

Hyogushi

(Scroll mounting)

Munechika Inazaki

The word *Daikyoji* (Great Sutra Master) is displayed at the front of the store. The history and pride it expresses is passed from generation to generation.



Profile ● Born in 1937. Fifth-generation owner of Kyoshindo Inazaki Hyoguten. Certified as a Traditional Craftspeople of Tokyo, 1997.

2-48-7 Nihonbashi-Hamacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

Delicate technique, heavy labor, and the right mindset

A large sign reading *Daikyoji* hangs in front of Kyoshindo Inazaki Hyoguten. "This is a special name given only to the most highly skilled of mounters," says fifth-generation owner Munechika Inazaki. "In the early 1800s, commoners were not allowed to have surnames, but our family was permitted a surname and swords and was even allowed to enter Edo Castle."

The shop was founded in 1837 in what is now Nihonbashi 2-chome, Chuo-ku. A ranked list of mounters from 1884 is displayed inside: Inazaki Shinpachi appears at the top with the *Ozeki* rank. The name was passed down through the fourth generation.

The shop burned down twice, in major disasters: the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and the Great Tokyo Air Raid of 1945. Munechika, who was eight years old in 1945, fled the burning city

with his mother, who carried his grandmother and younger brother on her back.

After the war, the shop moved to its current location in Nihonbashi Hamacho. Munechika joined the family business after high school. "It used to be the norm for eldest sons to take over the business. I accompanied my father to work from a young age, so it came naturally to me. But this job isn't as simple as adding two plus two. I learned little by little by watching the hands of the craftsmen who were my seniors."

Long ago, he would attach a rack to the side of his bicycle and ride up and down the hills of Shibuya to mansions along the Tama River. The round trip took an entire day. A mounter's work is hard, requiring not only skilled deftness, but also physical strength.

There were more tradi-

tional Japanese homes then, with sliding paper doors and *shoji*. "Work was very busy. In December, our season for 'spring cleaning,' we had practically no time to sleep. The entire commercial district was that way. I'd go to the public bath around midnight, and the tub was so covered in grime, I couldn't see the water," he laughs.

Once, he made sliding doors for an exclusive restaurant. He used the colors the customer wanted, but when he delivered them, the owner said, "It just isn't quite right..." He had to redo them twelve times! And in the end, the owner chose the one he'd done first time around. "He said to me, 'Actually, the first color was the best, but I wanted to teach you to pay the utmost attention to even the smallest of jobs, so I made you redo it multiple times. I'll pay you for all 12 rounds of work.'" Munechika remembers it



"I want to keep our spirit of dedication, so that our customers are pleased with the work we produce, and we can share in the fullness of their joy," says Munechika.

nostalgically. "In the old days, customers were part of our training, like that."

He now entrusts the work to his two sons, who also train other craftsmen. We asked if Munechika had a message for younger people, and he smiled gently as he replied: "No matter how much times change, live your life with sincerity. The accrual of that is important."



A ranked list of mounting shops, created in 1884. Inazaki Shinpachi appears in the top rank.

Diligence is the key to success

Munechika is an avid lover of *shigin* (poetry recitation) and calligraphy. The calligraphy shown here is work he submitted to an exhibition. He personally completed its mounting.

