

To-Ken London meeting report – 24 February 2016

The meeting was opened with a presentation by Ian Chapman on tsuba and in particular differentiating and identifying cast or counterfeit copies. Some particular characteristics included:

- Seppa dai not being well forged
- Irregular chiselling or rough surfaces (eg poor nanako)
- Cast seams, sekigane, hitsuana plugs
- Rounded as opposed to sharp edges
- Acoustic ring

Following the tips as to how to identify fake tsuba, Ian shared with the attendees some of his high-quality tosogu and tsuba, including: Goto dragon tsuba, Bakamatsu tsuba (made to appear older), Omori sea waves tsuba, Goto Ichijo, Goto Mitsumasa and others.

Clive Sinclair and David Maynard then talked about swords they had brought for viewing. Coincidentally, they were forged by Koyama Munetsugu and his teacher, Tsunatoshi.

Tsunatoshi was born as Kato Hachiro around 1800 in the family of Dewa (no) Kuni Kunihide and he was the younger brother of Kato Tsunahide. He has dated works from around 1823, which he made in Edo, where he did most of his work. He received the title of Chounsai in 1854. He handed down this title to his son, Koretoshi, in 1856 and took the new title of Chojusai for himself. It is said that he received a stipend from the Uesugi Clan. He died at the age of 66 on the fifth day of December 1863. Tsunatoshi and his students greatly excelled in the making of Bizen style swords. His skill was great enough to surpass the famous sword-making group led by Suishinshi Masahide.

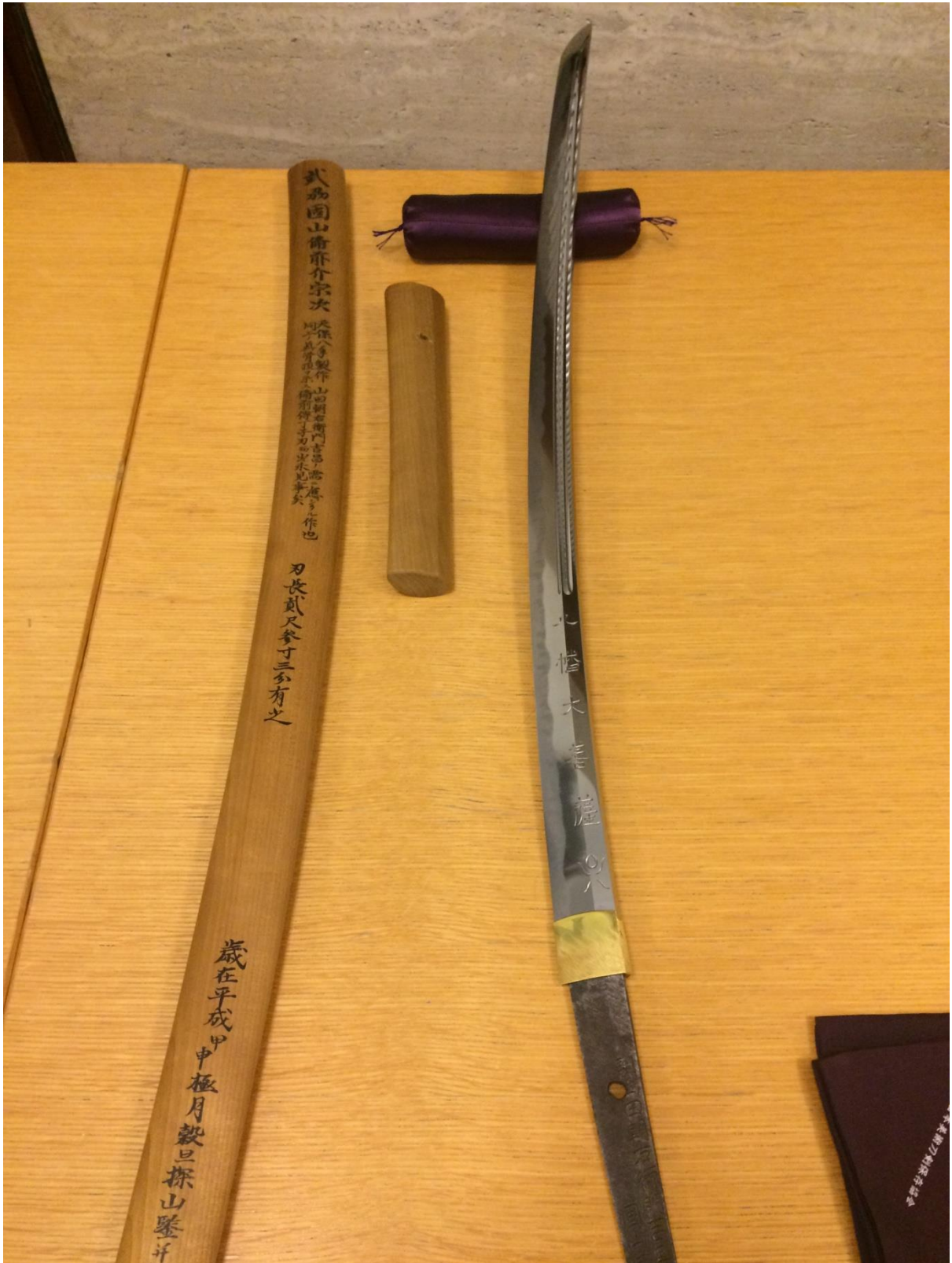
One of the most famous of all Shinshinto sword smiths, Koyama Munetsugu, is said to have been a student of Chounsai Tsunatoshi. Other scholars deem Munetsugu to be a contemporary of Tsunatoshi and a student of his older brother Tsunahide. The closeness of their working styles shows that they were related in some way. Munetsugu was born in 1802 in Shirakawa province, Oshu Prefecture, and was also known as Issensai or Seiryosai. He was the younger brother of the swordsmiths Koyama Munehira and Koyama Munetoshi. Munetsugu went to Edo and worked as a retained swordsmith of Lord Matsudaira of the Kuwana family. Munetsugu is considered to be the master of the Bizen Den Ichimonji style of choji midare during the early part of the Shinshinto period. Munetsugu died in 1872 at the age of 70 and is rated at least as highly as the other important smiths of the Shinshinto era such as Masahide, Naotane, Unjusai Korekazu, and Chounsai Tsunatoshi, especially in the area of Bizen den works.

Clive showcased:

- A lovely Tsunatoshi wakizashi dated 1842 with very tight hada and choji midare hamon, komaru boshi and matching koshirae
- A long Munetsugu katana dated 1837, characterised by predominantly choji hamon (unusual as Munetsugu's hamon is mostly gunome choji) and hachiman bosatsu horimono, also bearing an Yamada tester inscription (Munetsugu worked closely with them)
- A Munetsugu tanto with the more typical gunome choji hamon and signed Bizen no Suke Munetsugu, forged later than the aforementioned katana as he received that title in 1845
- A rare Munetsugu jumonji yari dated 1859 with beautiful calligraphy on the nakago

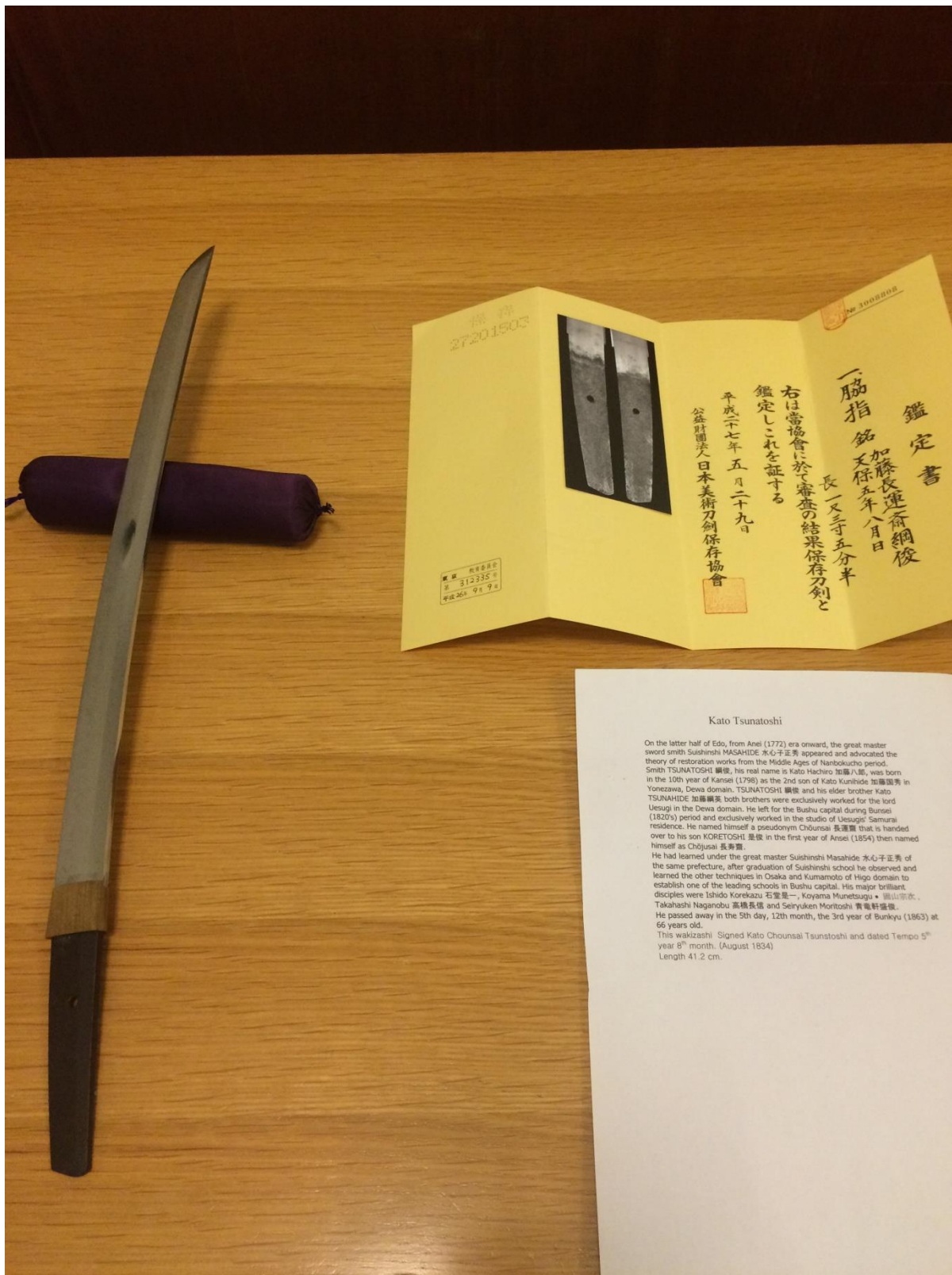
Finally, David talked about his shinogi zukuri Tsunatoshi wakizashi dated 1834 and housed in elegant koshirae. Again, it exhibited the characteristic tight jihada and choji midare hamon.











Kato Tsunatoshi

On the latter half of Edo, from Ansei (1772) era onward, the great master sword smith Sushinshi MASAHIDE 水心子正英 appeared and advocated the theory of restoration works from the Middle Ages of Nanbokucho period. Smith TSUNATOSHI 綱俊, his real name is Kato Hachiro 加藤八郎, was born in the 10th year of Kansei (1796) as the 2nd son of Kato Kunihide 加藤國秀 in Yonezawa, Dewa domain. TSUNATOSHI 綱俊 and his elder brother Kato TSUNAHIDE 加藤綱英 both brothers were exclusively worked for the lord Uesugi in the Dewa domain. He left for the Bushu capital during Bunsei (1820's) period and exclusively worked in the studio of Uesugi's Samurai residence. He named himself a pseudonym Chousai 長善齋 that is handed over to his son KORETOSHI 是俊 in the first year of Ansei (1854) then named himself as Chijusai 長壽齋.

He had learned under the great master Sushinshi Masahide 水心子正英 of the same prefecture, after graduation of Sushinshi school he observed and learned the other techniques in Osaka and Kumamoto of Higo domain to establish one of the leading schools in Bushu capital. His major brilliant disciples were Ishido Korekazu 石堂一孝, Koyama Munetsugu 小山宗次, Takahashi Nagasabu 高橋長左衛門 and Seiryken Montoshi 青龍軒盛俊.

He passed away in the 5th day, 12th month, the 3rd year of Bunkyo (1863) at 66 years old.

This wakizashi Signed Kato Chounsai Tsunatoshi and dated Tempo 5th year 8th month. (August 1834)

Length 41.2 cm.