

Basic Detail Report



Sword (Wakizashi)

Date

1532-1554

Medium

Steel, manta ray skin, lacquer, silk and iron

Description

Samurai sword. Found by donors parents while on a leisure trip to Japan in the 1950's and shipped to the US.

This was a tenuous time to transport a samurai sword from Japan. There are no records or receipts of its purchase and, most unfortunately, no record of its previous ownership. The sword was stored in its cloth sheathe in a cedar chest for some 40 years before it was found, restored and appraised by Mike Christianson in 1995-96. It has since been encased and displayed in the donors home. This sword was made by sword smith Tsuguhiro between 1532-1554 during the Muromachi (Ashikaga) Japanese art period (1392-1572) in the Tenmon Era (1532-1554). It was made at Fuyuhiko Mon (school) in Wakasa Province, Japan. Tsuguhiro was a student of the Third Fuyuhiko. Present-day Fukui is the modern prefecture of the old province of Wasaka. Of great importance was the road on which the smith school existed; the Fuyuhiko Mon was on the Hokurikudo (do = road) that originated in Wakasa Province. The Hokurikudo was one of eight roads that held the five Koto sword smith schools. There are three signatures on this sword: (1) on the nakago (tang) by sword smith Tsuguhiro (inscription is in two characters and is to be considered mei ga aru, indicates further research to tenaciously guarantee this Tsuguhiro inscription); (2) on the fuchi (metal ferrule) by artisan Tomoteru; and, most rare and unique, (3) on the kashira (pommel) by artisan Akitada. This sword is a wakazashi, the shorter of two swords which together were called the daisho ("the great [katana] and small [wakazashi]); it is the companion (the shorter) sword, in length between one to two feet, which carried the kodzuka (a small knife held on the back side of the scabbard). The wakazashi sword was normally worn when entering a friend's house, where the katana would be left in the vestibule on a rack provided for the purpose. The wearing of two swords was the prerogative of the noble class, of which the samurai were the lowest from the point of view of seniority, although a samurai might well have come from a family of very high nobility. Saya (scabbard) is mantaray belly skin smoothed and filled with lacquer. The sugata (blade) is shinogi-zukuri, the basic blade type (rigid), or form of this sword. The sori (general term for curve of the blade) is 1/2 inch. The kissaki (general term for point of the blade) is medium. The shinogi-ji (the area of metal on a blade that lies between the ridge on the side and the back) is called mesame with a raised (high) shinogi (the ridge on the side of a blade and running the length). The mune (general term for the back of a blade-the side opposite the tempered edge) is iroi (slightly high). The Nagasa (length of the sword from the tip to the beginning of tang) is 19 3/8 inches. The nakago (the tang) is 4 3/4 inches long. The hamon (general term for the shape of the outline of the border between the tempered edge and the untempered metal of the ji, the surface structure of the blade between the edge

and the ridge) is hiro-suguha mixed with notare and ko-ashi near the hamachi and ko-ashi and hotsure in the monouchi. The boshi (the part of the hamon in the point of the blade and of particular importance when assessing a blade) was determined as tsukiage-sharply pointed. The kitae (forging) is in the itame pattern with patches of o-itame (wood grain). The tsuba (the sword guard) is made of iron and in the shape of a rat in keeping with the overall leitmotif of the sword.

Dimensions

2 3/4 x 2 3/8 x 27 1/4 in.