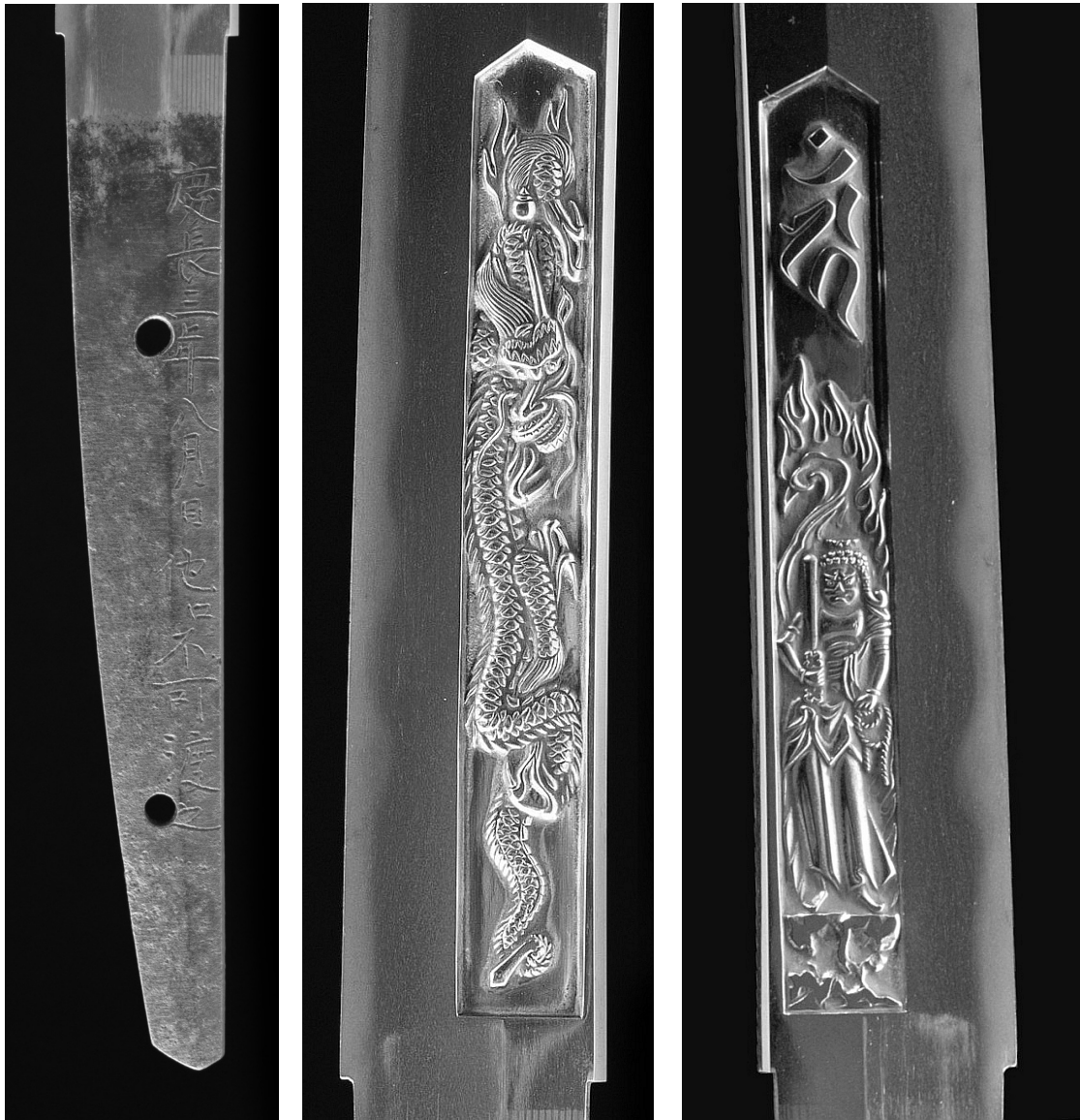


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Myōju's real name was Umetada Hikojiro (埋忠彦次郎). On the basis of an extant *tantō* which is dated Genna four (元和, 1618) and signed with the supplement "made at the age of 61," of a *katana* made by his student Hizen Tadahiro (忠広) that is dated Kan'ei six (寛永, 1629) and signed with the supplement "master Myōju, who carved the *horimono*, 72 years old," a *katana* dated Kan'ei seven (1630) bearing the supplement "made at the age of 73," and a *ken* dated Kan'ei eight (1631) with the supplement "made at the age of 74," we can calculate his year of birth (according to the then Japanese way of counting years) as Eiroku one (永禄, 1558). He was born as son of Umetada Shigetaka (重降), also named Myōkin (明欽), counted himself as 25th generation of the famous Kyōto smith Sanjō Munechika (三条宗近), and signed in early years with Shigeyoshi (重吉) and Muneyoshi (宗吉), although no work is extant that bears the former name. The earliest known works of Myōju, a *yari* and a *tantō*, were made under the name Muneyoshi in the eighth month of Keichō two (慶長, 1597). The Umetada family worked on a hereditary basis as sword-smiths and engravers (*horimono-shi*) directly for the Ashikaga *bakufu* but were apart from that also in charge of making *habaki* and *seppa* and of shortening sword blades and applying, on behalf of the Hon'ami family, gold-inlaid appraisals (*kinzōgan-me*) to sword tangs. When Myōju's father Shigetaka was head of the family, he witnessed Oda Nobunaga (織田信長, 1534-1582) destroying the Ashikaga shogunate in 1573 and thereby their employer, and when Toyotomi Hideyoshi (豊臣秀吉, 1537-1598) was later on unable to attain the title of *shōgun*, there was now no longer any shogunate and all former *bakufu*-employed artists were facing an uncertain future. But fortunately, Hideyoshi made sure that the most important lineages of artists and craftsmen were able to survive. So Myōju eventually worked for Hideyoshi and took also orders from Hideyoshi's nephew and successor, the *kanpaku* Hidetsugu (秀次, 1568-1595). When he was twelve years old, the workshop and main seat of the family had been transferred from the Sanjō (三条) to the Nishijin (西陣) district of Kyōto. It is unclear when Myōju became head of the Umetada family but it is assumed that it was the third year of Keichō (1598). This is namely the year when he changed his name from "Muneyoshi" to "Myōju." Incidentally, please note that Myōju's name is today mostly quoted with the simplified character for *ju* (寿). Two years before, the Saga *daimyō* Nabeshima Naoshige (鍋島直茂, 1538-1618) had sent his promising smith Tadayoshi (忠吉, 1572-1632) to Kyōto to refine his craft for two years under guidance of Myōju and his father Myōkin Shigetaka. Also Horikawa Kunihiro (堀川国広, 1531-1614) spent some time at the Umetada forge but the exact



Picture 3: *tachi, jūyō-bunkazai, mei* “Yamashiro no Kuni Nishijin-jūnin Umetada Myōju + *kaō*” (山城国西陣住人埋忠明寿) – “Keichō sannen hachigatsu hi” (慶長三年八月日, “a day in the eighth month Keichō three [1598]”) – “Hoka e kore o watasu-bekarazu” (他江不可渡之, “do not give this to others”), *nagasa* 64.7 cm, *sori* 1.3 cm, *shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune*. This is the blade which is thought to have been made by Muneyoshi on the occasion of him taking over the Umetada family and changing his name to Myōju. He was 41 years old at that time. It shows *horimono* in the form of a *kurikara* dragon on the one, and the deity Fudō-Miyō on the other side, both engraved as relief within a *bitsu* recess. The whereabouts of the blade were unknown until it was found by Honma Junji among the sword collection of the Sōma (相馬) Viscount family, the former *daimyō* of the Nakamura fief (中村藩) of Mutsu province. It is today preserved in the Kyōto National Museum.

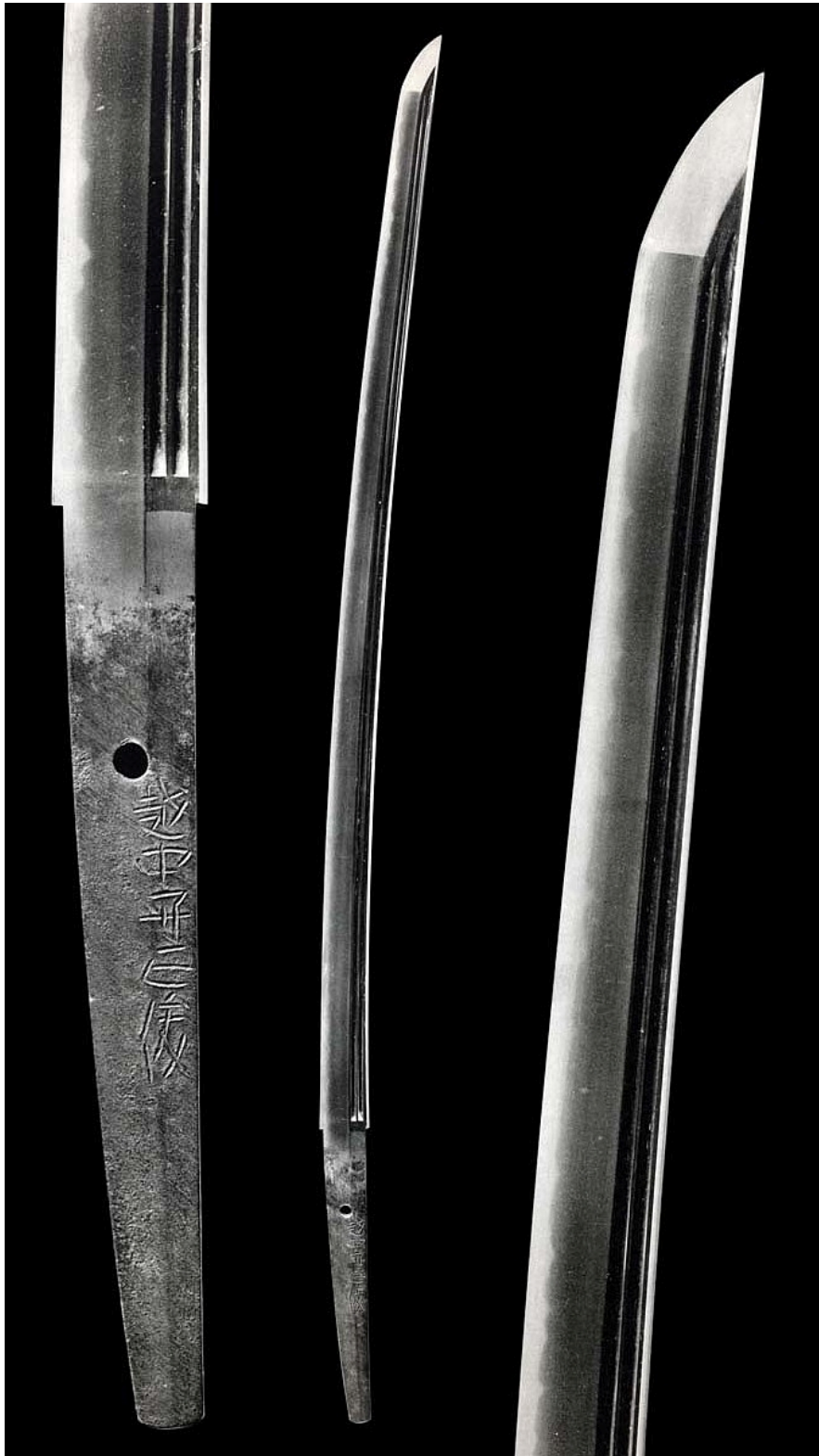


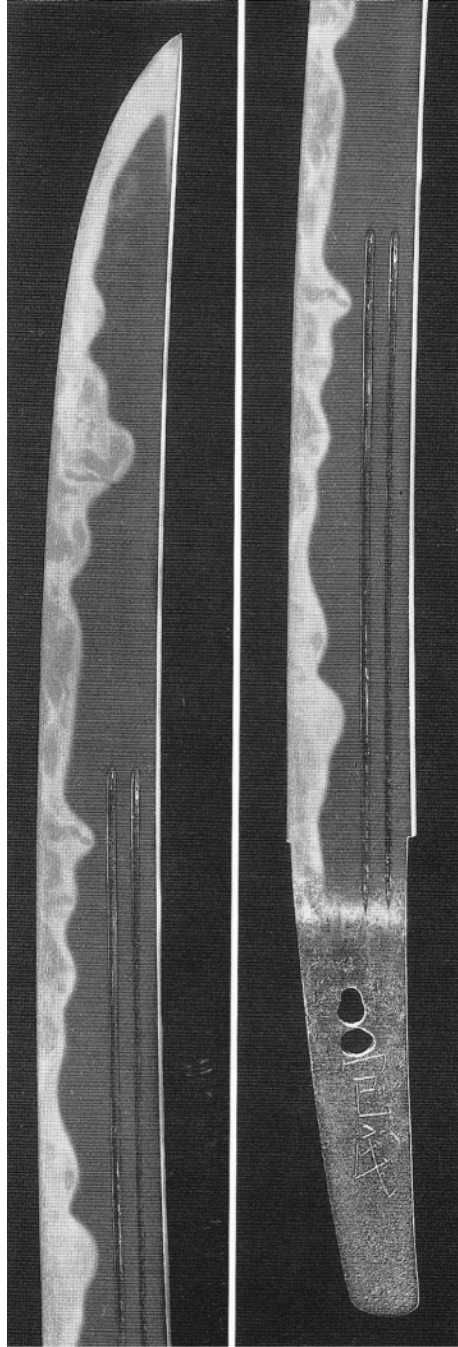
ETCHŪ NO KAMI MASATOSHI

越中守正俊

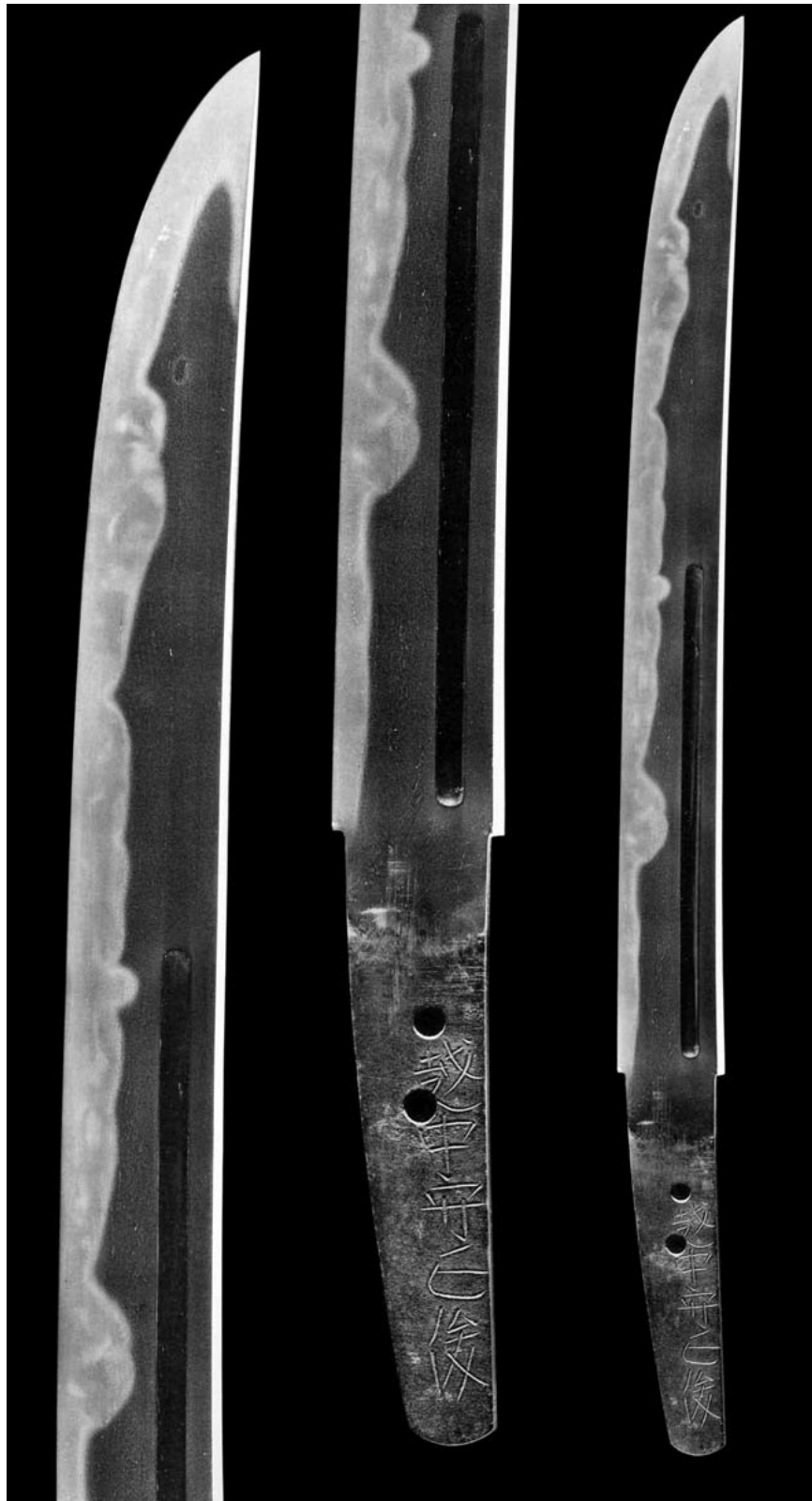
Masatoshi was the fourth son of the Mino master Kanemichi (兼道) who took him and his three older brothers Tanba no Kami Yoshimichi (丹波守吉道), Iga no Kami Kinmichi (伊賀守金道), Echigo no Kami Rai Kinmichi (越後守来金道) in the second year of Bunroku (文禄, 1593) to Kyōto where they settled in the Nishinotō'in (西洞院) district and founded the Mishina (三品) school. Masatoshi received his honorary title Etchū no Kami on the twelfth day of the ninth month Keichō two (慶長, 1597) and we know date signatures from the fifth year of Keichō (1600) to the sixth year of Kan'ei (寛永, 1629). Masatoshi was one of the best Mishina smiths and able to work in all the five *gokaden*. He rarely made long swords and focused instead on *hira-zukuri ko-wakizashi* and *tantō*. Some of his works aim at the Shizu (志津) style. We don't know when Masatoshi was born or when he died but there were three more generations Masatoshi who were active until around Genbun (元文, 1736-1741).

Picture 33: *katana, jūyō-bijutsubin, mei* “Etchū no Kami Masatoshi” (越中守正俊), *nagasa* 69.4 cm, *sori* 3.0 cm, *shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune*, this blade bears *futasuji-hi* on both sides that end in *kakudome* above the *habaki* area. This blade shows a shallow *ko-notare* that is mixed in intervals with *togari* elements and thus it seems as if Masatoshi aimed at Seki Kanemoto (兼元) with this work.

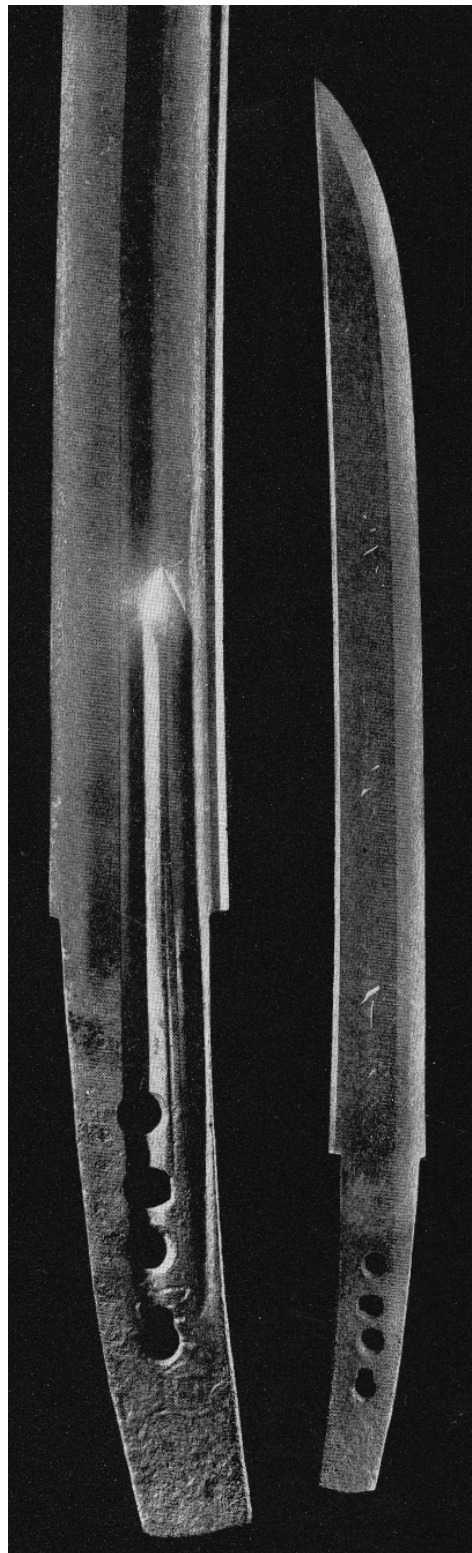




Picture 34: *wakizashi, mei* “Etchū no Kami Masatoshi” (越中守正俊), *nagasa* 33.3 cm, *hira-zukuri, iori-mune*, it seems as if Masatoshi aimed, although rather freely, at another Mino work with this blade, namely at the blade nicknamed Minemuri (三睡) (see picture above) from the early years of Shizu Saburō Kaneuji (兼氏), i.e. from when he still signed his name with the characters (包氏)



Picture 55: *tantō, mei* “Echizen no Kuni Yasutsugu Honda Hida no Kami shoji-nai” (越前国康継・本多飛驒守所持内, “from the possessions of Honda Hida no Kami”) – “Nanbangane – Sanjō-Kokaji haku” (なんはんかね三条こち迫, “[forged with] *nanban-gane*, tribute to Sanjō Kokaji [Munechika]”), *nagasa* 29.7 cm, *sori* 0.45 cm, *katakiriba-zukuri*, *mitsu-mune*. This is a copy of the *meibutsu* Ebina-Kokaji (海老名小鍛冶) by Sanjō Munechika (三条宗近) which is shown to the right.





Picture 56: *katana, jūyō-bunkazai, mei* “Nanban-tetsu o motte Bushū Edo ni oite Echizen Yasutsugu” (以南蛮鉄於武州江戸越前康繼, “made by Echizen Yasutsugu from *nanban-tetsu* in Edo in Musashi province”) – “Keichō jūkyūnen hachigatsu kichijitsu” (慶長十九年八月吉日, “on a lucky day of the eighth month Keichō 19 [1614]”), *nagasa* 69.4 cm, *katakiriba-zukuri, iori-mune*