



STAMPS OF THE JAPANESE SWORD

Version: March 2024

The following is compiled from numerous sources, and is not to be used for sale or monetary gain. It opens with discussions on the history of WWII sword stamps, in general, and, in particular, the Showa, Seki, and Star stamp. Information gleaned from books and websites are sometimes dated as recent discoveries have uncovered more information about certain stamps than were known at book/website publishing.

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INTRODUCTION

There are few sources that document and discuss the various stamps found on Japanese sword blades. As I began to get interested in them, my primary sources were the Fuller & Gregory books, Jim Dawson's book, Ohmura's website, The Japanesewordindex.com and a few online forums, the primary ones being Nihonto Message Board and Warrelics. But I traveled for a living (now retired) and these resources weren't always available on the road. So, I began compiling the essentials from each into a Word document that could go with me and be accessible, anywhere, anytime. It became a challenge to find actual examples of the stamps displayed in the various charts. More challenging still, were the "unknown" stamps and newly discovered ones not in the books.

As I learned more about them, the document morphed and grew. I learned things I hadn't expected and had fun doing it. But most of all, I'm blessed with finding myself a part of a group of friends from around the globe. The document literally has been a group effort. So, my thanks and gratitude to all who made this possible:

Richard Fuller – Who graciously puts up with my multiple emails.

Jim Dawson – Who I have yet to make contact with!

Ohmura-san – Ditto!

Richard Stein – Whose website I turn to almost daily.

Nick Komiya – Who has been singularly responsible for many new discoveries through his archival research and insight into WWII Japan.

Thomas "Kiipu" Keep – Another vital researcher and translator with several new discoveries of his own.

I hesitate to attempt to list all who helped me in my quest for these stamps and their meanings because I'm sure I'll miss many. So, if I have left someone out, please email and I'll make sure you're included in the next revision!

NMB Contributors: Trystan Huang, Chris Schmucker, Stephen Christensen, Neil Freeland, Steve Opie, Ernst Matak, John Mankey, George Trotter, Malcolm Cox, And more!

Translators: Ray Singer, Steve Miller, Moriyama Koichi, Uwe Sacklowski, Piers D., And more!

The photos were filed long before I began recording their sources, so my apologies to all whose swords these were taken from. Some came from online searches of auctions and websites, but most came from sword forum members. Thanks to all you collectors!

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HISTORY

For centuries, swordsmiths have been known to mark their work with things other than just names and dates. The Chrysanthemum is a well-known emblem found on blades as far back as the 1600's. Some smiths have used personal marks called kakihan, or kao, seen on blades as old as the 1300s. Bonji, Buddhist names or slogans have been seen for a long time on nakago. All of these were hand carved. It wasn't until the industrial age that we start to see markings appear in the form of stamps. In the 1800's, as Japan adopted Western military structures, weapons, and armories, an increasing number of stamps appeared, exploding in number during WWII. Initially, they were arsenal inspection stamps. But as Japan transitioned from the Western saber back to Samurai-styled blades, we see a mixture of both civil/corporate and military stamps on blades.

To date, we have no official documents, government or military, establishing the requirement for, or ordering the use of, stamps on military blades. For years, the explanation for them is summarized by the following:

From Ryujin Swords Kevin Jones (<https://www.militaria.co.za/nmb/topic/23887-informations-about-the-rjt/?do=findComment&comment=364656>):

“Tang stamps were introduced precisely because swordsmiths and collectors could not distinguish the best quality non-traditional swords (i.e. ‘mill steel’ gendaito) from traditionally made swords. It was discovered that, as a result, some smiths were forging replicas of older swords, giving them false signatures (gimei), and passing them off as the real thing. Several smiths were subsequently arrested. Amidst mounting concern, the government passed a law requiring all swords that were non-traditional in any way to be marked with a tang stamp, although the actual stamp used was left to the manufacturer. These stamps should not however be confused with the smith’s personal seal or ‘kokuin’.

The system was not fully implemented until 1940. That means that there could be a fair number of swords of non-traditional manufacture not bearing tang stamps, of which some will be ‘mill steel’ gendaito. It would be fairly easy to differentiate between an oil-hardened sword and a traditionally made sword, even if the former lacked a tang stamp. However, there would probably be little or no chance of differentiating between a ‘mill steel’ gendaito and a tamahagane gendaito. It is not impossible that some examples have since received origami. Again, a togishi can remove a tang stamp so that it looks as if one was never there. Some smiths stamped their tangs very lightly, thus complying with the law, but making it easier for their customers to remove the stamp.

The legislation produced a profusion of stamps, ranging from sword factory stamps, to the stamps of sword sellers. ... The best known of these is the well known Showa stamp...”

This may prove true, but laws were announced in gazettes during this time, and searches of the gazettes have uncovered no such law. According to the Seki City website, stamping began because of low quality showato:

“During the war, Seki’s entire cutlery industry got drawn into supplying the military, and sword-smithery was once again a thriving industry. In those days, military swords were called Showa-toh to differentiate them from traditional Japanese swords, but as demand grew, bad quality Showa-toh appeared on the market, becoming a social problem. To counter this problem, the sword dealers of Seki devised a program to assure quality by having the Seki Cutlery Manufacturing Industry Association test all newly produced Japanese swords and stamped products that passed this test.” (Komiya, “Rikugun Jumei Tosho (RJT) Star Stamped Blades - Documentation?,” www.warrelics.eu)

A Police Chief memo discovered by Nick Komiya shows that, in fact, both gimei and poor quality showato were the concern of the Ministry of Interior. Still, no laws or regulations have been found, so it is possible that private sector testing and stamping, along with police scrutiny, were sufficiently handling the problems.

The Seki City website does not say what stamp was being used by the Manufacturer’s Association, however Ohmura quotes a 1940 Japanese magazine article which clearly specifies it was the Showa Stamp. (1940 昭和 15 年, magazine "Toto Seki" 刀都関 ; Ohmura, <http://ohmura-study.net/211.html>; translation by Thomas “Kiipu”, NMB) Current surveys (Fuller, Cox, Pennington) of dated blades confirm the Showa stamp as first on the scene, earliest dated stamped blade – 1935 – one year after the introduction of the Type 94 Officer gunto. Admittedly, half of all Seki stamped blades are un-dated, so it is possible that the Seki stamp is just as old, or older, but for now, the dated blades point to the Showa being first.



{Ed Marshall, www.yakiba.com}

It is not known whether this stamp was used on both gendaito and showato. The Seki City website claimed “all Japanese swords” were tested and stamped, lending support to the opinion by some collectors that their blades are gendaito, regardless of the stamp’s presence. The website article was referring to the impact “poor showato” were having on the industry. Is it possible the testing and stamping was only done on showato? In fact, Ohmura, citing a 1939 survey of Cutlery Assoc. inspected swords, states that traditionally made swords were not part of that tally because they weren’t inspected. Half of the blades in each survey had no stamps at all, many of them from the Seki prefecture. Were these the un-inspected gendaito blades? For now, the evidence is contradictory. Until new documentation is uncovered to tip the scale, the old sword advice still holds true “Consider the blade, not the (stamp).”

From George Trotter quoting Richard Fuller:



“Swordsmiths came under the control of the Army Blade Department around late 1941 or early 1942. The "Sho" stamp seems to have been abandoned in favour of stamps relating to specific blade-producing centres. The most common of these is that of "Seki"....Neither the "Sho" nor "Seki" stamps indicate the method of blade manufacture...”



Seki stamps are seen in two sizes, 5mm(large) and 3mm(small). The earliest large Seki seen, so far, is 1940, so there are both Showa and Seki stamped blades found in 1940-1942. The stamp was a commercial one, like the Showa, likely used by the Seki Cutlery Manufacturers Association.

In 1943, the large Seki rapidly tapered off. Most dated stamped blades that year bore the “Na” of the Nagoya Army Arsenal. At the same time, the first signs of the small Seki began. The Seki Supervisory Unit of the Nagoya Army Arsenal began using the stamp on accepted blades and used it through the end of the war.



The Gifu-in-sakura stamp appeared that year too and is possibly the stamp adopted by the Seki Cutlery Manufacturers Assoc. in response to the Nagoya inspectors use of their Seki logo. Other arsenal stamps appear that year – Saka, Osaka Army Arsenal; Nan, Nan-ban Army Arsenal; and the Anchor-in-circle, Toyokawa Navy Arsenal. The stylized anchor of the Tenzoshan Forge was used by the Navy Kamakura-Tenshozan Inspector and was seen throughout the war beginning as early as 1939.



Nagoya



Saka



Nan



Toyokawa



Tenzoshan

STAR STAMP



George Trotter:

"I read Ohmura's translation of star stamped swords in "Zoheito" (Arsenal swords) as posted by Jacques...see <http://ohmura-study.net/206.html>... and found I was confused as to Ohmura san's exact meaning, so I decided to do my own translation of the first part to see if there was any additional information. My translation is as follows:

HONTANRETO (True forged swords)






1. Swordsmiths were commissioned to forge swords at the named workshop's forge (the *nakago* was marked with the swordsmith's *mei* and the workshop's logo/mark). Tokyo Hohei Koshō: Yokoyama Sukekane, Morioka Masayoshi; Tokyo No 1 Army Workshop: Yoshihara Nobushiro, (Akihiro, Kuniiye same man); Osaka Koshō: Gassan Sadakatsu, Sadakazu (*nidai*), Sadashige, Masakiyo; Kokura Koshō: Hakuryushi Tadataka, Taira Sadashige, Kanenobu; Kyuheiikisho (refurbishment workshop): Yoshihara, others.

2. Private swordsmiths, and also Sword companies were commissioned to forge swords (*nakago* marked with *mei* and simple Army Star inspection mark).

3. Army specification Gendai forged swords (*nakago* marked with *mei*, date and star). Rikugun Jumei Toshō made swords of the style. They were trialled from Sho 15 [1940]. From Sho 17 [1942] it was implemented nationally. For efficiency, a big break was made with the tradition of individualistic handwork and non-uniformity of Nihonto "True Standardisation" was tried for the first time. Every sword was subjected to severe inspection to maintain quality/performance. (I am not sure if I have translated the following correctly) The former drawback of testing each sword (as in old sword making in *meito* times) by *tameshigiri* was not used. This was the first time such a situation occurred.

We know that Rikugun Jumei Toshō [RJT] were issued tamahagane by the army, they were issued charcoal by the prefecture. They had to conform in sword making to the Army regulation sizes, lengths, hamon etc., but also to ensure all swords were tamahagane...true nihonto."

George's last paragraph is based on the fact that we now have the RJT Program regulation which specifies that qualified smiths will be given tamahagane and charcoal to make their blades. The blades will be made with "multi-fold forging." But it doesn't mention the star stamp that we see on their blades. The breakthrough came from Nick Komiya at Warrelics, when he pointed out the graphic that showed the star and its meaning:

補助検査印表 Complementary Stamps				
種類	大きさ	使用範囲	摘要	
	Same size as Acceptance Stamp 検査印と同じ大きさ	Material Inspection Stamp 素材検査	These charts are from the October 1943 revision of the Acceptance Stamp and Markings Guidelines 各関係箇所共通トス	
	Same size as Acceptance Stamp 検査印と同じ大きさ	Interim Inspection Stamp 半途検査		
	Same size as Acceptance Stamp 検査印と同じ大きさ	Failed Stamp 不合格品		
特種検査印表 Extraordinary Stamps				
種類	大きさ	使用範囲	表示方法	摘要
特	Stamp Sizes 2, 4, 6, 8 10 or 15 (mm)	Specially adopted on basis 兵器採用検査規程第十一條ニ依リ特別採用セムモノニ用フ	To either side of 合格線印ノ一側ニ捺ス	
		事變特別規格ニ依リ採用セラルモノノ或該規格制定ノ主管ニ則リ検査實施部隊ニ於テ採用セラルモノ	Adopted based on Special Incident Specs or deemed to be in line with the purpose of those specs and adopted at unit inspections. 合格線印ノ上位ニ捺ス	
		Adopted as a Clause 2 一製品トシテ採用セムモノニ用フ	Accepted as a Clause 2 合格線印ノ上位ニ捺ス	

The star was an Army "Material Inspection Stamp" certifying that the steel used in the item was Army-provided steel. It is found on other Army products, too, and other steels. In the case of the RJT Program, we know the steel provided was tamahagane. So, we now have documented proof that Star-stamped blades are folded tamahagane nihonto.

<https://www.warrelics.eu/forum/f216/rikugun-jumei-tosho-rjt-star-stamped-blades-documentation-789067-post2156159/#post2156159>

The following are charts from Richard Fuller and Ron Gregory's works, Ohmura-san's website, and Richard Stein's website explaining the stamps they identified along with a collection of actual examples of them and other stamps found in the process of creating this document. They are not in alphabetical order. Ideally, that will come in later versions.



(i)



(ii)



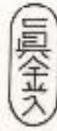
(iii)



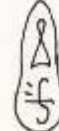
(iv)



(v)



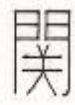
(vi)



(vii)



(viii)



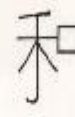
(ix)



(x)



(xi)



(xii)



(xiii)



(xiv)



(xv)



(xvi)



(xvii)



(xviii)



(xix)



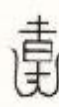
(xx)



(xxi)



(xxii)



(xxiii)



(xxiv)



(xxv)



(xxvi)



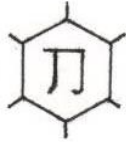
(xxvii)



(xxviii)



(xxix)



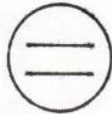
(xxx)



(xxxi)



(xxxii)



(xxxiii)



(xxxiv)



(xxxv)



(xxxvi)



(xxxvii)



(xxxviii)



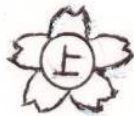
(xxxix)



(xl)



(xli)



(xlii)



(xliii)



(xliv)

Stamps found on military Japanese sword blades and fittings

(Compiled from sword tangs, fittings and various English language sources)

by Richard Fuller

[ed. Note: This info was published in 1995 and some item descriptions are outdated due to more recent discoveries.]

- (i)** 'Shō' (abbreviation for 'Shōwa') stamp. Post 1926 military inspection and/or acceptance stamp used until around 1941. Very common.
- (ii)** 'Gi' stamp. Probably an abbreviation of 'Gifu prefecture'. Possibly the Gifu Swords Co-Operative (or Union).
- (iii)** 'Kami' (meaning 'God') stamp. Significance unknown. Found only on shin-guntō tsuba. Very rare.
- (iv)** 'Hisa' stamp. Significance unknown. Found on a naval dagger crossguard.
- (v)** 'Tan' or 'Kitau' stamp. Literally 'to forge' or 'forged'. Very scarce.
- (vi)** 'Shin gane iru' stamp. Literally 'genuine steel put in' i.e. genuine inserted steel. Very rare.
- (vii)** 'Five measures' stamp. Literally Go (5)-To (measure of capacity. (1 To = 3.97 Imperial gallons). Significance unknown. Very rare.
- (viii)** 'Matsu' stamp found associated with tang issue or batch numbers. Significance unknown. Appears limited to blades found in 1944 pattern army mounts.
- (ix)** 'Seki' stamp. Military inspection and/or acceptance stamp for blades made at Seki in Nōshū (Mino) province. Prevalent after December 1941. Very common.
- (x)** 'Star' stamp. Military inspection and acceptance stamp. Believed to be associated with good quality hand forged 'mill steel' blades but not those made with traditional tamahagane. Generally post 1942 but more often found in 1944 pattern army mounts. Rare. (Note: Also used as a 'materials' stamp on military firearms).
- (xi)** 'Tai' stamp of the Izumo Seikō (Izumo Steel Works Co.) in Shimane prefecture which was located close to the Izumo Taisha (i.e. Izumo Grand Shrine). 1945.
- (xii)** 'Wa' stamp. Probably indicates manufacture in an occupied area, most likely by a collaborating force. Found on poor quality rolled or hammered blades.
- (xiii)** Probably a naval inspection and/or acceptance stamp. Found on naval parade sabres and dagger guards. Possibly associated with the Toyokawa Naval Arsenal.
- (xiv)** Unidentified. Found on a naval dagger crossguard.
- (xv)** Unidentified. Found on a 1903 Forestry Officials dagger crossguard.
- (xvi)** 'Kikusui' (chrysanthemum on water). When found stamped on the tang above a smith's signature it indicates manufacture at the Navy controlled Minatogawa Shrine forge from 1940. Good quality hand forged blades. Rare. (Note: Also adopted as a kamikaze motif in 1944 but does not imply this usage when found on the blade).
- (xvii)** Large unidentified stamp found above a signature. Probably a retailer's logo. Rare.
- (xviii)** Unidentified stamp. Found on the reverse of signed but undated tangs. Probably the logo of a private manufacturer or retailer. Rare.
- (xix)** Logo of the South Manchurian Railway Company. Seems to be associated with blades dated 1938. Scarce.

- (xx)** Logo of the North China Joint Stock Transportation Company. Found on specially made shin-guntō fittings and also on signed sword tangs. Rare.
- (xxi)** Small unidentified W stamp noted only on blades dated 1943. Possibly the Chigusa Factory or Nagoya Arsenal.
- (xxii)** Seal stamp which has been found on the reverse of an undated shōwa period blade. Probably a retailer's trade mark. It reads NIHON (Japan) TORA (tiger) GO (a suffix meaning 'title' or 'item'. Possibly meaning 'an item by Tiger of Japan'.
- (xxiii)** Stamp found on military sword and dagger fittings. Logo of the Suya Company of Tokyo. They appear to be a private company that provided military fittings.
- xxiv) Unidentified. Reported on naval dagger crossguards and also a Fire Commander's dagger.
- (xxv)** Small unidentified tang stamp on an unsigned shōwa period blade. See xxxiii below.
- (xxvi)** Small 'I' stamp which is the cursive form of 伊 meaning 'that one'. Found below the Toyokawa Naval Arsenal stamp xxxvi below and above an inscription reading INAMI 以奈波 (presumably a name which incorporates the same 'I' character).
- (xxvii)** 'Saka' stamp signifying the Osaka Rikugun Zōheisho (Osaka Army Arsenal).
- (xxviii) 'Ren' stamp signifying the Dairen Railway Factory in Manchuria which made 'Mantetsu' blades. Post 1937.
- (xxix)** Trade mark of Wakasei Seisaku Jo which is a company located in Tokyo that made fittings for army and navy swords.
- (xxx)** Unidentified. 'Tō' kanji meaning sword. Found only on a shin-guntō kabuto-gane (pommel fitting).
- (xxxi)** Stamp of the Gunso Kabushiki Gaisha Company of Tokyo which made army and navy sword fittings.
- (xxxii)** Unidentified small stamp reported only once on a kōtō period blade under the habaki. This had been shortened and was in shira-saya (wooden keeper fittings). Perhaps the logo of the company that shortened it.
- (xxxiii)** 'Ni' stamp meaning 'two'. Believed to indicate a second class military weapon when found with a manufacturer's mark or arsenal stamp. Noted in conjunction with xxxv below on a c1945 pattern Army NCO's sword and also with xxv above.
- (xxxiv)** Gold paper quality control label found on a shōwa period lacquered scabbard. It confirms inspection by the Seki Cutlery Industrial Society. Probably early 1940s. Very scarce.
- (xxxv)** 'He' stamp. Inspection mark of the Heigo factory of the Jinsen (Inchon) Arsenal, Korea. Noted only in conjunction with xxxiii above but may have another significance since the Korean manufacture of swords is, so far, unconfirmed.
- (xxxvi)** Toyokawa Naval Arsenal inspection stamp. Aichi Prefecture, Japan.
- (xxxvii)** Unidentified. Possibly 'Yoru' meaning 'depend on'. Found under a Toyokawa Naval Arsenal stamp xxxvi above.
- (xxxviii)** Small 'Na' inspection stamp of the Nagoya Arsenal.
- (xxxix)** 'Matsuyama' stamp. Used by the Guntō Seisakujō which made military sword fittings. Stylised version of the two kanji for Matsuyama 松山 which is the owner's name.
- (xl)** 'Nan' stamp. Possibly the Kokoburi Factory of Chuo Kogyo Ltd. Part of the Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Company.

(xli) Tenshozan Company stamp. Located in Kamakura Prefecture, Japan. Appears to have made kai-guntō only.

(xlii) Unidentified. Possibly 'Jo' meaning the best, high class.

(xliii) Unidentified.

(xliv) 'To' stamp meaning 'sword'. Used by the Nōshū Nihonto Tanrenjō (Mino province Sword Forging Company) where Seki is located.

(xlv) Unusual and rare hot stamp reading 'Hyakuren' 百鍊 meaning 'well tempered'. Noted only once on a signed shōwa period blade. Very rare.



Double struck stamps on a tang consisting of two kanji read right to left as 直 弘 NAO 弘 HIRO i.e. NAOHIRO. Family name is Yanagawa from Saitama. Probably second generation. During the Meiji and Taisho periods he worked at the Tokyo Army Arsenal making blades for sabres (kyuguntō?) and other western style swords. This is a rare example of a smith signing his blade with two hot stamps to make up his name instead of signing the tang in the conventional manner.

From Fuller & Gregory, "Japanese Military and Civil Swords and Dirks", pg 226 (errata updated: 5 Jan 2020)



GIFU 岐



TAN



SEKI



WARRIOR

Yoshisuke and Yoshichika blades



KIKUSUI Crest



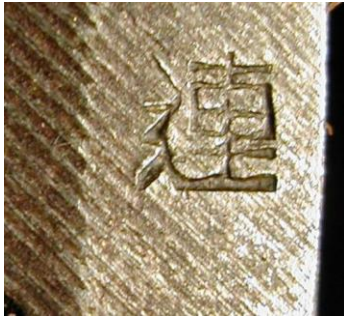
MATSU



山 = yama



5 Measures



REN



North China Rail



SMR Dalian



NAN



Saka of Osaka Arsenal



WA



Inspected



特 = Toku (Special)

江(e) Matsue Supervisory Unit of Kokura Army Arsenal



Tai (Slough's book, page 82: Tai stamp appears on late war blades made by smiths associated with the Izumo Seiko steel works. Located in Shimane. The forge was located near the Izumo Taisha shrine and by 1945 the country was in dire need of divine assistance, hence the Tai or Dai stamp on some blades. Known blades with the stamp: Okimitsu, Masakiyo, Masayoshi, Yoshikiyo.



Circled "He" of the Hoten Corp



"Ho" of 1st Factory
Kokura Army Arsenal



"Ki" of 2nd Factory, Tokyo 1st Army
Arsenal



“Se” – Second Factory of Kokura Army Arsenal (Found on a “Zohei-to”, Type 98 formal sword)



“He” of Heijo Factory, Jensen Army Arsenal with Clause 2 stamp (Alternate-spec weapon)



“Kuma” - Kumamoto Inspector, Kokura (double stamped)



“Fuku” – Likely an inspector stamp from Fukuoka (also has the double meaning of Good Luck)



別上 (betsujō)
A general phrase meaning “superior quality”



LATE WAR “EMERGENCY” STAMP

Thought to be on gunto made by Chinese for Japanese Officers, very late in the war

Diamond & Delta Stamps

Information from Malcom Cox' article "Showa Swordsmiths of Aichi Prefecture (Owari and Mikawa)" has revealed that the following two stamps were used by two specific smiths. Reasons for, or meaning of, the stamp and number used is not known, but they appear to be used exclusively by them.

Kuniyasu "diamond" stamp



Masayasu "delta" stamp



A
MAS-1282
Fawley's Japanese Swordsmiths
(incorrect kanji for Yasu printed)

B
Shōshinmei
Medium-Grade Gendaitō
1941 Exhibition - 4th Seat

The "Five Measures" Stamp



I had to give this stamp a dedicated section. The kanji inscribed are written in Tensho script. So, I brought the stamp to expert researchers Malcolm Cox and Nick Komiya hoping for clarification of the stamp's meaning. So far, it has only been found on blades made by Ogawa Tofuji 小川外藤. According to Malcolm Cox, "In 1941 Ogawa Tofuji was working for the Goto Kaji-jo (Goto Sword Forging Centre) in Seki, along with his teacher Kanekami." Malcolm pointed out that "gou-to" 合斗



are volume measures in terms of sake bottles. . . common sake bottle is 720 mL (4 gou) (standard wine bottle is 750 mL = 4.2 gou)

1 gou 合 = 180 mL (0.1804 L) (a standard serve of sake)

1 shou 升 = 1804 mL (1.804 L) (1 shou = 10 gou)

1 to 斗 = 18040 mL (18.04 L) (1 to = 10 shou = 100 gou)"

1 sake cup over 100 cups? 1 drink leads to 100? Is the stamp a play on the shop name and a sake reference? We took this info to Nick Komiya who pointed out that the Goto shop logo "features the characters 五斗, which also reads Goto.

That happened to be the annual income of a low-class Samurai, which was roughly 50 scoops of rice with both hands forming a cup, thus a metaphor for a marginal livelihood in the Samurai world.

The outer shape of the logo is a sake bottle fashioned from a gourd.

Altogether, the logo is self-deprecating humor, likening oneself to a "penniless wino" or the "Goto Wino Forge".

Shown below is 五斗 in Tensho/stamp script, as used in the logo.

五斗



What did it mean to Tofuji? We will likely never know. But it was fun trying to find out.

Japanese Army Sword Inspection Marks as of 1943

Inspection Mark		Name	Notes
東	TŌ	東京第一陸軍造兵廠監督課 Tōkyō 1st Army Arsenal Supervisory Section	1-2
キ	ki	第二製造所 2nd Factory of Tōkyō 1st Army Arsenal	2
名	na	名古屋陸軍造兵廠監督課 Nagoya Army Arsenal Supervisory Section	1-2
関	seki	名古屋陸軍造兵廠関監督班 Seki Supervisory Unit of Nagoya Army Arsenal	1-2
阪	saka	大阪陸軍造兵廠監督課 Ōsaka Army Arsenal Supervisory Section	1
小	ko	小倉陸軍造兵廠監督課 Kokura Army Arsenal Supervisory Section	1-2
山	yama	小倉陸軍造兵廠松山出張所 Matsuyama Branch Office of Kokura Army Arsenal	1
江	e	小倉陸軍造兵廠松江監督班 Matsue Supervisory Unit of Kokura Army Arsenal	1
熊	kuma	小倉陸軍造兵廠熊本監督班 Kumamoto Supervisory Unit of Kokura Army Arsenal	1
ホ	HO	小倉陸軍造兵廠第一製造所 1st Factory of Kokura Army Arsenal	1-2
セ	SE	小倉陸軍造兵廠第二製造所 2nd Factory of Kokura Army Arsenal	1
仁	JIN	仁川陸軍造兵廠監督課 Jinsen Army Arsenal Supervisory Section	2
へ	HE	仁川陸軍造兵廠平城製造所 Heijō Factory of Jinsen Army Arsenal	1-2
南	NAN	南滿陸軍造兵廠監督課 Nan-Man Army Arsenal Supervisory Section	1
連	REN	南滿陸軍造兵廠大連監督班 Dairen Supervisory Unit of Nan-Man Army Arsenal	1
社	SHA	各民間工場 Each civilian/private factory	2








1. Officer Sword.

2. NCO/Enlisted Sword.

Source: Japan. Rikugunshō 陸軍省 [War Ministry]. Rikugun Heiki Gyōsei Honbu 陸軍兵器行政本部 [Army Ordnance Administration Headquarters]. Ken'in oyobi hyōshiki kitei 檢印及標識規定 [Regulations for Inspection Marks and Signs]. General Order 2389. 19 October 1943. Research and translation by Thomas "Kiipu" Keep of Nihonto Message Board

Type 95

Armored Factory Arsenal trademark

	<p>The Tokyo Artillery Factory sign "four shells" mark. After the Great Kanto Earthquake (12th year of Taisho), the artillery arsenal was reorganized into an arsenal factory.</p> <p>It was continued to be used until March 1945 at the Tokyo Arsenal of the Army Factory.</p> <p>Tōkyō Artillery Arsenal trademark.: "Four cannonball" mark . (1923 - March, 1940) . The artillery arsenal was reorganized by the arsenal after the Great Kantō Earthquake (1923). Continuation use was carried out at "Army Arsenal Tōkyō Factory".</p>
	<p>Tokyo Daiichi Army Arsenal Factory Label It was newly enacted in the organization reorganization of "Army Factory" in April 1945.</p> <p>Tōkyō First Army Arsenal trademark: (April, 1940 - 1945) It was newly enacted by the organization reorganization in April, 1940.</p>
	<p>Arsenal Kokura Arsenal labeling 1933, with the Ogura transfer of "Tokyo Arsenal", "arsenal Kokura Arsenal" was also used this mark.</p> <p>Ogura Army arsenal after the reorganization of the labeled 1940 was also continued use until the end of the war (Showa after 15 years can conclude that Ogura).</p> <p>Arsenal Kokura Factory Army Trademark: (1933 - March, 1940) "Arsenal Kokura Factory" Used This Trademark With Kokura Relocation Of "Arsenal Tokyo Factory" In 1933. Kokura Army Arsenal Trademark: (April, 1940 - . 1945) Continuation Use Even Of after the organization revision in 1940 was carried out to the end of the war.</p>
	<p>Army Soldier Nagoya Arsenal - Nagoya Army Arsenal Factory The main branch of the Ninety - five Type Army Sword was the Tokyo (Ogura) Arsenal, so it never got stamped on the rim . However, it came to be used this marking stamp in organization reorganization to "Armament Factory" of April 1945.</p> <p>Army Arsenal Nagoya factory - Nagoya Army Arsenal trademark: (1923 - 1945). Since the supervisor arsenal of a Type 95 Guntō was Tōkyō (Kokura) Factory, a Nagoya Factory trademark was not stamped on copper Fuchi metallic ornaments. use this sign stamp by the organization reorganization to the "Arsenal" in April, 1940.</p>
	<p>Arsenal MinamiMitsuru arsenal - MinamiMitsuru Army arsenal labeling Army Arsenal Nanman factory - Nanman Army Arsenal trademark: (1938 - 1945).</p>
	<p>Incheon Army Arsenal Laboratory New establishment in the organization reorganization in April 1945. Incheon Army Arsenal trademark: (1940 - 1945)</p>
	<p>Assembling Responsibility Army Factory. Incheon Army Arsenal Pyongyang Factory inspection mark: "He"</p>

From Ohmura's "Military Swords of Japan": <http://ohmura-study.net/794.html>



Tokyo 1st Inspector

Suya Shoten Co., Ltd

Kokura Arsenal



Tokyo 1st Inspector

Ōjima Tōken Seisakusho

Tokyo 1st Army Arsenal



Jinsen Army Arsenal "Jin"



Mizuno



Nagoya Army Arsenal Inspector

Gifu (probably Seki Cutlery Co.) Kokura Army Arsenal



Nagoya Army Arsenal Inspector

Seki Token Co., Ltd Kokura Army Arsenal

小 Ko of the Kokura Army Arsenal Supervisory Section

NOTE: These logo (Gifu and Seki Token) could be from the same sword company. Seki Cutlery used the Gifu Stamp, last observed blade 80247. Seki Token stamp is then seen on blades, earliest observed 82009. Source: Kiipu, at Warrelics.org, <https://www.warrelics.eu/forum/f216/original-japanese-type-95-gunto-nco-sword-772560-post2099671/#post2099671>



It is possible that both these stamps were used by Kobe Shoten. The owner of the shop was 神戸 一幸 Kobe Ikko. Observed "K" stamps are found on serial number range 37000 – 39000, and the "Ichi" continues from there to the end of the war. (source: Stegel and Kiipu, NMB)

















Sha (private contractor)



Seki Token Co. & Nagoya Arsenal



Seki Token Co, late war

Manufacturer's logo	Principal inspection mark	Manufacturer's logo	Principal inspection mark
 (i) Tokyo Artillery (prior to April 1923) Koishikawa (Tokyo) Army Arsenal (April 1923–Nov 1933) Kokura Army Arsenal (After Nov 1933) (Koishikawa and Kokura used this mark simultaneously during the 1929–35 period)	七 (x) Small Arms Manufacturing Factory of Tokyo Army Arsenal; 2nd Factory of Kokura Army Arsenal after November 1933 (SHICHI character meaning 'seven') 小 (xi) Supervisory Section of Kokura Army Arsenal after March 1935 (KO character abbreviation of Kokura)	 (v) Osaka Army Arsenal	
 (ii) 1st Tokyo Arsenal (formed 1936 from the reorganised Koishikawa Arsenal)	東 (xii) Department of Control (Chief Inspector) Kokura and Tokyo Arsenals (and factory identification for Nagoya Army Arsenal until 1936) see also (xix) below (TO character abbreviation of Tokyo)	 (vi) Toyokawa Naval Arsenal	 (xvi) Toyokawa Naval Arsenal  (xvii) Toyokawa Naval Arsenal
 (iii) 2nd Tokyo Arsenal		 (vii) Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Co. Chuo Kogyo Co. Ltd	 (xviii) Kokubunji Factory of Chuo Kogyo Co. Ltd after Nov 1944 (NA character probably an abbreviation of Nambu)  (xix) Factory of Chuo Kogyo Co. Ltd 1936–45; see also (xii) above (TO character)
 (iv) Nagoya Army Arsenal 1923–45	See also (xii) above 名 (xiii) Department of Control (Chief Inspector) Nagoya Arsenal (NA character abbreviation of Nagoya) リ (xiv) Toriimatsu Factory of Nagoya Army Arsenal (Katakana character for RI) 千 (xv) Chigusa Factory of Nagoya Army Arsenal (CHI character abbreviation of Chigusa)	 (viii) Mukden Arsenal, Manchuria, 1930s–1945	 (xx) Department of Control (Chief Inspector), Mukden Arsenal (NA character meaning 'south')
		 (ix) Tenshozan Company, Kamakura	

From Fuller & Gregory, "Japanese Military and Civil Swords and Dirks", pg 228



Toyokawa Naval Arsenal



Navy Kamakura-Tenshozan Inspector



Kure Navy Arsenal



Toyokawa Naval Arsenal Anchor in Sakura found on fittings and dirks



“Ha” (meaning unknown)



Unknown – Found on “Inaba” and “Hiratoshi” blades. Believed to be an inspector stamp for the Inaba Tanrenjo in Noshu



“Ka” Unknown. Could be an inspector from Kamakura, location of Tenshozan



On a Shigemitsu
(meaning unknown)



STAMPED MEI



Nobumitsu



Naohiro



Masayuki



Shigenaga

THE 'W' STAMP or DOUBLE CHEVRON


Research from collectors on the Nihonto Message Board (www.militaria.co.za/nmb/19390-the-mysterious-w-stamp/) have revealed 'W' stamps on the following blades: Type 19 saber; Type 95s made by Iijima for Kokura & Tokyo 1st Arsenal; Mantetsu; and blades made by Haruhisa, Takehisa, Tenshin, and Yoshiharu.

The majority of the stamps appear to be linked to the Tokyo Arsenal. A document provided by Nick Komiya shows that the Mantetsu factory was ordered to supply several thousand unfinished blades to the Tokyo 1st Arsenal for finished production, which may explain the stamp on Mantetsu blades. The stamp has also been found on Arisaka Type 99 rifle firing pins and bayonets, both manufactured for the Tokyo arsenal, and a shovel.

"By the way, the same October report says as of September of that year (1942) all Type 95 sword contractors were transferred away from Kokura to the jurisdiction of other arsenals (Suya, Iijima and Kobe were taken over by Tokyo, and Seki went to Nagoya arsenal). I just mention this as someone was wondering how the same marking could appear in connection with different arsenals"
 {Nick Komiya, "The Mysterious W Stamp" NMB}

It should also be noted that the first observed Mantetsu with the stamp are early 1942, which is the same year that the "Army Sword Dept" [George Trotter] assumed control of all sword production. They are seen on Mantetsu through 1944. So, the stamp could have been in use by Nan-Man Arsenal inspectors as they assumed supervision of the SMR factory that year.

A Dictionary of Military Terms, by H. T. Creswell, J. Hiraoka, and R. Namba., 1942, published for the Army states the following:

Yamagata, n. 山形 a chevron (a mark used to distinguish War Department property = )

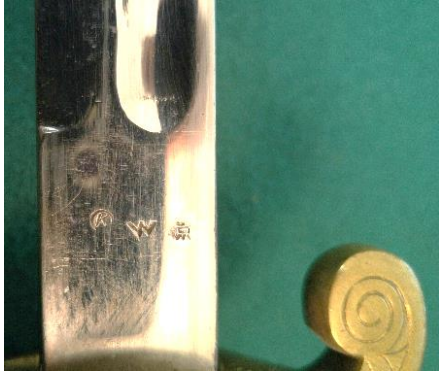
It is possible that this is the meaning of the "W" stamp – "Property of the War Department"

But it seems more likely that the stamp is a "midway/halfway" inspection stamp, found in "Rikugunshō 陸軍省 (War Ministry). Rikugun Heiki Gyōsei Honbu 陸軍兵器行政本部 (Army Ordnance Administration

附表第二

✕	∩	☆	種 類
檢 印 = 準 式	檢 印 = 準 式	檢 印 = 準 式	期 檢 査
不 合 格 品	中 途 檢 査	製 材 檢 査	使 用 範 圍
各 種 保 密 所 共 知 す			備 註

Headquarters). Ken'in oyobi hyōshiki kitei 検印及標識規定 (Regulations for Inspection Marks and Signs). General Order 2389. 19 October 1943. [source/chart provided by Thomas, at NMB]



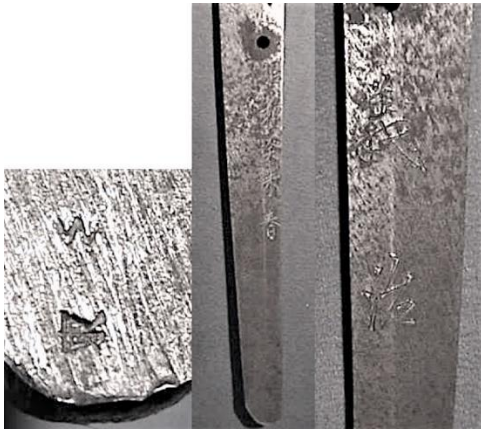
Type 19



Type 95



Mantetsu



Yoshiharu

MANTETSU MUNE STAMPS

Mantetsu marked each nakago mune with a number preceded by Katakana (a few have hiragana). The exact purpose of the numbering system is not known.

Numbering began with English letters followed by a number, but in 1939 transitioned to the

Order from top to bottom, right to left

ン	ワ	ラ	ヤ	マ	ハ	ナ	タ	サ	カ	ア
n	wa	ra	ya	ma	ha	na	ta	sa	ka	a
		リ		ミ	ヒ	ニ	チ	シ	キ	イ
		ri		mi	hi	ni	chi	shi	ki	i
		ル	ユ	ム	フ	ヌ	ツ	ス	ク	ウ
		ru	yu	mu	fu	nu	tsu	su	ku	u
		レ		メ	ヘ	ネ	テ	セ	ケ	エ
		re		me	he	ne	te	se	ke	e
	ヲ	ロ	ヨ	モ	ホ	ノ	ト	ソ	コ	オ
	wo	ro	yo	mo	ho	no	to	so	ko	o

Combo Katakana Dakuten

kana/number system with some overlap even into 1940. They used the “I RO HA” poetic style system with the kana, broken down by year:

1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945

イ (I)	ホ (HO)	ワ (WA)	ラ (RA)	マ (MA)	ヒ (HI)	い (i)
ロ (RO)	へ (HE) #	カ (KA)	ム (MU)	ケ (KE)	モ (MO)	
ハ (HA)	ト (TO) *	ヨ (YO)	ウ (U)	フ (FU)	セ (SE)	
ニ (NI)	チ (CHI)	タ (TA)	イ/キ (I/WI) #	コ (KO)	ス (SU)	
ホ (HO)	リ (RI)	レ (RE)	ノ (NO)	エ (E)#	(イ) (I)	
	ヌ (NU)	ソ (SO)	オ (O) #	テ (TE)		
	ル (RU)	ツ (TSU)	ク (KU)	ア (A)		
	ヲ (WO) オ (O)	ネ (NE)	ヤ (YA)	サ (SA)		
	ワ (WA)	ナ (NA)		キ (KI)		
				ユ (YU)		
				メ (ME)		
				ミ (MI)		
				シ (SHI)		
				エ (WE) #		
				ヒ (HI)		

NOTES:

1945: starts over in hiragana;

* All observed 1940 “TO” are hiragana “と = to”;

None observed; the オ (O) from 1942 seems to have been substituted for ヲ (WO) in 1940.

KIKUMON



Known examples date as early as the 17th century. Predominantly believed to indicate the smith was on retainer by the Shogunate. Meaning of the "ichi" unknown but could indicate the smith's work was representing the ichimongi school.



Buddhist Stamps



“Flaming jewel” Left one on a Fukomoto Kanemune, center unknown, right Amahide



Possibly a Buddhist symbol to chase away the devil. It is probably a stylized ken, straight sword with a "handle", possibly called a sanko-tsuki-ken or sanko-zuka-ken. The ken (or suken) can reflect the incarnation of the deity Fudo Myoo, and the "handle" appears to be a rendai, the lotus petals put



beneath an image of the Buddha. (Mal Cox, NMB)

Stamp on the left found on a Tadahiro blade. On the right, a Kanetoshi blade.



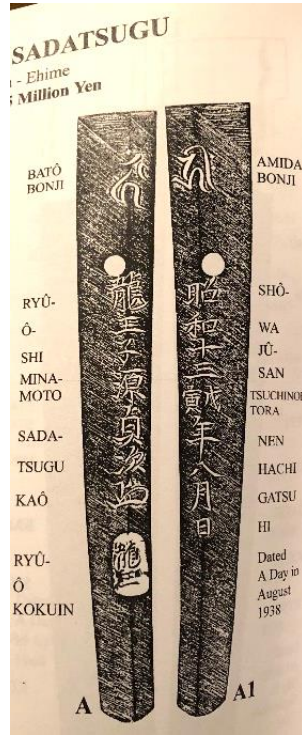
The god “Daikokuten”
god of fortune and fertility



An engraved Flaming Jewel on 1936 Hisakastu

BONJI (SANSKRIT)

Some blades have a single kanji, written in Sanskrit, that have meaning or significance in Buddhist beliefs. These are “normally” found on the blade but can be found on the nakago.

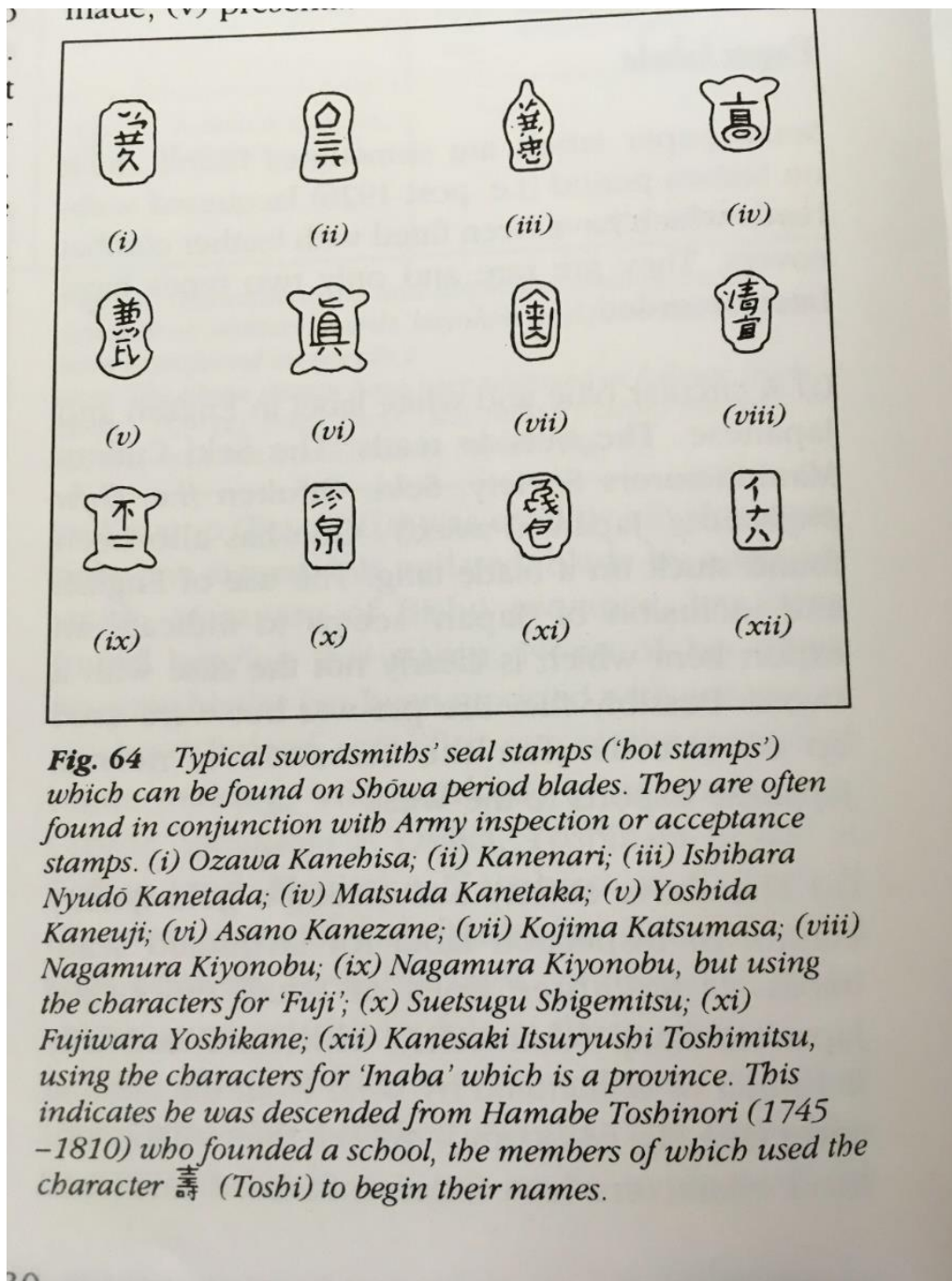


KAO

Kokuin are hot stamps and kagikan are inscribed. Both can be referred to as kao.

Kokuin

Many kokuin are personal marks of a smith, but not all. Some are statements about the steel used in the blade, and some seem to be forge or factory logos. There is much to be learned, still, about them.



(Fuller & Gregory, pg 230)

Kanezane



Kanekado



Matsuda Kanetaka



Nagamura Kanekiyo



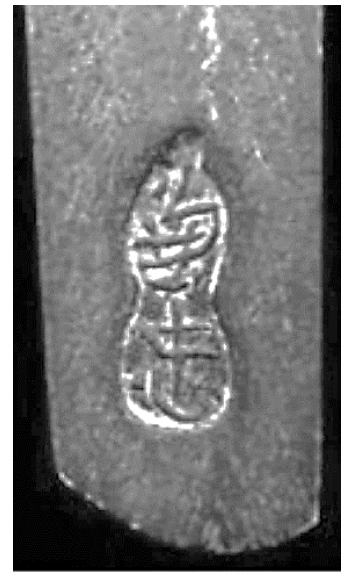
Ozawa Kanehisa



Kaneuji

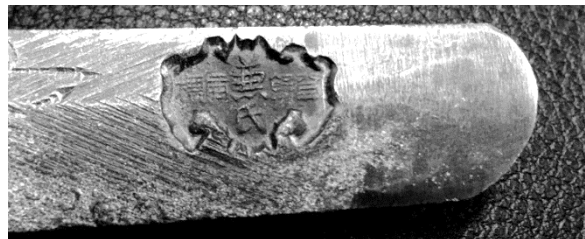


Kanetada

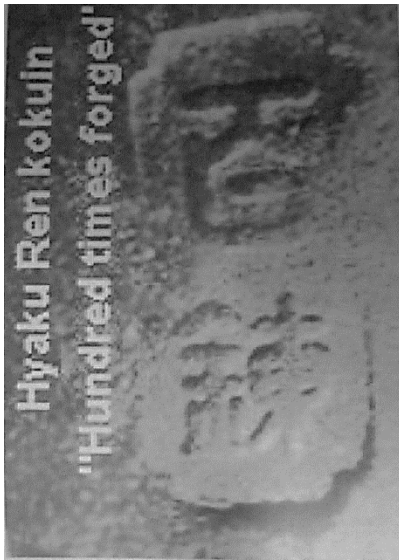


“Kaneuji registered trademark”

found on a Kanemitsu blade



Hyaku-ren



Hyaku-ren on a Minamoto Kanehisa



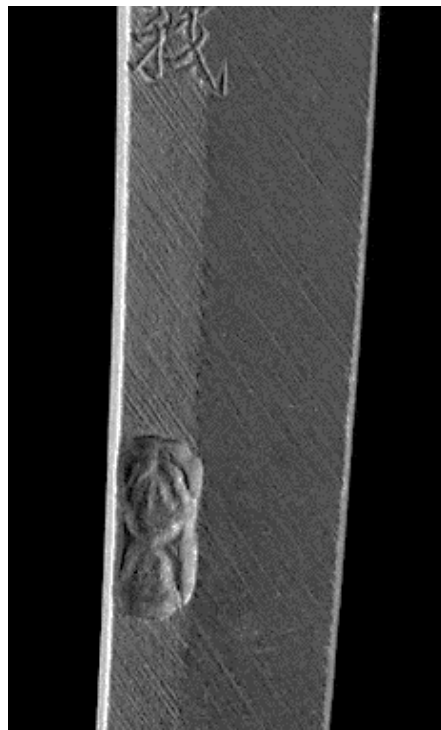
"Okada" on a Kanemitsu



Seki-den

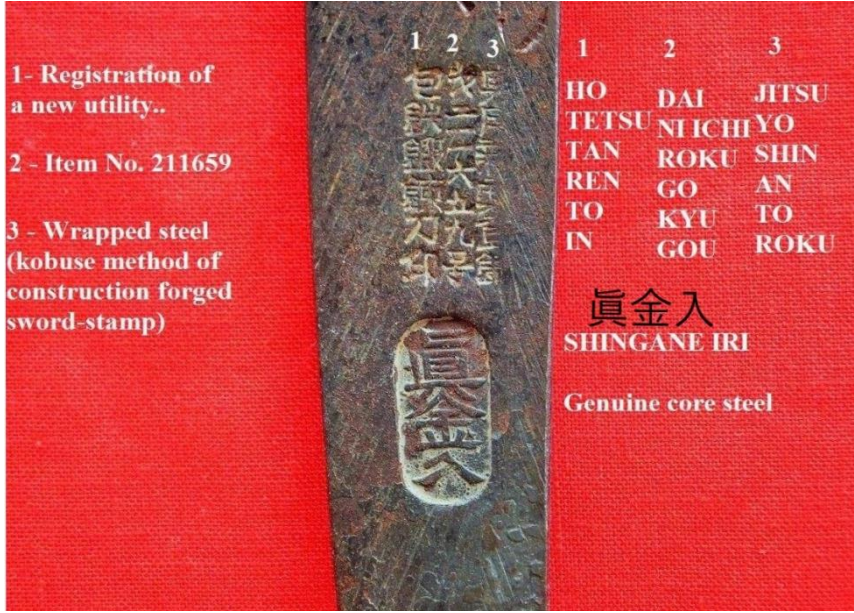


Sakuyo Bakkashi Hosokawa Masayoshi



Hosokawa Masamori





Sadaroku



Kazutada



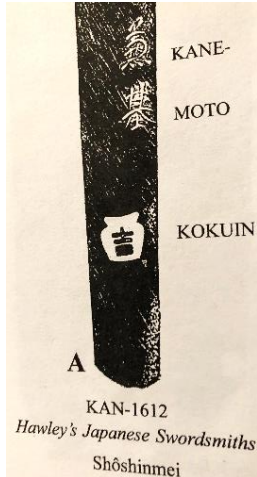
Shigemitsu



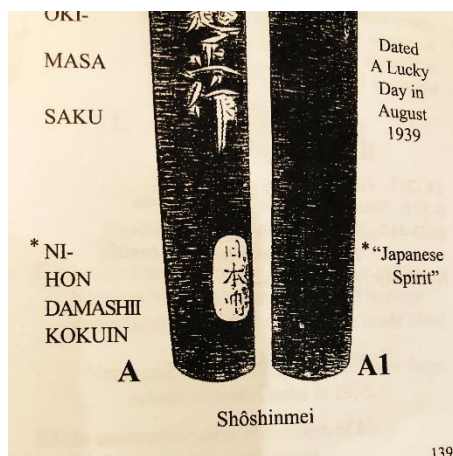
Sadakazu 1867



Kanemoto



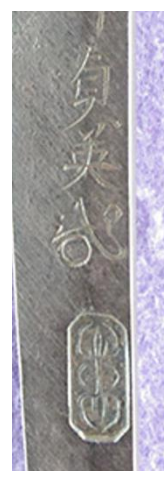
Okimasa



Shigetsugu



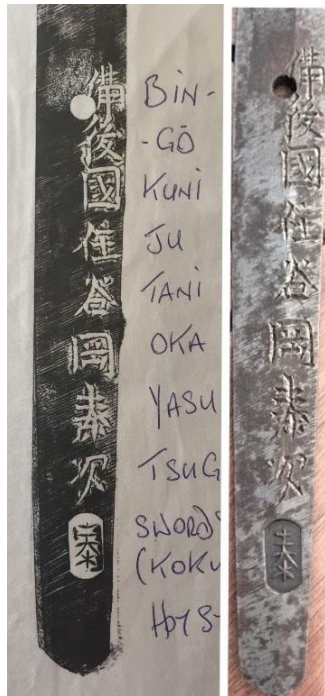
Sadahide 1839



Mitsuoki



Tonioka Yasutsugu



Sadatsugu



Akihide



Yasuki Steel



Kanemichi with Yasuki Steel stamp



Kojima Katsumasa



Masafusa



Kanemichi



Logo of the Yasugi (Yasuki) Steel Co., headquartered in Yasugi City, Shimane prefecture. (Slough, pg 98)



Left:

Amahide (according to Slough), also found on Kanemune, Kunimoto, Hidetoshi, Masafusa signed blades – smiths working at Amahide’s Tan Ren Jo.

Compare with the stamp of Shinshinto era Amahide below, which is actually another art-name for Masahide. The Showa era Amahide was an apprentice of an apprentice of the Masahide line.



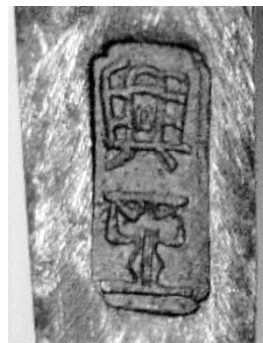
Shinshinto Amahide



Suishinshi Masahide, circa 1806



Stamps also found on Amahide blades. Stamp on the left, unknown; on the right is the “Koa Token Sha” stamp of a company founded by a group of retired servicemen to support the war effort. It was the parent company of the Seki Nihon To Tan Ren Jo of which Amahide (Hideyoshi san) was president. Amahide was also running Tan Ren Jo as a commercial operation. [from Malcom Cox]



KAKIHAN

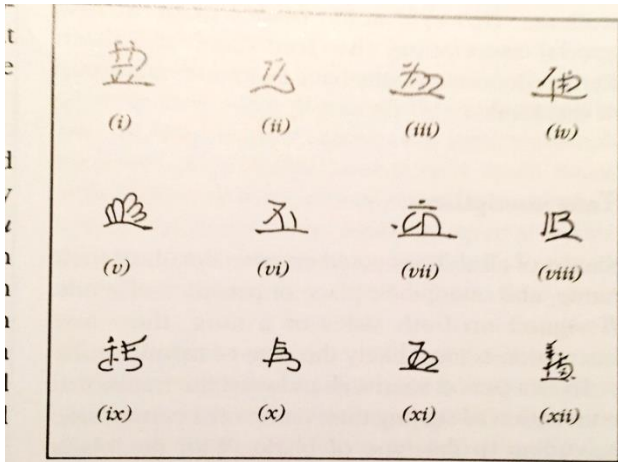
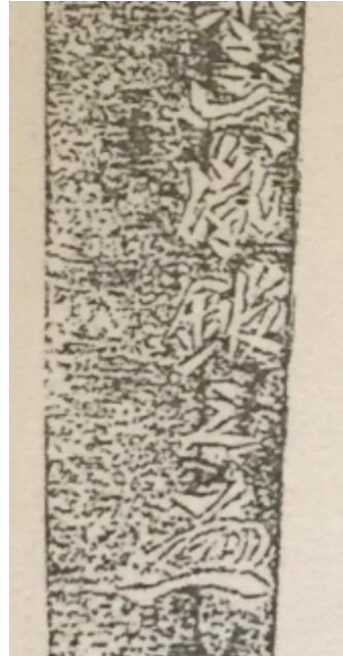
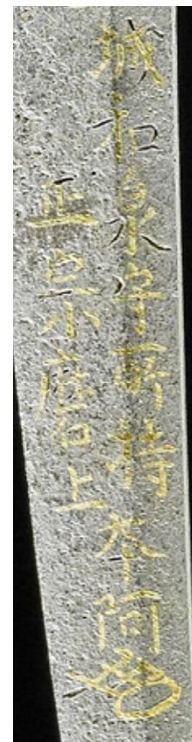


Fig. 63 Typical engraved swordsmiths' kakihan. The examples shown have been found on Shōwa period blades. Only (i) has been noted in conjunction with an Army inspection or acceptance stamp, in this case that of Seki. (i) Okada Kaneyoshi; (ii) Tessai? Shirō Kunimitsu; (iii) Fujiwara Masatane; (iv) Ishidō Mitsunobu; (v) Morimichi; (vi) Hara Morinobu; (vii) Minamoto Moritaka; (viii) Ichihara Nagamitsu; (ix) Gassan Sadakatsu; (x) Kawanao (Minamoto) Sadashige; (xi) Tenryushi Sadakiyo; (xii) Kanemitsu.

Fujiwara Masatane



Masamune (14th C)



(Fuller & Gregory, pg 229)

Ishido Mitsunobu



Ishido Teruhide



Minamoto Morinobu

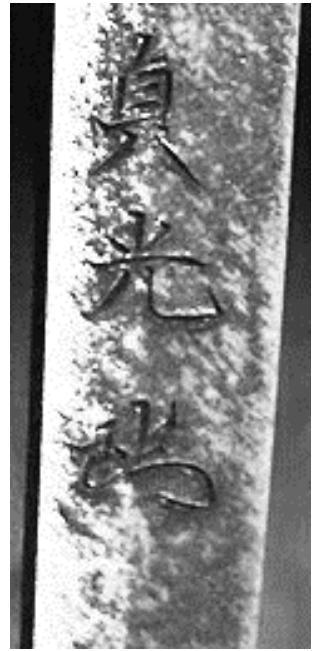


Morimichi



It is believed that Ishido Teruhide and Ishido Mitsunobu are the same smith

Ichihara Nagamitsu Gassan Sadakazu, 1867 & his son Gassan Sadakatsu & his son Sadamitsu



Morinobu



Yoshisada



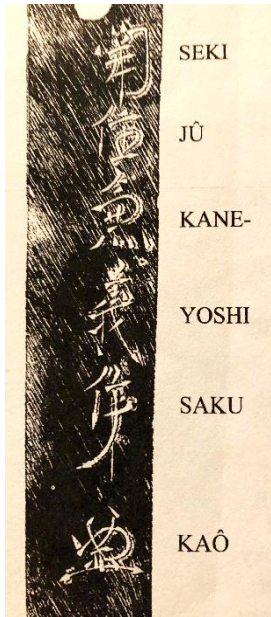
Nagakuni (永国), 2nd gen



Naotane



Kaneyoshi



Kanenori



Imai Sadashige



Minamoto Sadashige



Kojima Nagatoshi



Naokatsu



Okimitsu



Yoshitaka, 1870



Yasutada



Sa circa 13-1400s



Kanewaka (1800s?)



Takahiro, possibly brother
Of Kanewaka



Moritaka Yasuhiro also signed



Minamoto Moritaka



Minamoto Moritaka with different kakihan



1st Gen Masahide used kakhian, kokuin, and both together

Masahide Kakhian



Kokuin



and Both



Both Kakhian & Kokuin

Sadatsugu



“Dragon Prince”



Masahide 1808



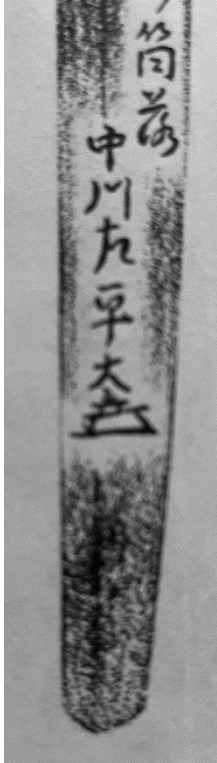
Sadakazu



Cut Test Kao

Many images are from Marcus Sesko's book "Tameshigiri" and are marked with "*"

Saheita early 1600s*



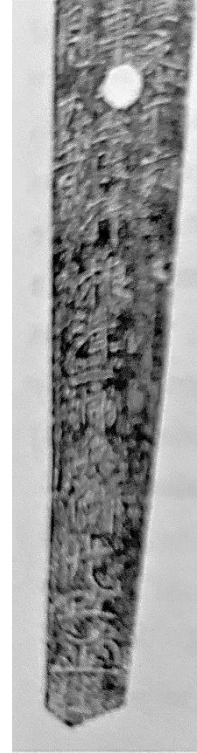
Shigetsuna 1681



Masatomo 1704*



Mitsumasa 1707*



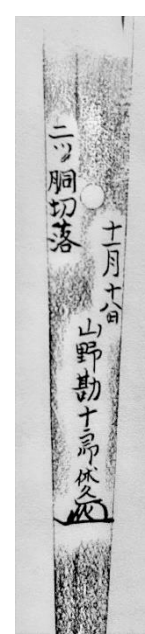
Yamano Kanjūrō Hisahide also signed Narihisa (1660)



and Yasuhisa



and Naganari*



Ukaino-jō-Yoshizane



Matsuyo Yoshihiro



Nagahisa 1666



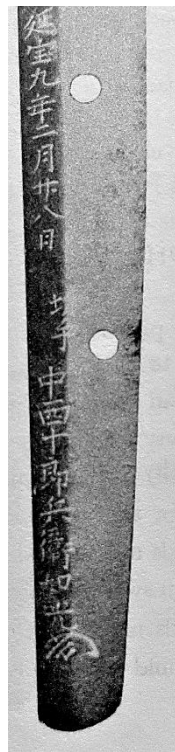
Rokubei 1650



Shigetsugu 1668*



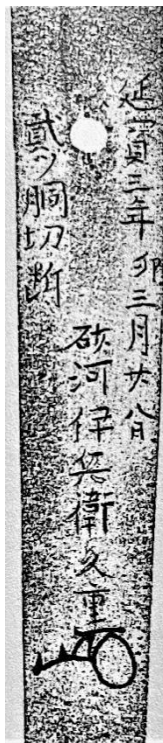
Yukimitsu 1681*



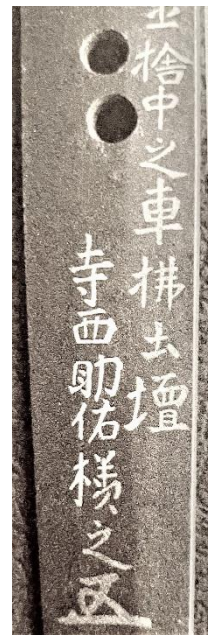
Masatsugu 1638*



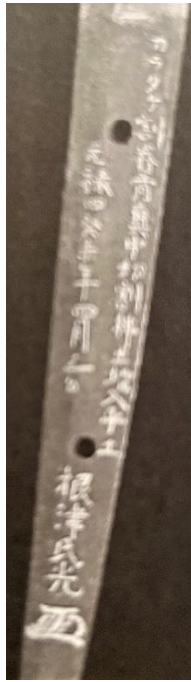
Hisashige 1675*



Josuke*



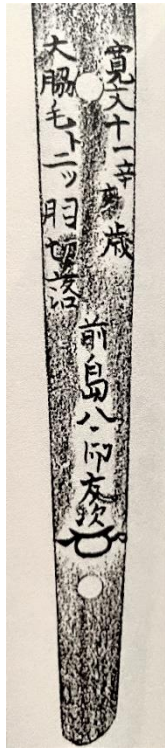
Ujimitsu 1691*



Nagaaki*



Tomotsugu*



Shigeyoshi 1674*



Masayoshi



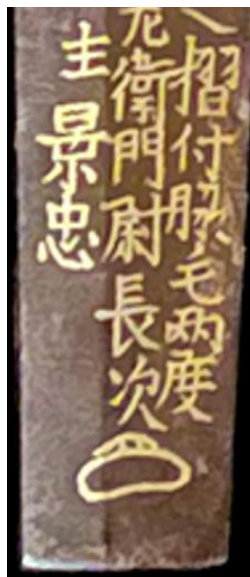
I'emon 1720



Tomotsugu 1544



Nagatsugu Late 1500s



Yoshitoyo 1850s



Not a kao, but a unique, stamped statement "Cut Test by Hakudo." Found on both 1st and 2nd generation Yoshichika blades.

Minamoto Yoshichika



Nidai Yoshichika



KAMON (Family Crest)

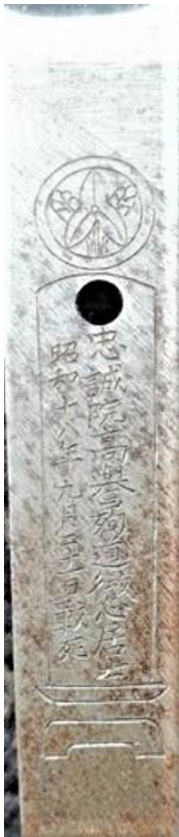
Mon have been found on blades for centuries and are too numerous to document here, but here are some interesting examples:



“Date” Family Crest on 18th Century blade



“Tokugawa” Crest on 2nd Gen. Yasutsugu



Left: A memorial dedication to a soldier killed in action, called an “Eihai”. At the top is the family mon. The dedication below “has the rank and the real name of the dead officer, with a request, that his spirit resides in this blade.” [Volker (Volker62 at NMB)]

Right: Aoi Breaking-chrysanthemum of Mito Tokugawa, 9th generation clan leader



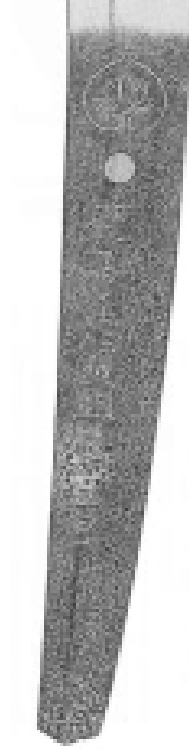
1 Leaf Aoi

This one deserves a more thorough description. Our source is Markus Sesko's articles on *Japanese Arms and Armor*, www.markussesko.com, "THE CONTESTANT NOBUKUNI SHIGEKANE" and "SHOGUNAL SUPPORT PROGRAM".



Masakiyo

"Eighth Tokugawa-shōgun Yoshimune (徳川吉宗), 1684-1751)" was "unhappy with the general decline in the quality of blades at his time ... his project that peaked in the 1721" was a "sword forging contest." "There were four winners selected, namely ... Masakiyo ... Yasuyo ... the 4th generation Nanki Shigekuni (南紀重国) and the Chikuzen smith Nobukuni Shigekane (信国重包)." ... "The tang bears the single leaf of the Tokugawa aoi crest granted to the winners of the contest."



Shigekane

STAMPED NUMBERS



Arabic numbers stamped on nakago are seen, so far, as early as 1890 on Murata-to, then later, from 1941 through the end of the war, on both Army and Navy blades. It is not known if these numbers were put there by the military, the blades' producers, or if they were put there by koshirae shops. Except for the Murata-to, the numbering seems to coincide with the advent of the Army's take-over of wartime sword production, which happened in 1942 or possibly July 1941. Most of the numbered blades are from RJT smiths, but they are also found on some Mantetsu blades and Navy blades. So it is possible some numbers were part of the Army's RJT system and the others are from fittings shops.

Tomomaru RJT, Dec 1941



Mantetsu, 1942



Inaba Kaneyoshi, Navy



Numbers are seen on blades made by the Yamagami brothers Akihisa and Munitoshi (both RJT smiths) in 1941-1944, but in 1942/3 they are preceded by a circled Matsu. The stamp has also been found on blades by Chikafusa, Kiyokuni, and Tsugunobu. In 1944, the Matsu seems to end. Many are simply numbered, after that, but some are preceded by kanji. Kanji & number stamps appear as early as May 1943 and seem to overlap the Matsu-stamped blades that year. They are only seen on blades by RJT smiths.



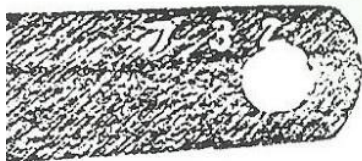
Here are some examples:



オ Kunishiro

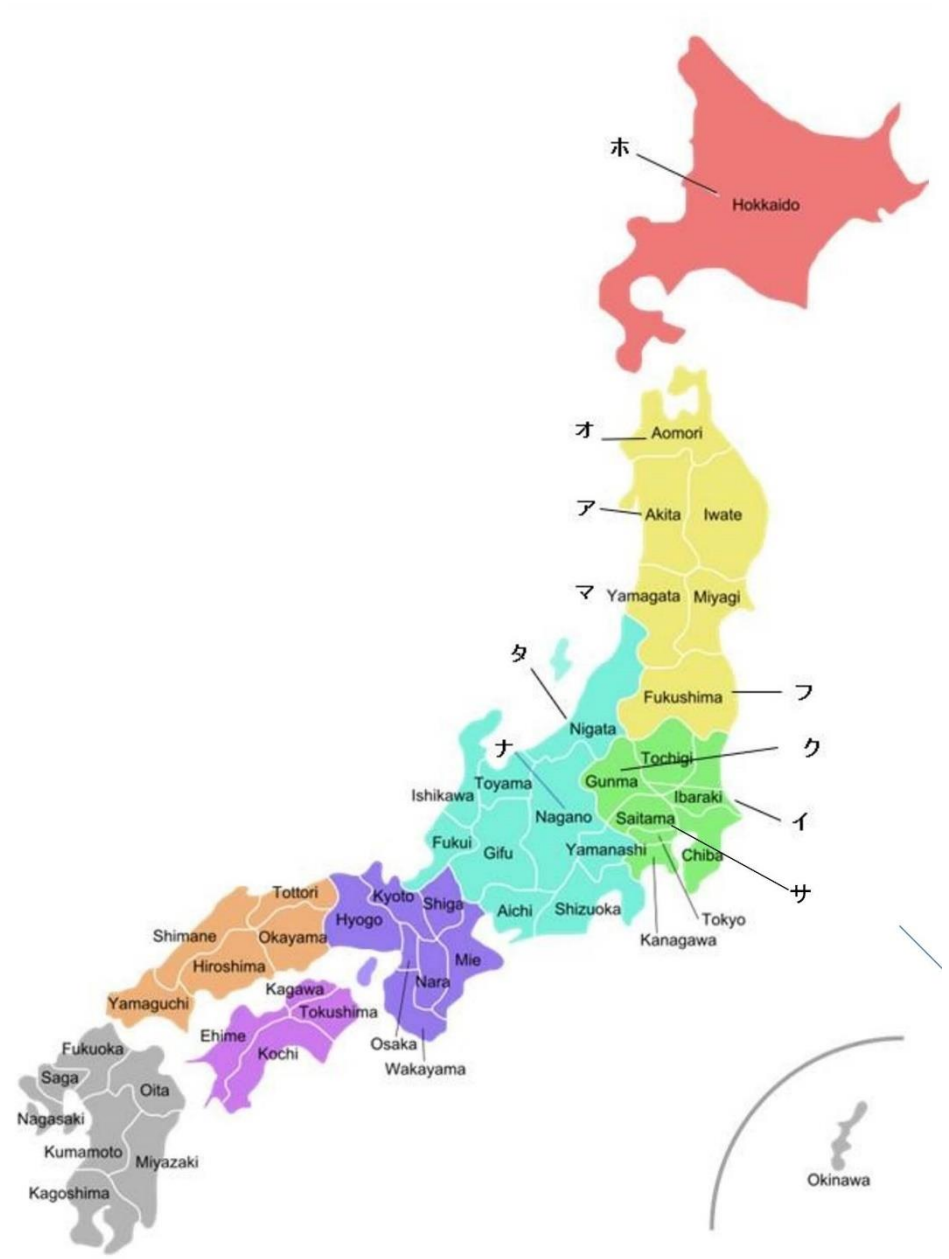


タ Munitoshi



フ Masakakazu

The kana seem to be specific to prefecture:



KOSHIRAE STAMPS

Stamps on koshirae are numerous and many of them are unidentified. Some are clearly a private company mark or arsenal marks, but several are unknown and some are not known kanji, so maybe a particular craftsman's mark.

The following is from The Japaneseindex.com: <http://www.japanesewordindex.com/logo/logo.htm>



JAPANESE SWORD COMPANY LOGOS OF THE WORLD WAR II ERA

These sword company logos were collected by **Chris Bowen** (used with his permission) from advertisements placed in war era sword publications. The following logos were used by various sword shops, koshirae makers, and gunto factories during WWII. These marks have been found on stickers on war era iai-to, and sometimes on gunto koshirae. Some of these logos belonged to sword shops that merely sold gunto; they didn't manufacture them themselves.



Shirakiya Guntobu

Located in Tokyo. They provided koshirae for gunto, and claimed in their ad that their swords would absolutely beat the English and American forces.



Nakano Shoten

Located in Tokyo. This company was owned by Mr. Nakano. In addition to Tokyo, the company had shops in China. The company provided a full range of koshirae.



Seki Hyaku Tan Sha Token Sei Saku Jo

This company was located in Seki city. They offered a complete line of services, including old blades, newly made gunto, polishing, and koshirae. They also made gunto.



Kamikodo Tokenya

This shop was located in Tokyo. They offered kodogu, polishing, and provided gunto koshirae. The shop was run by Okuda Masami, a member of the well-known Butoku Kai and a kendo sensei.



Shokendo Guntoya

Located in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture. Offered blades, army and navy gunto, polishing, shirasaya, tsukamaki, repairs, etc. Owned by Mr. Yamaguchi.

Suya Sho Ten

Located in Tokyo. This company was used by the Suikosha, or Navy Supply Center. The company made gunto koshirae. The owner of the company was Mr. Shimada. This company started back in the Meiji era and had a long history of making koshirae, including those for members of the Imperial family and many high ranking officers and diplomats.



This mark was used by a shop in Aizu Wakamatsu owned by Mr. Ozawa. The shop offered gunto koshirae, shirasaya, and toggi services. [Owaza Keiji sword polishing and fittings shop; George Trotter]



Tsunemitsu Kosaku Jo

Located in Kofu city, Yamanashi Prefecture. They manufactured koshirae, and had a long history of making sword related items.



Gunto Sei Saku Jo

Located in Tokyo. The company was owned by Mr. Matsuyama. This firm made koshirae for both army and navy, as well as koshirae for police, diplomatic, and ceremonial uses.



> Nihonto Tanrenjo

Located in Seki city. The company was owned by Mr. Hara. The company made both traditionally made swords and sunobe gunto. They also manufactured army and navy koshirae, offered repairing and polishing, and shirasaya.



Sugimoto Tokenya

Located in Tokyo. Provided gunto, various sword related services. They mention in their ad that they carry an alumite gunto saya koshirae.



Wakasei Seisaku Jo

Located in Tokyo. They made army and navy koshirae. They won a Minister of the Navy Award in the koshirae section of the Shinsaku Tenrankai.



Yamamoto Guntoya

Located in Tokyo. This company provided gunto for the war effort.



Shoheikan Gunso Kabushiki Gaisha

This company made army and navy koshirae. They also advertise a wood saya gunto koshirae. The company was located in Tokyo and owned by Mr. Saito.



Nakayama Token Ten

This shop was located in Tokyo. They sold gunto and sword related items.



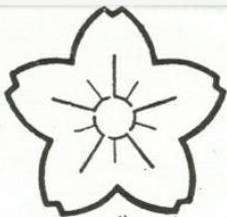
Fujishiro Sho Ten

This is the logo of the well known Fujishiro family which offered polishing, sold both old swords as well as gunto, and published a variety of sword related literature.



Kuramoto Toishi Ten

This shop was located in Kyoto and supplied togi-shi and craftsman with stones for polishing.



Omura Token Kogeisha

This company was located in Hiroshima. They used both the logos to the left. They sold gunto and offered sword related services.



Source: Chris Bowen

From Fuller & Gregory, "Japanese Military and Civil Swords and Dirks", pg 227



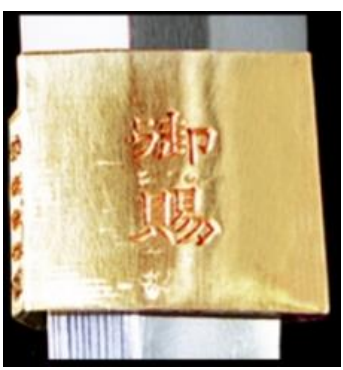
Note the actual Yamamoto logo is just the image in the center of the star. The star and outer circle aren't stamped.



Nakano Shoten



Shoheikan Gunso Kabushiki Gaisha



"Imperial Gift"



Echizen'ya Tazaki Shōten



Gunto Sei Saku Jo
(Matsuyama Gunto Factory)



Ryōshodō



Possibly Tomita Shoten/Tool Co.



Two sides of a Type 98: 飯島 “Iijima”



Nakano Shoten



Unknown



“Ichi” Officially still an “unknown”, however we suspect it is one of two logos of Kobe Shoten sword company



Wakasei Co.



Kobe Steelworks Co., Ltd



MODIFIED ROMAN NUMERALS:

- I = 1
- II = 2
- III = 3
- IIII = 4
- \ or > = 5
- X = 10



"74"



"168" Numbers on the fittings confirm the reading

Examples of this style numbering are found in the discussion below. They can be found on both shingunto and kaigunto fittings. [Full discussion with more examples:

<http://www.militaria.co.za/nmb/topic/23543-pet-dragon-solves-faux-roman-numeral-mystery/>

PATENT STAMPS



Left: "The cover of this example is stamped SEMBAI TOKKYO (Monopoly patent) and DAI (number) 132106, GO (number, item), i.e. 'item number' 132106, which must be the patent number."

[From Fuller & Gregory, pages 70, 72]

Below:

專賣特許 (專売特許) Exclusive Patent

飯田式錠蓋 lida-style locking lid 出願中 Patent pending

[From SteveM, NMB]



JAPANESE MILITARY AND CIVIL SWORDS AND DIRKS

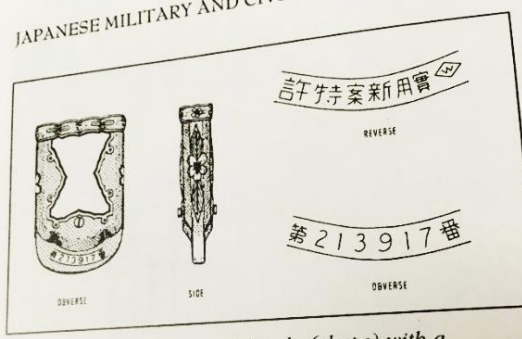


Fig. 15 Special shin-guntō isbizuke (chape) with a thickened shoe. The reverse markings read: JITSUYO (utility, practical use), SHIN (new), AN (idea), TOKKYO (patent), i.e. the patent practical new idea. The 'W' stamp is probably the manufacturer's trademark. The obverse markings read: DAL (number, order, series) 213917, BAN (number), i.e. series number 213917 which is probably the patent number. All examples found, including the naval kai-guntō version (Pl. 188), have identical markings.

(From Fuller & Gregory)

The "W" in diamond stamp is of the Wakasei Co.



UNKNOWNNS



Found only on kaigunto fittings



Open Boar's Eye?



This seems to be a mixture of English, Japanese numbers, and katakana (K 1 ro 2 ma) with a Suya Shoten Co logo at the top.



TEC, unknown



defies translation

"To" in sakura
Unknown shop





"S"



"T"



"ST"



"ST"



Tokyo 1st Arsenal and Unknown



Seki, Toku, unknown.



horizontal "8" on a '43 Kanemichi



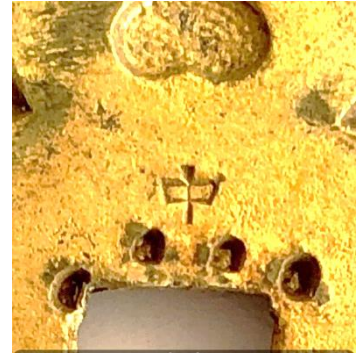
"Ka" on a Toyokawa Blade



On a mumei kaigunto



On 3 mumei blades



"Naka" or "Cho"



Hachi?



West?



"Sword Steel" (on late-war blade)

Possibly Kaneshiro Sakuganki Seizo who is known to make bayonets



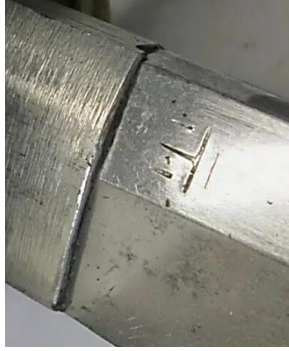
Left: The tsuba of an "ersatz" sword possibly made in Manchuria in the last months of the war. 造 could be short for 造兵 which in Japanese apparently translates to "Arsenal."

Right: Found on a blade with "Tokyo Kaikosha" mei. Kaikosha was a non-profit organization of retired officers. The sakura could be the logo for the Omura Token Kogeiisha, a shop in Hiroshima that sold gunto.





On a Yoshinao blade



On a Police blade



On a kyuguntō drag



On Gunto and kaigunto seppa



On a Kazunori blade



On 2 zoheito and fittings

"&"



UNKNOWN ON KYUGUNTO & TYPE 8/19 SWORDS

Almost nothing is known about the makers, and therefore the logo and inspector marks, of kyuguntō and Type 8/19 swords. Suya Shoten is a well-known manufacturer, but the rest are, so far, lost to antiquity. The following are what we have seen to date:



Suya Shoten



Ryōshodō (Shop Name?)



Dots

Punch dots are often found on nakago, both on the jiri and mune. They range from a single dot to multiple dots. They are found on blades of multiple smiths as well as mumei blades. Further research is needed to determine if they are from a particular area/prefecture. Reasons for use – unknown.



FOIL LABELS

While not stamps, these were mentioned in Fuller & Gregory's chart and are sometimes brought up by collectors. The only observed labels all come from "The Seki Cutlery Manufacturer's Society, Seki Gifuken Japan". One label has been found with only Japanese, but all others are written in both English and Japanese.



One of this style was recently seen with a production date on it

PRIVATE PURCHASE AND RENTALS

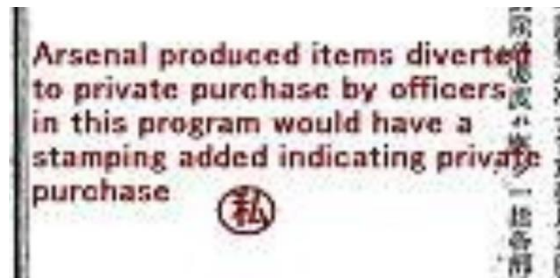
Documents uncovered by Nick Komiya, Warrelics forum (<http://www.warrelics.eu/forum/japanese-militaria/short-development-history-type-95-gunto-676112-7/>) declare that officers whose gunto were lost or damaged could rent swords. Rented "Samurai" swords refitted for the war were to have a "maru-Ai" (愛) stamp. No examples of this stamp have been seen to date.



Also, in 1940, a document allowed Arsenal produced blades to be privately purchased by officers. These blades were to be marked with a stamp designed for this, and again, no examples of this on blades have been observed:



(On a pair of binoculars)



Sources

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Tamashigiri, The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing; 2014, Markus Sesko

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SEKI SWORDSMITHS and JAPANESE NAVAL SWORDS, Malcom E. Cox, NMB 2021

SWORDSMITHS OF AICHI PREFECTURE (OWARI AND MIKAWA), Malcom E. Cox, NMB 2022

SHOWA PERIOD SWORDSMITHS OF EHIME PREFECTURE, Malcom E. Cox, NMB 2022