Short sword signed Yoshimitsu (celebrated Atsushi Toushirō)

National Treasure: Short sword signed Yoshimitsu (celebrated Atsushi Toushirō) (Blade length 27.6 cm)
Photo: ColBase (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)

The National Treasure "Short sword signed Yoshimitsu (celebrated Atsushi Toushirō)" is a 13th-century work by the swordsmith Awataguchi Yoshimitsu, who was active in Kyoto during the Kamakura period[1].

Awataguchi Yoshimitsu belonged to the Awataguchi School, a group of swordsmiths who worked in Kyoto from the late Heian period[2] to the middle of the Kamakura period.

"Yoshimitsu, commonly known as Tôshirô, was […] An expert craftsman, he is known for his short blades (J. tantô). This particular example has been famous since the Muromachi period (1392-1573). While the overall dimensions of the piece are quite small, the blade is unusually thick; hence the name the "Thick (J. Atsushi) Tôshirô." The metal finish and tempering pattern are both of outstanding workmanship."[3]

"This blade was handed down through the house of Ashikaga Shoguns. It then passed through the hands of such notable figures as […] Toyotomi Hideyoshi,"[3] before eventually being handed down to the Tokugawa shogunate[4]. It is currently housed at the Tokyo National Museum.

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1. The Kamakura period refers to the period from the late 12th century, with various theories regarding the start date (such as 1185 or 1192), to 1333.
2. From 794 to the late 12th century (Until the beginning of the Kamakura period, as stated in [1])
3. Quoted from e-National Treasures:
(https://emuseum.nich.go.jp/detail?langId=en&webView=&content_base_id=100183&content_part_id=0&content_pict_id=0)

<<About Terminology used in the quoted passages>>

- J. : Abbreviation for "Japanese"
- Please note that the English spelling of Toushiro is as per the source.
- Blade: The part of the sword that fits into the scabbard.
- Metal finish (*jigane*): Japanese swords are forged by repeatedly folding and hammering the raw material, *tamahagane* (high-quality steel made from iron sand), to enhance its toughness and strength. This process is known as folding and forging. As a result, patterns appear on the surface of the blade, called *jihada*. The steel itself, with its distinctive texture, is referred to as *jigane*.
- Tempering pattern (*hamon*): A white, wave-like pattern that appears on the blade of a Japanese sword. It is created during the quenching process, one of the steps in sword-making, where the steel is rapidly cooled from a high temperature to harden it.
- (About the Muromachi period) There are various theories about the beginning and end of the Muromachi period, so some caution is required.
- Ashikaga Shoguns: A family lineage that held the position of shogun, the supreme military ruler of Japan, from the first half of the 14th century to the late 16th century, a period of approximately 240 years.
- Toyotomi Hideyoshi: Born in 1536 or 1537 and believed to have died in 1598, Hideyoshi was a military leader who achieved the unification of Japan during the Sengoku period, a time of civil war and regional division.

4. Tokugawa Shogunate: The samurai-led Tokugawa regime, established by the Tokugawa family, held the position of shogun, the supreme military ruler of Japan, from the early 17th century to the mid-late 19th century, for a period of over 260 years, during the Edo period.

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