who never signed that way? On second thoughts I realised that in a time when the sword-literature still taught a different theory, and everybody still believed in the existence of this kind of signature, it could certainly be profitable to do so. As shodai Rai Kinmichi was a swordsmith of jō saku class it could be worthwhile commercially to make and sell swords with a faked Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi signature. I therefore meticulously rechecked the calligraphy of the last three characters on the ō mi yari over and over again. However, despite all this critical rechecking I could not find any reason to revise my conclusions. The signature on the ō mi yari seemed perfectly genuine to me. Knowing my limitations in this field, I decided to send an oshigata to Homma Junji sensei asking him for his opinion on my conclusions, as they were solely based on the last three characters. By letter the sensei confirmed that the signature is the authentic signature of shodai Rai Kinmichi.

Homma sensei and Ishii Masakuni sensei have indeed stated in their Nihontō Meikan, 3rd edition, p.232, that the younger brother of Iga no Kami Kinmichi used the title Izumi no Kami in his signatures. That he also signed with Echigo no Kami is not put forward in their monumental work. The swordsmith who signed with Echigo no Kami Fujiwara no Kinmichi is recoreded separately as if he was a different person without any reference to the other record. However, as both records mentioned the same province and the same Kanei period, I assume these records are dealing with one and the same swordsmith.

Fukunaga Suiken[7] in his book Kyōto no Tōken, p.146-150, is of the opinion that shodai Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi and Echigo no Kami Rai Kinmichi were two different persons. In his opinion Echigo no Kami Rai Kinmichi was nidai, and the smith who generally is considered nidai Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi was sandai. If his opinion is correct, then my analysis on the genuineness of the signature concerned is without any solid basis. If shodai Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi and Echigo no Kami Rai Kinmichi were different persons, then the authenticity of the first man's signature of course cannot be judged by comparing it with the signatures of the other man. The point is that although Fukunaga sensei obviously has also never come across any signature of shodai, because not one is included in his book, shodai according to this sensei did signe with the title of Izumi no Kami. Most striking is that the last three characters of the

7) In his article in Tōken Bijutsu No.47 p.26-34, on p.33 he had not yet reached this conclusion. I take this opportunity to correct a mistake in my "Reminiscences of Tōken Taikai '79" JSS/US Bulletin 1979, p.68 as regards the first name (or rather the second name) of this sensei.

signature on the ō mi yari are almost identical with the corresponding characters of the signature Echigo no Kami Fujiwara no Rai Kinmichi illustrated in Fukunaga sensei's book.

Though a pupil of Fujishiro sensei, Shibata Mitsuo sensei has explicitly rejected the opinion that shodai Rai Kinmichi never included the title of Izumi no Kami in his signatures. He also rejects the opinion of Fukunaga sensei[8]. In his Nippon no Meitō, p.220 he writes that shodai Rai Kinmichi in the beginning signed his swords with Izumi no Kami and later on with Echigo no Kami. And in Rei No. 126 p.16 he writes that Echigo no Kami Kinmichi and Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi were one and the same person.

Notwithstanding these explicit statements by Shibata sensei none of the most important of his many publications show a single oshigata of the Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi signature. Perhaps this is because the work by this smith is extremely scarce[9]. Shibata[10] sensei considers it quite possible that the eldest brother Iga no Kami Kinmichi needed the highly able shodai Rai Kinmichi for making daisaku for him. Because of his dominant position in the making of swords Iga no Kami Kinmichi had no time to make swords himself. In consequence there are only a few swords which shodai Rai Kinmichi signed himself. If so, then those with the Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi signature just make

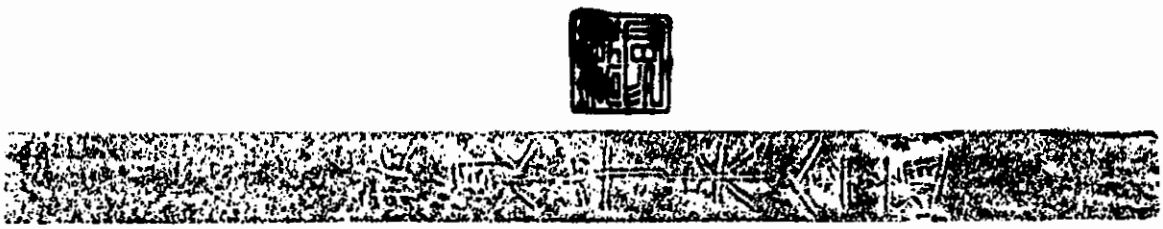
8) In Nihontō, Genson no Yūhin, No.7 p.20.

9) See also Hiroi Yūichi sensei in Nihontō Zenshū, Vol.4 p.24, who refrains from going into the subject of the different titles.

10) See note 8.

up a part of this small number. Even two centuries ago swords with the Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi signature were already very scarce. Kamada Natae for instance, who - as we have seen in the writing of Satō sensei - stated in the Shintō Bengi that this smith received that title in the Bunroku period, could not include that signature in his oshigata collection of 1779, which was republished in 1975 by Mr. Hawley.[11)]

The ō mi yari in Holland is therefore perhaps one of the very few with the signature Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi found up till now, if not the only one. Who knows, it will contribute to put an end to the controversy between the sword experts. For this it will be necessary to have it repolished and submitted to shinsa for an examination of the characteristics of its hamon and its steel.



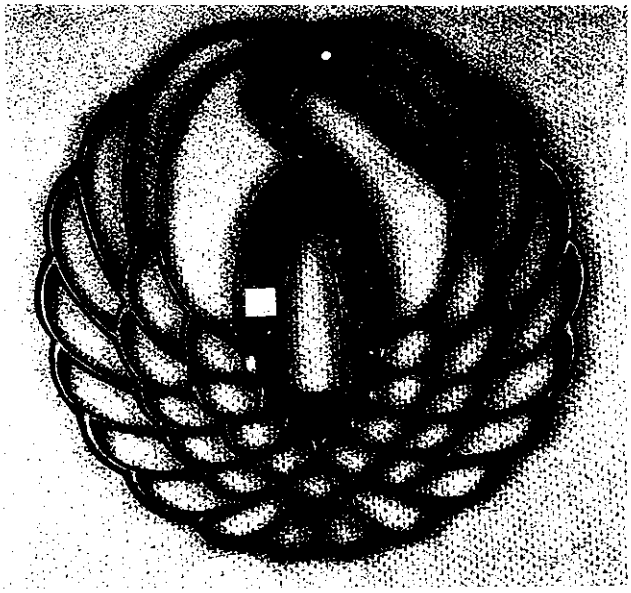
An oshigata of the ō mi yari
signed: Izumi no Kami Rai Kinmichi

11) On p.28 some oshigata of Iga no Kami Kinmichi signatures are keyed by number KI 44, but according to KI 44 in Japanese Swordsmiths the swordsmith concerned had not that title.

MODERN TSUBA-KO IN AMERICA

by Ron Hartmann

Soon after purchasing a daishō pair of tsuba earlier this past year it was discovered that the set was not antique as originally thought, but of quite modern manufacture. First inclination was to reject them as modern reproductions until it was realized that the purchase was made on the merit of the tsuba alone, and not by signature or age. The pair was truly a fine example of the art and should be appreciated as such, even if they had been manufactured today. This realization stimulated the following article. Its intent being to recognize and give credit to a few of the modern artists who are trying to carry on this craft of old Japan. The examples of only three craftsmen will be presented in this article, but they well represent the talent available in todays America. Europe has produced other such craftsmen and perhaps that country can be recognized in a future article.



85mm x 86mm x 3mm

The beautiful example illustrated above is the work of Mr. John Yumoto of San Mateo, California, author of The Samurai Sword, sensei and Honorary Member of our Society. Johns great love for kodogu and his interest in making tsuba stems from his early training in Japan.

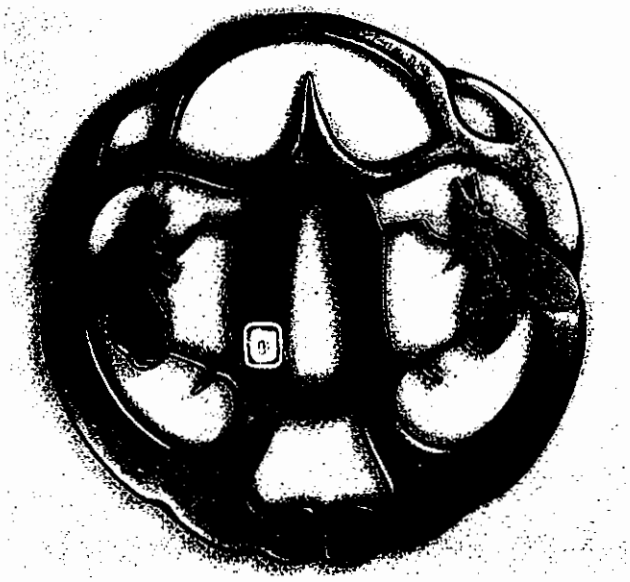
He learned soft metal work while studying in Kyoto many years ago. The late Mr. Tanaka, a Goto family descendent from Kaga, showed him many techniques. John says he did not actually learn tsuba making, but rather many of the techniques used by the artists of olden days. These techniques, along with an understanding of tsuba design and control has guided him in his hobby of making tsuba.

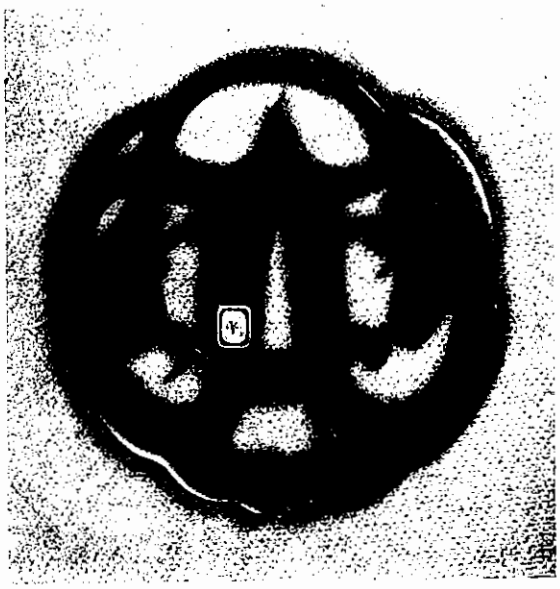
When creating a tsuba such as the one illustrated, a proper well-forged blank is selected. Smiths of ancient days made their own blanks but in Edo times and later years such preworked blanks were commonly used. John points out, because of this early practice kantei can be greatly facilitated if one learns to recognize iron characteristics of various older tsuba schools. This is an area deserving more study, says John. A blank must be "just right" if proper surface texture and color is to achieved, John points out. When creating a sukashi example with many piercings as in the one illustrated, a mechanical jig saw is used. Such mechanical assistance has been utilized for many years, even by the great masters, ever since such devices have been available. Of course the final finishing steps are done by hand. It is these final steps which will produce a true tsuba, or simply an ornament.

John points out that it is traditional when copying a master's tsuba design, the copy be made slightly larger than the original piece. The intent being to avoid any confusion between identifying the original tsuba from the copy (an optimistic thought). John makes his copies approximately 10% larger than the original being copied. When attempting to make a tsuba John stressed one very important rule. He pointed out that in making a tsuba, it must serve its purpose as a tsuba first--and can become artful only after meeting this initial requirement. There is a great difference between an artful "ornament" and a masterpiece tsuba.

The next modern tsuba smith contacted was long time Society member, Billy Johnson of Birmingham, Alabama. A retired jeweler, Billy is well known for his scale model Kentucky rifles (miniature models of fantastic detail). Copying tsuba naturally appealed to him and the challenge has driven Billy to make a number of tsuba with "crane" designs being his most favorite because of their very

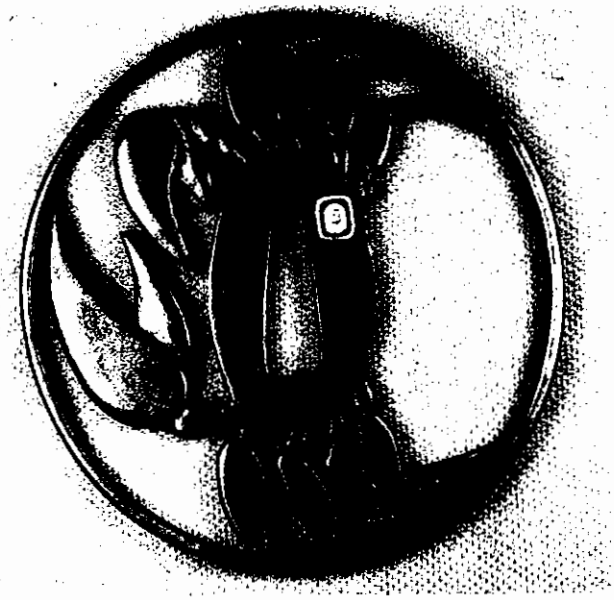
graceful lines. The following daishō pair of tsuba is a copy of a ko-Heianjo tsuba of "deer antler and bee" pattern, the original belonging to Paul Couch, also of Birmingham. This particular tsuba design has been adopted as the Southeastern Tokenkai logo.





DAI - 91.0mm x 89.0mm x3.75mm SHO - 76.0mm x 74mm x 3.75mm

All of the tsuba that Billy has made have been of the sukashi or pierced form, all copies of existing tsuba. He uses a jeweler's saw to rough out a tsuba. It is simple work but hard work with hundreds of saw blades broken in the process. "Many times I have wondered how in the world a Japanese artist could cut out and finish up a sukashi tsuba of lacey design, two or three hundred years ago, working only with hand twist drills and hand made files!", says Billy. Perhaps it took weeks or even months to make one tsuba.

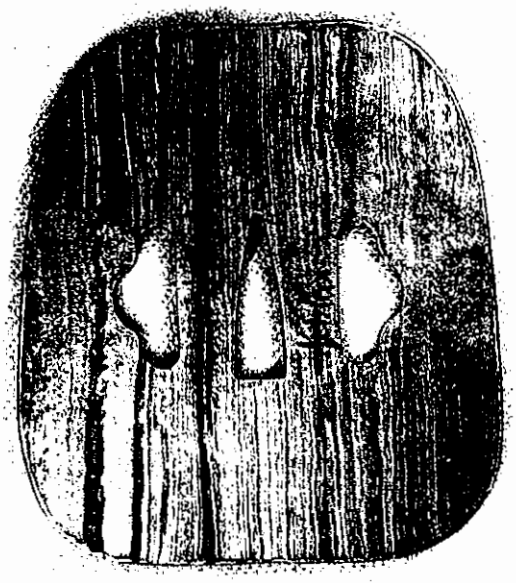


87.5mm x 84.0mm x 4.5mm thick

The above tsuba is a "crab" design in sukashi form, again a very famous design usually pictured in tsuba books. This particular tsuba is in the Bill Miller collection, a product of Billy Johnson.

Billy adds that he did try his hand at other kodogu several years ago, making a complete set of fuchi-kashira, menuki, kogai and kodzuka, and tsuba, all in soft metal (silver) with gold and silver sea shell pattern.

The next tsuba pictured are the two daishō tsuba which initiated this article.



DAI - 85.0mm x 74.0mm x 4.5mm

SHO - 74.0mm x 65.0mm x 4.5mm

This pair of tsuba, depicting "rotten wood" design are made from folded plate with the wood grains worked so as to give a very pure "feeling" to the total tsuba. The rim is hammered over and polished. The plate surface has retained a "wet" appearance which is striking. The daishō is signed Nobuhira, the Japanese trade name of Keith Austin who continues to work a forge in California. These two tsuba are two of four made from a particular forging at that time. Although "fresh" looking tsuba, they do appear to meet John Yumoto's requirement of "a tsuba first and then an artful item".

Keith is well known by many of the seasoned collectors, primarily for his expertise in sword making. His training began in 1963 when Keith went to Japan and approached the master swordsmith Teiji Takahashi, requesting apprenticeship. Initial rejection was followed by acceptance when sincerity was understood. After many years of hard work and study Keith's talents bloomed forth with his receiving of high awards during sword making contests in Japan. Truly a unique individual, Keith is not only a talented craftsman but also an individual with an "understanding" of Japanese things. It is understood that tsuba making is somewhat secondary to sword forging, but his fame is obvious as to tsuba, judging from the apparent demand for his works. The daishō pair illustrated are now highly regarded additions to the Hartmann collection.

It is interesting to think back a few years to one's first sword. Often lacking a tsuba, many collectors-to-be tried to "hammer out" a tsuba in order to complete their sword. Quickly the novice discovers how difficult this project is, how the end product distracts from the total sword rather than adding to it. Such disheartening experiences do serve a purpose--they serve to give one an appreciation for a "real" tsuba. Once this basic understanding is gained, hopefully the collector progresses into higher appreciation realizing the artfulness of truly fine tsuba design. To gain this full understanding of the art, and then to be able to actually produce such an item, must certainly be a most rewarding experience!

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OEI BIZEN SWORD

by Tsuneishi Hideaki

Nihontō Kantei-tō Kenkyū Kotōhen

as translated by Steven Winkley

The Oei era (1394-1427) of Bizen province was, in a manner of speaking, the last period for famous Bizen Osafune swordsmiths. In other words the elegant beauty of ko-Bizen smiths from the Heian era, the large heroic blades of the early periods of Kamakura era, and the works of the Ban Kaji of the same period could be used as examples and, indeed, were aimed at by the Oei era smiths who wanted a re-emergence of quality. (Others might include the originators of the Ichimonji school, Tadamitsu, Nagamitsu, and Kagemitsu that were making blades in the first periods of the Osafune era with incomparable beauty). These Oei smiths used these previous masterpieces as goals in all of their efforts. Accordingly, the shapes of the earlier generations of the Namboku era's heroic styled tachi shape changed completely. Even though the blade was thrust in a sash at the hip, there were circumstances occuring with the balance of the blade with its koshi sori. This was a shape that was indeed pleasing to many people.

Originally, the term sugiru was used to describe Bizen blades (sugiru meaning to exceed or to go to excesses). The width of the blade, the temper and the balance of the sword as well as the sori (curvature) was described as being of excess. This is really one of the major keys to determining Bizen works according to the Honami family. But the Honami family were also significantly accurate in describing the abnormal amounts of expression in the forementioned characteristics. However, a deterioration of skill can be seen when compared to the ko-Bizen daito. The "funbari" characteristic is insufficient and the quality of the sword falls off in this area of its structure. Also, though there is a similarity between the Ichimonji types with their heroic beauty, the shortness of the measurements lack in dignity. There is no problem comparing the ko-Bizen to Ichimonji. Nevertheless, the sue Bizen era, being the next after the Oei era

has smiths such as Katsumitsu, Munemitsu, Tadamitsu, and others. The difference in skill and dignity of the blades can be seen. This separates it from the workmanship of the Oei Bizen smiths. Moreover, the Oei Bizen smiths became a focal point of sword-making and the shape of swords changed from the tachi era to the era of the katana which is one point that should never be forgotten. (Later, the differences between a tachi and a katana will be discussed.)

Moreover, rarely in the works of Oei Bizen (when there are long blades) are there blades as broad and wide as in Nambokucho examples. The blade width in never bold and it is without fail a slender shape and design. The sori is shallow with the lengthened kissaki (point) of a Namboku style. While this might be wordy, if I might clarify this once, the last period (prior to Oei Bizen) had the shape called "tachi" and from the Oei era on the name "katana" has been used for this style. The heroic strength of Nambokucho blades has been completely lost and, to symbolize the peaceful times of the Oei period, the measurements are in balance, the width of the blade is slender, and there is a ko-kissaki (small point) that has good shape. But from this period, the Bizen koshizori changes more or less to sakizori (the deepest point of the curve falls more into the kissaki end of the blade). Therefore, early Osafune or Soshu style Bizen blades that are long and large of width with unokubi kissaki or a kissaki that is large and extended and with a withered looking fukura, are certainly different.

From this period, the warrior carried two swords from his hip (the "daishō") and this was the beginning of a transition in the way of wearing the Japanese sword. (Tachi are, you will remember, suspended by courds from the hip, edge facing downward, not edge up thrust into the sash as katana and wakizashi were.) Consequently, wakizashi were newly manufactured by the Oei Bizen smiths and were circulated to the entire country. Moreover, this was the basis of the origination of

wakizashi and was a major change in the warriors customs. Clearly eighty percent of kotō hirazukuri wakizashi are of this period and of Bizen work. Consequently, to exemplify honzukuri wakizashi with sanjo Munechika or Soshu Goro Masamune's signature can't be done. Even though we do not see the actual works they are know as fakes because Masamune and Munechika were prior to Oei Bizen times and master swordsmiths did not make wakizashi in their particular day.

Morimitsu, Yasumitsu, and Moromitsu are named as Oei Bizen "sanmitsu" of the "three mitsu". They are not just representative of that Osafune era of swordsmithing. They and other styles were spread throughout the country and created a great boom. They opened the origin of the so-called katana era.

Eventually, the kotō period of the Oei had the same importance as did the first period of shintō works of the Keicho era (1596). It wasn't just the method of making the sword that changed, but there was a revolution brought about by this era. Therefore, this is a highly important historical period. Gotoba and his Goban kaji of the Jokyu era (1219) and the previously mentioned Keicho era should be eras that are never forgotten due to their importance.

On the point of skill of the temper patterns it can be said that there is a world of difference between some of the three mitsu tempers. Yasumitsu and Moromitsu aimed at a uniform ko-choji midare. Morimitsu copied Ichimonji, Mitsutada, and Nagamitsu styles of the first period of Bizen Osafune with its particular trait of ofusa choji or Juka choji (multible choji) midare. Even though they were skilled, a sign of their deterioration in skill is in the openness of the koshiba (first few inches of the hamon which swells up at first at the hamachi end of the sword) and the roughness thereof. A proportion of choji midare temper was splendidly executed. In other words, this period's temper was like a

sue Bizen gunome of overlapping choji midare or a divided choji with the top of the choji shaped like crab pincers. Others do not have nioi on the top of the choji though there is tangled nioi present. It has been pointed out that the open koshi choji midare is similar to a trail around Mount Fuji or so it has been described.

Also, a few temperlines called shin cho-ito are seen. However, they are not often present. (Shin cho-ito is not a pure suguha, the style being notare midare with ashi present.) A nioi based suguha temper pattern is partiuclarly seen in tempered ko-wakizashi. These are later generation Tadamitsu, Norimitsu, Munemitsu, and Kiyomitsu works. Possibly, Sengoku era blades, called kazuuchi with suguha, received great influence from this era.

Oei Bizen has a feature called bo-utsuri that is very common. Ichimonji, or the early period Osafune utsuri, is so-called choji utsuri or midare utsuri but Oei Bizen utsuri is a rod shaped unskilled utsuri. Furthermore, in sue Bizen works, most blades do not have this feature (utsuri) at all.

Boshi are lightly tempered with a small kaeri (turnback) but the omote side of the boshi has a slight feeling of pointed areas of nioi that is very common. Particularly, in Oei Bizen blades there are no examples of deep kaeri in the boshi.

The jihada is a mokume with a weak feeling. The Oei Bizen hada is called Oei hada which is somewhat conspicuous. It is a comparatively beautiful, obvious hada.

Engravings are not often found on katana of this era (though era's about that time have many examples) but blades with grooves (hi) are extremely common. Without fail, the hi ends above the machi (notches at the base of the blade). Some are square ending and some are round ended. The front of the hi is weak and fades below the yokote. The hi is wide, but

they are quite shallow. With some hirazukuri wakizashi, ken, bonji, ken maki ryu, and honorific names of gods are done in simplistic style. This point differs from previous and latter eras. In addition, bo hi that end in round points and bo hi that have soebi are quite common.

Wakizashi that are less than 50 centimeters and in balance with good shape were quite often made, expecially in kotō times. Again, eighty percent of the hirazukuri ko-wakizashi are from this period of Oei Bizen.

The nakago of Oei Bizen blades show a widening and shortening tendency. From this period on, moreover, there is no sori in the nakago and the nakago jiri has a feeling of extension. Also, the mekugi ana is raised from the middle of the blade to the upper part of the nakago. Certainly a lathe was used to cut the holes in the nakago. Previously, a chisel was laboriously used to open holes. Therefore, a non-uniform hole was cut in a round shape. In a way, there was elegance, but a hole cut by a lathe was very practical and common. The earlier eras had holes that were more elegant but because a lathe opens the shole simply, this practice was spread to all smiths of the entire nation despite the lack of elegance. In other words, here we have another key to the period of Oei products. A lathe was used, of course, to accurately open holes which were a product of the Oei era and beyond.

The tantō of Oei Bizen are, just as long swords, balanced in all aspects and many smiths used this basic concept of balance. But they were not like the long extended Nambokucho blades that were wide of blade and thin bodied. The sue Bizen blades that were short of length were unlike Oei Bizen blades. Also, the hamon was chu suguha made with a mixed ko-midare. The koshi of the sword was open and mixed with choji midare. Therefore, the likes of Soden Bizen shape or Nambokucho kata-ochi gunome, mimikata or Ogunome with midare are not present.

(Kataochi gunome is a dropping gunome with one side lower than the other.) Also, exactly opposite of sue Bizen tempers of uniform gunome style with choji midare or hitatsura temper, we have a more gentle feeling in the temper. The tantō boshi kaeri is the same as long swords, not like a Soden Bizen or sue Bizen kaeri that is deep, it is quite the opposite. There are irregularities, a light midare komi has been seen with a slight kaeri present.

There were many small blades made in the Oei era. Iesuke, Tsuneiye and others are seen as being of the Oei Bizen era. However, there is cause to believe that these blades have been made by someone other than the previously mentioned smiths.

The characteristics of Oei Bizen Horimono, the aforementioned ken or bonji and other engravings have been simplified. The engraving is quiet and uniform. There is a rounded feeling to the handle of the ken engraving which is seen in many examples. Also, the location of the engravings are in balance on both the omote and ura sides. Looking overall, the engravings are midway between the Sōden Bizen and sue-Bizen workings.

Authors comment: Bizen den is persistently choji midare in the tempers. As a rule though, from the Oei Bizen era on we see that suguha became more common in the temper patterns. Most frequently they can be seen in wakizashi.

THE HIDDEN SPIRIT OF A FINE KOSHIRAE

by Ron Hartmann

The following is taken in part from an article by Mr. David Swedlow, with a conclusion by Mr. Morihiro Ogawa, entitled " A Japanese setting for a private collection" which appeared in Arts of Asia magazine, July-August 1978 issue. It is with the kindness of Mr. Swedlow and the editors of Arts of Asia that this material is presented in our journal.

In reading Mr. Swedlow's article, more specifically, the portion of the article pertaining to the sword by Yamato no Kami Yasusada and its koshirae, the talents which were pulled together to create the total mounted sword were most impressive. How often the collector discovers a finely mounted sword and because of cracked lacquer or other such damage the quality of the original mounting is overlooked. Perhaps all of us should stop and reconsider before we quickly "redue" a mounting in our well-meaning manner. Many collectors have some grasp on the appreciation of a fine polish, perhaps a fine habaki, but few people stop to realise just what goes into the making of a saya, it's lacquered finish, the handle and it's wrapping, all of the years of training in these various arts that it takes to create a truly fine "total" sword. Mr. Swedlow was questioned about this project of rebuilding his sword's koshirae. The job was both costly and timely taking around three years to complete and some $5,000 in expenses! The finished product, exhibited during the 1980 Dallas sword event, gave all who viewed it a better appreciation of the "hidden spirit and tranquil gracefulness" transmitted by this total sword as pointed out by Mr. Ogawa.

The following illustrations and biographies will hopefully impress upon everyone the many talents and abilities required to create this masterpiece koshirae. If just a few members stop and look closer at their own somewhat neglected and abused koshirae and express just a little more appreciation of what it took to create that product, then this article will have done its duty.

The blade featured in this article[1] has received a Juyo rating in Japan. There is always a question as to the authenticity of blades until they have been judged, as has this one, by the Masters at the Tokyo International Swords Museum. This blade originally came in a plain wooden scabbard. On the basis of the fine rating it received, and with the assistance of Mr. Morihiro Ogawa of the Department of Arms and Armour, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, I was able to have Mr. Shinichi Hiroi make a suitable scabbard. This was then lacquered by Mr. Shisen Sato to match a beautiful set of fine and rare fittings which I supplied for the purpose. The fittings were made by one of the greatest Goyo Masters and are also rated Juyo. So the combination of the lacquered scabbard with its beautiful fittings and the blade is indeed quite rare.

To complete this article Mr. Morihiro Ogawa has set down the biographies of the sword mounting artists Shisen Sato and Shinichi Hiroi; as well as describing the activities involved in the making of the scabbard he has suggested his feelings for the blade itself. The photographs of the scabbard makers and of the sword blade with the details of its tang, point, and edge patterns are by Fumiyasu Kaname.

Shisen Sato was born in Aomori Prefecture in 1902. He graduated from Hirosaki Art and Technology School of Aomori Prefecture in 1917. In 1919, he became a student of Shisui Rokkaku who was celebrated as the top-ranking craftsman in lacquer. When he became a professional in 1923, he first produced lacquer wares for the tea ceremony, for trays and boxes and the like, just as other lacquer craftsmen who made articles for daily use. Around 1942, by chance he happened to start making a sword mounting and became interested in handling the related lacquer detail. Since then he has specialised in sword mounting work.

1) Arts of Asia, Vol.8 No.4, July-August 1978, p.42-55.

The making of a scabbard involves many complicated and elaborate steps ranging from the first groundwork to the final finish. Even in todays's machine age it is impossible to mechanise the process of producing lacquer. Only through a craftsman's long experience can beautiful maki-e (applied gold and silver) lacquer come to fruition. Since the ground layers are concealed under later layers, it is very hard to tell if a short cut has been taken and a step intentionally omitted from the many processes that go to the making of the finished article. This will only come to light after serveral decades, just as the true beauty and quality of the lacquer appears gradually.

Even were there no one to understand the aesthetic value of Shisen's work today, in the long run the difference between a great art like his and a sham art will become apparent, so that more people will eventually understand his distinguished craftsmanship and be fascinated by the beauty of his works.

Sato has said about his lacquering of the scabbard now in the Swedlow collection, "It took about two years to complete this maki-e work. This is one of several masterpieces which are especially memorable and meaningful in my life. You will understand, it is very hard for me to make an object like this because of my old age. I think it is a great privilege and honor for me that this art object has been shipped to the United States across the Pacific Ocean, and has been added to an American's collection to be appreciated and carefully preserved abroad for many years to come."

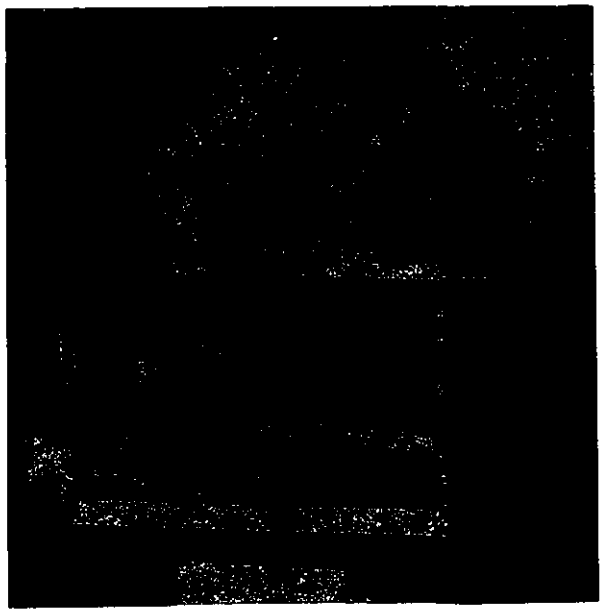
Shinichi Hiroi was born in Tokyo on September 11, 1909. At the age of twelve, he became a student of Tokujiro Suzuki, a great master of saya making. At the age of thirty-three, he opened his own professional workshop in Asakusa, Tokyo. He is now celebrated as the top man of saya making.

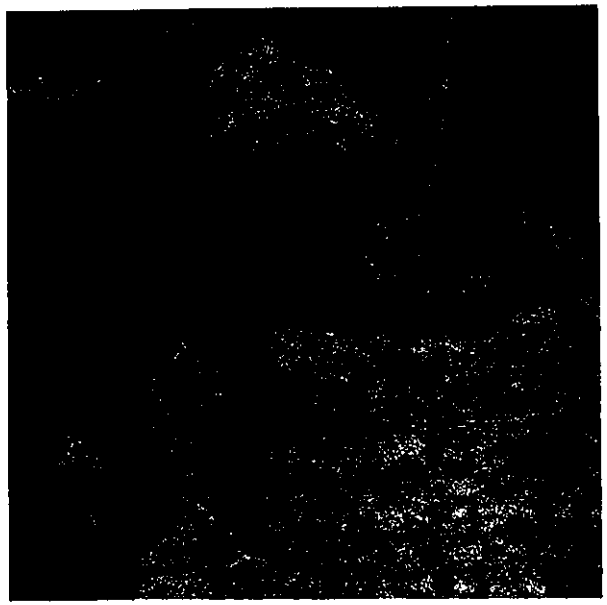
The first step before making a koshirae (sword mounting) is to look at the blade the mounting is to complement and to judge its age and style of school. In order to match the quality of a blade, a tsuba and other sword fittings must be selected carefully. There are several stages in the production of the actual sword mounting. First, the scabbard and hilt are made with a plain wood which is then lacquered by a craftsman. Meanwhile, another craftsman has been specifically making the cords for the koshirae. Finally, a craftsman wraps the hilt with the cords. To produce a fine koshirae of quality and beauty, which is a compound of several traditional arts, deep understanding and knowledge are required of each craft.

Hiroi is a distinguished saya maker and has produced many superb masterpieces. He has made sword mountings for members of the Japanese Imperial family, which is truly a mark of high respect for his work.

The pale green courds of the koshirae were braided by Domyo, and the hilt wrapped by Kyojiro Tsuji, who are both top-ranking craftsmen in Japan. The design on the surface of the black-lacquered scabbard of plants and flowers in gold, silver and red with dew drops shining on the leaves of the plants in the moonlight, was suggested by Morihiro Ogawa who points out that in a beautfully decorated koshirae there is a blade which can be used as a weapon to protect its owner and at the same time to attack an enemy. This unique combination, he feels, is of great significance.

"This koshirae" he says "may look only a gorgeous object, at a glance, but by appreciating it carefully and quietly you will be impressed by its hidden spirit of tranquil gracefulness. You will then come to understand that in Japan sword making is an art with a spiritual content. It is hoped that those who look on this celebrated masterpiece will be able to touch our Japanese soul."





Juyo rated sword in
saya by Shinichi Hiroi
lacquered by Shisen Sato.

Detail of lacquer

ON THE STUDY IN EUROPE OF JAPANESE SWORDS

Lecture for the Tōken Society of the Netherlands
On August 26, 1979
by Han Bing Siong

This article by Mr. Han Bing Siong of the Tōken Society of the Netherlands is presently being presented as a series of articles in the English edition of Nippon Bijutsu Tōken Hozon Kyokai's Tōken Bijutsu journal. The footnotes to this article will not be presented by NBTHK due to a lack of space in their journal. In cooperation with the author and the NBTHK, we present these important footnotes to our membership at this time so that they can be utilized with the serialized portion of this material.

* * * *

1) Tōken Bijutsu 1979, No.264 p.54-55, No.265 p.59-60 and No.266 p.50-51. I take this opportunity to correct a mistake. Instead of General Allons, General Mojet should be mentioned on p.54 of No.264. And on p.51 of No. 266 the name of General Kokubu Shinshichirō was mis-spelled.

2) A. Dobree, Japanese Sword Blades I, Archeological Journal, 1905 Vol.62 p.16-17.

3) See the program of the Southern California Tōkenkai for March 9, 1979.

4) W.M.Hawley, Sword publications in Japanese, The Journal of the Tōken Society of Great Britain, Vol.I No.2 p.43-44.

5) See the program of the Southern California Tōkenkai for November 11, 1977.

6) See Ōno Tadashi, Gendaitō Meikan, 1971 p.199. See also Homma Junji, Japanese Sword, 1948 p.70-71, Inami Hakusui, Nippon-tō, the Japanese Sword, 1948 p.151-152, and Shibata Mitsuo in Nipponto Zenshū, Vol.7 p.110. B.W.Robinson, The Arts of the Japanese Sword, 1961, p.41 does not explain that the swords with the inscription "mantetsu" are like the mass-produced Showa-tō mentioned by him on p.24. The inscription "mantetsu" is seen on swords with the inscript-

ion "Kōa Isshin". In my opinion this means: bearing in mind the development of Asia (see A.N.Nelson, The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary, 1967 p.20 and p. 183). According to W.M.Hawley, Japanese Swordsmiths, Suppliement 3, IS-6, and R.Gregory and R.Fuller, A Guide to Shōwa Swordsmiths, 1978 p.26-28 Kōa Isshin is the name of a swordsmith; in the opinion of the latter two authors he even was a superior swordsmith.

7) According to J.M.Yumoto, The Samurai Sword, 1958 p.183 Shōwa-tō are swords made in the Shōwa era without any restriction. See also Gregory and Fuller, op.cit. in their introduction. Hawley, op.cit. Vol.II 1967 p.711 on the other hand calls a sword a Shōwa-tō if it is hand-made during the Shōwa period, contrary to the guntō or military sword. With Yasu Kizu, Modern Japanese Swords, talk No.57 for the Southern California Tōkenkai, I think the word guntō refers more to the mounting or the use of a sword by the armed forces.

8) See Tōken Bijutsu 1972 No.184 p.45 and Sembatsu Gendai Tōkō Meikan, 1974 p.22-23. In 1978 a third modern swordsmith succeeded in making utsuri: Takahashi Nobufusa, see Tōken Bijutsu 1978 No.256 p.53.

9) Ōno Tadashi, op.cit. p.195.

10) Gregory and Fuller, op.cit. p.29

11) See Fujishiro Yoshio, Nippon Tōkō Jitten, Shintō-hen, 1965 p.300.

12) See Watanabe Kunio in his contribution in Nipponto Zenshū Vol.7 p.219-232, Yasu Kizu, How to go about Judging a Japanese Blade, talk No.47 for the Southern California Tōkenkai, and Ogawa Morihiro, "The Characteristics of the Japanese Sword" in Nipponto, Art Swords of Japan, The Walter A. Compton Collection, 1976, p.10-24 on p.12 and 24.

13) It is interesting that sometimes an individual expert does attribute an unsigned blade to a particular swordsmith, but when the same sword is submitted to a panel of experts, it is only attributed to the school to which that swordsmith belonged. For instance sword No.7 in Meibutsu, the catalogue of Tōken Taikai 1979 in Chicago, p.4, has a sayagaki by Homma Junji attributing that sword to Sukekane, but afterwards the panel of judges of which Homma Junji is a member, classified it as a ko-Bizen unsigned sword. In Tōken Bijutsu 1971 No.173 p.26 Homma Junji had not yet pinned the sword down to Sukekane, but still attributed it to ko-Bizen. It also happens that a sword which was attributed to the school only when examined by a panel of experts issuing certificates of a higher class. For instance the sword on p.86-87 of Nippon-tō, Art Swords of Japan, see also Homma Kunzan, Token Bijutsu 1971 No.172 p.47.

14) See Meibutsu, the catalogue of Tōken Taikai 1979 in Chicago, p.20. This information I received from the owner personally.

14a) This information I received from the owner personally.

15) A. Yamanaka, Tōken Newsletter, April 1968, p.22-25 warns against the dangers of incompetent polishing. See also Syd Hoare, "The Polishing of Japanese Swords" (a translation of a chapter from Shibata Mitsuo, Shumi no Nihontō), The Journal of the Tōken Society of Great Britain, Vol.I No.4 p.90-92. That the polishing must bring out the special characteristics of each smith was also put forward by Honnami Takeo in an interview by B.Vincent, in Vol.I No.3 p.75 of the same journal.

16) K. Evans, "Tsukuroi", Tōken Bijutsu 1977, No.247 p.54-56 on p.55-56.

17) Honnami Takeo in the interview by B. Vincent, op.cit. p.74, said: "It is difficult to learn to identify blades from pictures and descriptions in books. Real understanding comes much more readily from actual examples".

18) It is interesting that even a famous expert like Yoshikawa Kentaro according to E.Dobrzanski, "Some observations from the TTK'79 Shinsa", Newsletter of the JSS/US, 1979 Vol.11 No.4 p.5-7 on p.5, during the examination of swords in Chicago almost always looked at the signature first. However, perhaps that was due to the condition of the polish of most of the swords, making the identification by the characteristics in the steel difficult.

19) Tōken Bijutsu 1972, No.186 p.27.

20) See the articles of Bon Dale, "A relationship between mekugi-ana and signature" and "Counterfeit signatures on nakago" in The Journal of the Tōken Society of Great Britain, Vol.I No.1 p.10-16, No.2 p.44-45 and No.3 p.63-65, the Editorial in Programme No. 58 of this Society, p.14-16, my comment on this Editorial in Programme No.59 p.18-19 and W.M.Hawley, Sword Signatures, Genuine or Fake? talk No.37 for the Southern California Tōkenkai, republished with the title 'False Signatures on Swords, 1974 with additional illustrations of genuine and fake signatures".

21) For instance, in 1969 I examined the signature Toshū ju Sa Yukihide on a sword of Kogarasu maru type. The direction of almost all strokes was correct, even the number of chisel-cuts in each stroke was correct. Nevertheless I concluded this signature was not genuine. The chisel-cuts seemed to me to be too short and too stubby in comparison with genuine signatures of this famous swordsmith, making the whole signature a little bit out of porportion. Seven years later this sword was described in Nippon-tō, Art Swords of Japan, p.44. Contrary to most of the other swords described in this catalogue, no classification was mentioned. This, so I thought, confirmed my conclusion.

However, in Tōken Bijutsu 1977 No.244 p.39 Homma Kunzan mentioned this sword as a sword for which he had written a sayagaki. It was even used for the sword appraisal contest at the convention of the Nippon Bijutsu Tōken Hozon Kyokai in 1977, see Fukae Yasunobu, Tōken Bijutsu 1977 No. 250 p.32-37 on p.33.
In 1972 I had the opportunity to examine a blade of magnificent workmanship with the signature Minamoto Masayuki, dated Kōka Ni Nen. Notwithstanding its excellent quality I doubted the signature. In my opinion there were clear differences in comparison with genuine signatures with exactly the same date. But in this case I was wrong again, because Homma Kunzan according to his "Kantō hibi shō" in Tōken Bijutsu 1979, No.265 p.36-42 on p.37-37 wrote a sayagaki for this sword, too. It is a consoling idea to me that, anyhow, it took some years before these positive judgements could be acquired. Presumably these were indeed difficult cases.

22) See Watanabe Kunio in Nipponto Zenshū, Vol.1 p.232. This dai mei should not be confused with counterfeit signatures made by students of the smith, mentioned by Keith Evans, "Let the Buyer Beware", Tōken Bijutsu 1974 No.209 p.61-63 on p.61.

23) For this kind of signature see Watanabe Kunio, op.cit. p.231. It is also mentioned by Koizumi Tomitaro in his contribution on nise mono in Nipponto Zenshū, Vol.4 p.215-227. on p. 223 and by Ikeda Suematsu in his contribution on tsukuroi in the same volume, p.231-262 on p.252-253. The diagram on p. 253 is important. This kind of signature is not mentioned in western literature on Japanese swords.

24) See Tsujimoto Suguo in Nipponto Senshū, Vol.1 p.55-61.

25) See D. Hartley, "The Sword Appraisal System", talk No.11 for the Southern California Tōkenkai, also published in The Journal of the Tōken Society of Great Britain, Vol.1 No.2 p.40-42 on p.42. According to this article the

certificates of "Kokuho" and "Jūyō Bunkasai" are also issued by the Nippon Bijutsu Tōken Hozon Kyokai.

26) See Nippon-tō, Art Swords of Japan, p.86-91.

27) According to Homma, Japanese Sword, p.71 "thus the "service sword" and other non-artistic swords of each period were all disposed of". In view of this I wonder whether the mass-produced kuwana-uchi and kazu-uchi-mono were treated like the Zōhei-tō, Shōwa-tō, Mantetsu-tō and Murata-tō. In the opinion of W.M.Hawley, "Japanese Sword Production in late Kotō Times", talk No.34 for the Souther California Tōkenkai, these swords were mostly fine swords, notwithstanding the fact that in the process of forging and tempering there was skimping in many ways.

28) As the Tōken Bijutsu started in 1950 I only found confirmation as regards the Kichō Tōken shinsa held in 1949, see Tōken Bijutsu 1950 No.5 p.18.

29) See A. Yamanaka, op.cit. VolIV No.5, June 1971 p. 32. In his opinion ninteishō are not authentication papers, as "nintei" means acknowledgment. Although in Bushido, Vol.1 No.1 p.44, 46 and 48 the words "nintei suru" is also translated into "acknowledge", a "ninteishō" is considered to be a certificate of authenticity.

30) According to Dean Hartley, op.cit. p.42, authorities of the headquarters in Tokyo always attend the examination by local committees.

31) From March 1973 till the autumn of 1974 the Kichō Tōken shinsa was held at the Society's headquarters in Tokyo exclusively, see Tōken Bijutsu 1972 No.186 p.27, 1974 No. 209 p.41. This caused individual sword experts to issue their own certificates, for instance see Rei, September 1973 p.2.

32) See A. Yamanaka, ibid. In his opinion neither shiteishō are authentication papers, as "shitei" means designation.

33) The names of the experts during the 26th Jūyō Tōken shinsa in 1979 were not mentioned in Tōken Bijutsu 1979 No. 267 p.41. During the 25th Jūyō Tōken shinsa there were twelve experts, see Tōken Bijutsu 1977 No.251 p.48.

34) See Tōken Bijutsu 1978 No. 263 p.31.

35) See Satō Kanzan, "Jūyō Tōken nado no shitei to Tokubetsu Jūyō Tōken nado no shitei ni tsuite", Tōken Bijutsu 1970 No.165 p.53=54 on p.53.

36) For three of them, see Nippon-tō, Art Swords of Japan, p.94-95 and p.106-107.

37) See Sato Kanzan, op.cit. p54.

38) See "Kichō Tōken chihō shinsakai haishi to Tokubetsu Kichō Tōken Kōshu shinsakai jishi ni tsuite", Tōken Bijutsu 1972 No.186 p.27.

39) According to Bushido, Vol.1 No.1 p.42 Kōshu papers should first be obtained before a sword can be submitted to Jūyō Tōken shinsa. See however the source mentioned in note 34.

40) See the list of names in Tōken Bijutsu, 1973 No.201 p.54.

41) See Tōken Bijutsu, 1978 No.262 p.45.

42) Cf. A. Yamanaka, see the foregoing notes 29 and 32.

43) See Satō Kanzan, op.cit. p53-54. In this article Satō Kanzan wrote that for awarding Jūyō Tōken papers the authenticity of the signature is examined, even though that has already been done during the Tokubetsu Kichō Tōken shina. As he did not mention the Kichō Tōken shinsa, I first thought that authenticity of the signature was not necessary for obtaining a Kichō Tōken certificate. However, on second thoughts I concluded that Satō Kanzan only mentioned the

Tokubetsu Kichō Tōken shinsa because swords can be submitted only if previously a Tokubetsu Kichō Tōken paper has been received. And after all it was the Jūyō Tōken shinsa, that his article was dealing with.

44) Cf. Yasu Kizu, "Flaws and defects in Japanese sword blades", talk No.32 for the Southern California Tōkenkai, Keith Evans, "Tsukuroi" in Tōken Bijutsu, 1977 No.247 p.52-56 on p.55 and Bon Dale, "How to recognize a not so good blade" in Programme No. 102 of the Token Society of Great Britain, p.19-22 on p. 20.

45) See Tōken Bijutsu, 1979 No.267 p.41. The sword concerned is discussed by Homma Kunzan, "Kantō hibi shō" in Tōken Bijutsu, 1979 No.270 p.30-37 on p.30. See also T.B.Buttweiler, "The seeds of the Bizen tradition" in Tōken Bijutsu, 1976, No.236 p.57-60.

46) See Walter Ames Compton, "The artistic quality of the Japanese sword" in Nippon-tō, Art Swords of Japan, p.7-9 and in Tōken Bijutsu, 1976 No.234 p.60-63.

47) See the foregoing note 27.

48) Cf. "An interview with four Japanese sword experts", in The Journal of the Tōken Society of Great Britain, Vol.1 No.3 p.74 and Thomas B. Buttweiler, op.cit. p.58.

49) See Tōken to Rekishi, 1979 No.509 p.61.

50) Information received personally from Mr. Omino Kiyoharu during his visit to Holland in August 1979. After this paper was finished I received Tōken to Rekishi 1979 No.512 with the same information on p.60.

51) According to the Tōken Taikai 1979 Newsletters a "Yū-saku" is for 60 till 69 points, a "Yū-saku II for 70 till 74 points, a "Shū-saku" for 75 till 79 points, a "Shū-saku II" for 80 till 84 points, a "Yū-shū-saku" for 85 till 89 points, a "Yūshū-saku II" 90 till 94 points, and a "Sai-yū-shū-saku" for 95 till 100 points. For the four grades, see Imano Shigeo in his article in Tōken to Rekishi, 1979 No.512 p.10-16 on p.13.

52) See Programme No.89 of the Token Society of Great Britain, p.11

53) See W.M.Hawley, "Value system in Japanese Swordsmiths", in the Programme of the Tōken Society of Great Britain for October 7, 1968, p.6-7, on p.7.

54) See Rei, December 1974 p.18. He used the Yū-shū-saku classification for rating the sword submitted for appraisal, whereas the Jō-jō saku classification was used for indicating the rank of the swordsmith concerned.

55) According to Blaine Navroth, "Bungo Takata smiths in shintō times", talk No.4A for the Southern California Tōkenkai, Tokuno Kzuo in his Tōkō Taikan also uses the i-retsu system. However, I could not find any conversion table for the money values in this book.

56) In his book Katchū shi Meikan, instead of the word "saku" this author uses the word "i", rank.

57) Tōken Bijutsu, 1979 No.1 p.28.

58) See B.W.Robinson, The Arts of the Japanese Sword, 1961 p.15, Dobree, op.cit. p.5.

59) See W.M.Hawley, ibid.

60) In the interview by B.Vincent, op.cit. p.75.

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