

**NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL**  
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**Meito Kanshou**  
**Appreciation of Important Swords**

Classification: Tokubetsu Juyo Token

Type: Katana

Mumei: Den Masamune

With accompanying origami: Tenmei 5 nen ,daikinshi 500 mai by Honnami Mitsuhsa. Honami Ringa found records of this origami in the Honami family record book and wrote the origami in Meiji 45 based on the family records.

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu (71.5 cm)

Sori: slightly over 7 bu 9 rin (2.4 cm)

Motohaba: slightly over 9 bu 4 rin (2.86 cm)

Sakihaba: slightly over 6 bu 2 rin (1.89 cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 2 bu 2 rin (0.68 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly over 1 bu 4 rin (0.43 cm)

Kissaki length: slightly over 9 bu 9 rin (3.01 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 2 bu 6 rin (22.0 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

**Commentary:**

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a somewhat large kasane (i.e. the blade is slightly thicker than usual), a large sori, and a long chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame, and in some places there are o-itame and nagare hada. There are dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, the entire hada is visible, and there is bo-utsuri. The hamon is ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome and ko-midare and overall, the hamon is a midare hamon. There are nie around the nioiguchi, kinsuji and sunagashi, bright nie, and a clear nioiguchi. The boshi on the omote and ura are straight and yakizume. The tip has a little hakikake. The nakago is osuriage, the nakago tip is saki-kiri, the yasurime are kiri, and there are three mekugi ana of which one is closed. The blade is mumei.

In Sagami no kuni, the Soshu den was established by Shintogo Kunimitsu. The school produced many master smith students such as Yukimitsu, Norishige, and Masamune. Their works are based on Kunimitsu's, and additional new

developements established their tradition. Notably, Masamune used different carbon levels in his steel, controlled his soft and hard steels very well, and established a delicate nie style. Some of Masamune's styles are like Ko-Hoki and KoBizen styles, the same as Norishige. Other styles are based on a midare hamon, and there are frequent nie, nie kuzure, nie forming tight groups, and frequent kinsuji. The jihada has prominent chikei, the nie become yubashiri, and Masamune established and varied his original styles. Masamune's tachi and katana shapes are either with a standard mihaba, with a chu-kissaki, or with a wider mihaba with a longer chu-kissaki. At the end of the Edo period, the book "Koto mei zukushi daizen" listed Masamune as having passed away on Koei 2 nen (1345) at the age of 81. This is not a reliable fact, but he supposed to have been active from the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nambokucho period. This katana has a gentle look, the jihada has chikei, and there is a bright and clear hamon, and from these characteristics, the Honami family's 16th generation Mitsuhiisa (who passed away on Kansei 1, June) published an origami around Anei 3 (1774) to Kansei 1 (1789) which stated that this was Masamune's work. Later, Honami Nariyoshi (his childhood name was Yamamoto Saburo and he later used the name Ringa) wrote the Tomecho Utsushi. The tomecho listed all of the swords which the Honami family had examined from around the Keicho (1596) to Ansei eras (1854). After the Meiji era, this was sold, and around Meiji 28, Nariyoshi obtained it. At people's request, he judged whether or not Honami certificates were real or fake, by comparing items with items in the old Tomecho, and later he published the Tomecho Utsushi. Unfortunately, the Tomecho was lost during the great Kanto earthquake and fire.

(Explanation and oshigata by Hiyama Masanori)

## **Meitan kansho**

### **Appreciation of fine tsuba & kodogu**

#### **Juyo tosogu**

#### **Moko (wild tiger) zu fuchi-kashira**

#### **Mei: Yanagawa Naomasa (kao)**

This is Yokoya Somin's senior student Yanagawa Naomasa's moko design fuchi-kashira. Naomasa was born on Genroku 5, in Edo, and he is supposed to have studied under Yoshioka Inbanosuke, and later he studied with his father Masatusgu's school Yokoya Somin, and he was very successful. Later his school produced many great smiths, such as Inagawa, Sano, Ishiguro, Kikuoka, Touyama, Washida, Kono, Tanobe. The Yokoya school's was very prosperous, and this depended greatly on Naomasa. Among the Somin school, Naomasa followed his teacher's style more closely than anybody. He worked with a shakudo

nanako base, and with elegant and sound Yokoya takabori iroe carving, and sometimes he worked with katakiri bori. Notably, he used Somin's favorite subject of Shishi made with takaniku bori and this style reminds us of Somin, and has a dignified look. Kano Natsuo praised Naomasa work: "his technique is excellent, he is Somin's senior student, and already he must be one of the master smiths(a portion of the sentence os missing after this point)". His chisel work is clear, beautiful, and dynamic, and his nanako work is very refined. This base is a neat clean nanako, the takaniku-bori tiger's nikuoki is rich and has volume. The chisel mark are precise and very sharp, and the virile tiger with his sharp eyes is very dynamic. The horimono has an up and down variation in volume, but compared with Somin's shishi, the entire horimono or carving is round and has a gentle look, and this is a characteristic of Naomasa's.

(Explanation by Iida Toshihisa )

## Shijo Kantei To No. 667

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 667 issue Shijo Kantei To is September 5, 2012. Each person may submit one vote. Submissions should contain your name and address and be sent to the NBTHK Shijo Kantei. You can use the Shijo Kantei card which is attached in this magazine. Votes postmarked on or before September 5, 2012 will be accepted. If there are swordsmiths with the same name in different schools, please write the school or prefecture, and if the swordsmith was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

### Information:

Type: wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 4. 5 bu (31. 66 cm)

Sori: 1 bu 0.3 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 1 rin (2. 45 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 6 bu (10. 91 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a hirazukuri wakizashi with an ihorimune, a wide mihaba, sunnobi size, a shallow sori, a large kasane, and the fukura is poor. The jihada is itame, the hada is visible, in some places nagare-hada becomes a masame hada, and there are

dense ji-nie, and frequent chikei; the jihada is clear. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The entire hamon has long ashi, a wide nioiguchi, thick nie, and some places have strong light bright nie, there is a bright and clear nioiguchi, and there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are sujichigai, and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a three kanji signature located under the mekugi ana towards the mune side. On the ura side, the upper part has an owner's name.

## Teirei Kanshou Kai For July

The swords discussed below were shown in the July, 2012 meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades. This meeting was held on July 14<sup>th</sup> (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month) at the Token Hakubutsukan auditorium. The lecture was presented by Ooi Gaku.

During these meetings, five swords are displayed for examination. The blades can be examined, but the nakago are covered and cannot be seen (they are left in the shira-saya tsuka). After examining the 5 swords, the meeting attendees must decide who they think made the 5 swords which were available for examination, and submit a paper ballot with these names. The 5 swords seen in the October meeting are described below, and the correct names of the makers are presented, along with an explanation of important details which should lead a person to pick the correct swordsmith's name.

### **Kantei To No. 1: tachi**

Mei: Yoshifusa

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada; the hada is visible: there are ji-nie, fine chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: choji midare hamon mixed with ochoji, ko-gunome, and togari; there are up and down variations in the hamon; some parts have fukuro-choji; there are frequent ashi, a soft nioiguchi, nioi-deki, and fine kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi, there are hakikake, and the tip is a sharp type of komaru.

Horimono: on the omote side, there is a bo-hi through the nakago, and on the ura side, a bo-hi to the nakago.

This blade has a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a large kasane, generous hiraniku, and a lot of ha-niku which is called Hamaguri-ba. Because it is a little suriage, there is a funbari at the koshimoto, sori at the middle of the tachi, and an inokubi style kissaki, and this is a typical mid Kamakura era tachi shape. The hamon is varied with up and down changes, there is a beautiful nioi- deki choji midare hamon, and there are clear utsuri, and from these characteristics, most people did not miss the Fukuoka-Ichimonji school answer. Beside the fine work, Yoshifusa's important characteristic fukuro-choji (the top of choji in the hamon have a bulbous shape) show clearly, and many people voted for Yoshifusa. Among the Ichimonji school smiths, people voted for Sukezane, and Norifusa. If this were Sukezane's work, there would be a wider nioiguchi and strong nie, and prominent chikei; also compared to Yoshifusa's elegance, many of his swords are more dynamic. If this were Norifusa's work, his jihada is tight and refined, and the jihada and hamon are both bright and clear; in addition, his midare hamon are a saka-ashi type, and because of the clusters of his choji are smaller, many of his ashi and yo are more prominent. Besides the Ichimonji school, people voted for Hatakeyama Moriie, and early Osafune school smiths such as Osafune Mitsutada, Kagehide, and Nagamitsu. If this were by Moriie and Mitsutada, the kawazuko-choji would be more prominent. Kagehide is famous for his meibutsu "Kuronbo giri", and this is similar to Ichimonji work, and from this observation, the answer is well thought out. But his hamon contain more prominent togariba, and there are ko-nie, and prominent sunagashi, which is different from this tachi. Usually even Kagehide's beautiful midare hamon are similar to early Nagamitsu work, and his gunome stand out and there is not much up and down alterations in the hamon. Also, his midare hamon contain choji and gunome which are close to each other.

## **Kantei To No. 2: wakizashi**

Mei: Suishinshi Masahide

Kansei gannen(1) 2 gatsu hi

Length: 1 shaku 8 sun

Sori: slightly over 3 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame which becomes a muji-hada; there are fine and dense ji-nie, and a bright jihada.

Hamon: straight yakidashi at the moto, and above this, a toran style ogunome midare hamon; there are thick ashi, yo, a wide nioiguchi, dense nie, and in places there are strong nie over the jihada, which become black nie; there is a little bit of mune-yaki and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, and the omote has an omaru, and ura has a maru; both tips have a little hakikake and long return.

This wakizashi has a shallow sori, and for the mihaba, the width at the shinogi-ji is a little narrow; there is not much hiraniku, a long kissaki, and the jihada is muji-hada. These characteristics, and also the toranba style midare hamon are strong points for Shinshinto smiths such as Suishinshi Masahide, Ozaki Suketaka, and Ichige Tokurin, and many people voted for them. An important point for this wakizashi is that this is not exactly a toranba-midare hamon. The waves are not sloped, but consist of large and small gunome, and this resembles a toranba style midare hamon: This hamon is composed of prominent round top ogunome, and is an ogunome midare hamon. Actually, in the Shinshinto period there are many toranba midare hamon like this, but many of Suketaka's works are wave shaped hamon, the same as Sukehiro, and his yakidashi have a wider angle going towards the tip which is an Osaka yakidashi. He tried to make exact copies of Toranba-midare hamon and his styles are different from this wakizashi. People voted for Tokurin, and they looked at this as an ogunome midare hamon, and with an Edo yakidashi, in which the moto and saki of the yakidashi are almost the same width, and the ogunome hamon have a continuous rhythm. But his gunome form groups of one, two, and three, and this is different ( Masahide has all kinds of continuous gunome hamon, but in his hamon, it is difficult to detect an exact rhythmic pattern). Many of Tokurin's nioiguchi are wide with even nie and ko-nie, the same as his teacher Suketaka's, and different from this one. This blade has strong ha-nie, and on the jihada, in places, there are round nie which is one of Masahide's characteristics.

### **Kantei To No 3: tachi**

Mei: Yamato Shikake-ju Norinaga

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Design: shobu-zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada becoming a strong nagarehada; some parts are mixed with mokume hada; the hada is somewhat visible; there are frequent fine chikei, and a little bo-utsuri on the mune side.

Hamon: continuous ko-gunome midare hamon; in the middle a suguha hamon appears; half way down, there are some with square gunome; there are frequent ashi, yo, a somewhat wide nioiguchi, and nie which become somewhat uneven; some places have yubashiri; there is a pale muneyaki; there is hotsure, sunagashi and a bright nioguchi.

Boshi: small midare hamon with a komaru and short return; the tip has hakikake.

This tachi has a standard mihaba and, and the widths at the moto and saki are well balanced. There is a slightly deep koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. Since there is no funbari at the koshimoto, you can imagine that this is suriage, and originally this was a longer tachi. This suggests that this is a tachi from the end of the Kamakura period. Also, there is a wide shinogi for the mihaba, and a high shinogi ji, and these are Yamato characteristics. The jihada is a strong itame hada which becomes nagare hada, the hada is somewhat visible, and there are nie utsuri. The hamon has yubashiri, hotsure, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi, and the boshi has hakikake and a short return. The Yamato style characteristics show in both the jihada and hamon. Among the Yamato smiths, a midare hamon mixed with continuous ko-gunome is Shikake Norinaga. Also, when Norinaga is compared with other Yamato smiths, his nie are a little gentle, and this characteristic is visible in this tachi. This is an interesting tachi: usually the hamon are based on suguha and some parts are mixed with ko-gunome. However, this tachi hamon is entirely ko-gunome except for part of the center. There are some similar blades available from Norinaga and other Yamato smiths which show the traditional suguha hamon at this time, but you can imagine at the end of the Kamakura period, Norinaga aggressively tried to use the popular Osafune smiths' hamon style of continuous ko-gunome. Many people made a point about the continuous ko-gunome hamon, and voted for the Yoshii school. But their utsuri are the reverse of gunome midare, and are a unique utsuri; also their jihada are not as strong as Yamato's, their ji-nie are weak, the itame jihada are soft and sometimes mixed with ayasugi hada along with utsuri. So besides hamon, there are many differences between the schools.

#### **Kantei To No 4:tanto**

Mei: Kunimitsu (Shintogo)

Length: slightly over 8 sun 2 bu

Sori: very slight

Design: hira zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; close to the hamon it is mixed with an ayasugi type hada; there is a tight jihada but the hada is visible; there are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, narrow bo-utsuri, and around the monouchi there are nijuba. Hamon: narrow suguha; there is a slightly tight nioiguchi, frequent ko-nie, and at the koshimoto, there are small kinsuji and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with komaru; the tips have fine hakikake, and on the omote there are small kinsuji.

Shintogo Kunimitsu's was active during the latter half of the Kamakura period, and because of this, most of his tanto shapes have standard lengths and widths with

uchizori, although this tanto has a little sori. This is unusual for a tanto from this period, but we have seen little of works from Awataguchi Kuniyoshi, Awataguchi Yoshimitsu, Rai Kunitoshi, Soshu Mitsuyuki and Shintogo Kunihiro, and this is a good example to show that there is a tanto with sori from this era. Actually, in Kamakura times, there are many slightly uchizori tanto, but there are also tanto without sori. Viewing this from a polisher's perspective, there are opinions about this: when a polisher must polish tip which was broken or damaged, and which had either musori or very little sori, they will try save or preserve the hamon as much as possible by polishing from the mune side, so the shape of a tanto could become uchizori, and we should pay attention and consider this opinion. Other important characteristics of this tanto are: there are narrow bo-utsuri near the mune, and around the monouchi the hamon becomes nijuba, and there are fine hataraki along the hamon. The historical book "Kokin Mei zukushi" says "The utsuri are just like spiders webs", and the hataraki has been recognized since early times. A good example is a tanto owned by the Tsuchiura City Museum. Looking at the entire tanto, the jihada is mixed with abundant chikei, the clear itame hada is mixed little bit with some ayasugi hada, and jihada is clearly visible. The bright nioiguchi, the narrow suguha with frequent ko-nie and kinsuji, and the boshi with a komaru and return has a little kinsuji, and these show enough of Shintogo Kunimitsu's character. Many people voted for Awataguchi smiths, but if it were Kuniyoshi's work, his jihada are a tight ko-itame and there is a nashiji hada; if it were Yoshimitsu's work, his hamon are mixed with ko-gunome near the koshimoto, and in the monouchi area, the hamon becomes narrower. We need to recognize these types of characteristics in the Awataguchi tanto.

### **Kantei To No. 5: tanto**

Mei: Kiyondo

Man-en gan (1) nen, 8 gatsu hi

Length: 8 sun 9 bu

Sori: 1 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri (osoraku zukuri)

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame, and inside of the hamon it is mixed with masame hada; there are dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and the jihada is bright.

Hamon: midare hamon with gunome, choji, and ogunome; there are thick and long ashi, a wide nioiguchi, thick strong nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi, frequent hakikake, yubashiri, and the tip have some hakikake and are round with a long return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi and soe-hi carved through the nakago.



A shinogi zukuri blade on which the kissaki covers half or more of the length is called "osoraku zukuri". We have Shimada Sukemune's metezashi tanto (worn on the right side) which are osoraku zukuri, and on these tanto, there is a carved (horimono) "Osoraku" character, and the name comes from this. In spite of the fame of the style, osoraku style tanto are not readily available, so they sell for a premium. Even Sukemune, the founder of this style did not leave many examples of this type of work. During the Shinto period, Kotetsu seems to have tried working with the osoraku zukuri style, and he has left us large o-kissaki wakizashi. Because there was not much demand for tanto, we have not seen perfect copies of osoraku tanto. Later, during the Shinshinto period, we have seen some, and this was the Kiyomaro school's speciality, and they left good examples. Among the Kiyomaro school smiths, Kiyondo made more osoraku than anyone else. Compared with Kiyomaro's work, his yokote are wide, there is a narrower shinogi, a higher shinogi, a thinner kasane, the fukura are not as poor, the sori are not strong, and his shapes are considered to be the best in the school. This blade has a good shape and shows Kiyondo's character, but the hamon is not his usual style which is based on regular round top gunome. There is a tight nioiguchi like Kiyomaro's later work which have a more gentle look. The hamon appear as in Kiyomaro's peak work; there is a dynamic midare hamon with nie, so many people voted for Kiyomaro. When this work is compared with Kiyomaro's, there are more sunagashi but the hamon is not as clear. Also, as another example, Nobuhide and his younger brother Moritoshi made osoraku zukuri tanto, and many of them contain a horimono with the "osoraku" character.

## **Shijo Kantei To No 665 (in the June, 2012 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 665 in the June issue is a wakizashi by Gassan Chikanori dated Eisho 9.

The length is 1 shaku 2 sun 2.5 bu, and today this is classified as a wakizashi. This is a length of less than 2 shaku and is a short blade, with a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The upper half has sori, and from this, it is possible to judge this as a shape seen often around the date on the ura side date (around the Tensho period) for a katate-uchi or short uchigatana. Also from the marumune, it is easy to judge this as a "country" (non-mainstream) blade. Gassan Chikanori is known as a highly skilled smith among the Gassan smiths in the Muromachi era. His jihada are often a tight ko-itame and the hamon contains double gunome with ko-nie, and both the jihada and hamon are bright, which reminds us of better Sue Bizen blade's. This is an original Gassan school traditional work. In Muromachi time, many of Gassan jihada are Gassan's traditional ayasugi hada, and the hint mentions this. In this case, some of the

ayasugi hada contains or includes a high wave, but in other examples, the ayasugi hada is visible in places, just like on this wakizashi. In either case, the jihada are visible and there is a dark colored iron with whitish utsuri, which is a characteristic Oshu style. The Gassan hamon are usually based on suguha like this example, and often appear to be country work, with narrow hamon for the mihaba. The Gassan suguha has ko-nie, and nie mixed with ayasugi hada, and forms a ko-notare shape. Often some ha-hada is visible, and the entire hamon is soft and has a worn nioiguchi. However, this work contains a tight nioiguchi with ko-nie, the habuchi has nijuba, yubashiri, and the nioiguchi is bright, so it is a relatively sophisticated work for the school, and the hints suggest this. In the case of suguha, many Gassan boshi seem to be straight, with a komaru and return. The Gassan nakago are mainly kiri-jiri, and the yasurime are kattesagari. The signatures on many are a two kanji "Gassan", and some of them are three kanji with "Gassan saku" or with an individual name with a long signature such as "Ushu junin Gassan Cikanori" like this example, or "Gassan Masanobu saku", or "Gassan Toshiyasu saku" and often they have a date. Most people voted for Gassan Chikanori. Some people wrote a Muromachi period Gassan smith's name such as Munetsugu, and some people just wrote the "Gassan" school name. Usually, the Gassan school's smiths worked in very similar styles, and it is difficult to judge individual smiths names. Thus, if you said this was a Muromachi period Gassan work, the answer would be fine. Many people voted for Muromachi period Naminohira school work. Conventionally, at the NBTHK Shijo Kanteito, for a Gassan work, the Naminohira name is treated as an almost correct answer. In the lecture, for the typical ayasugi hada work, one should think about Gassan first. But this ayasugi hada is not typical with its overall pattern, and has some parts with itame hada, and often this type of jihada is seen in Naminohira work. Also, Naminohira yasurime are not only higaki, but sometimes kattesagari, and from these details, a Muromachi period Naminohira answer is treated as an almost correct answer. We have often seen Naminohira smiths make ayasugi hada which is similar to Gassan work. Many people believe there is a reason for this: the Gassan smiths used to live at the foot of Mt. Gassan one of Dewa's three great mountains, and they traveled all over Japan, including the Satsuma area and exchanged information with Naminohira smiths. However, we have little historical information or material to verify this, and there should be future research on this in the future.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.

