

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

Classification: Juyo Bijutsuhin  
Type: Tachi  
Mei: Koryaku Gannen(1) 8 gatsu hi Kaneyoshi

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 9 bu 1 rin (66.4 cm)  
Sori: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)  
Motohaba: 8 bu 4 rin (2.55 cm)  
Sakihaba: 5 bu 6 rin (1.7 cm)  
Motokasane: 1 bu 8 rin (0.55 cm)  
Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)  
Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)  
Nakago length: 6 sun 2 bu (19.1 cm)  
Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

**Commentary:**

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly narrow mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a standard kasane, koshizori, and a long chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and there are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and pale utsuri. The hamon is mainly ko-gunome mixed with togariba and is ko-notare. There are ashi, a wide nioiguchi, very fine thick ji-nie, a little bit of kinsuji and sunagshi, and around the monouchi there are muneyaki. The boshi on the omote is straight and the tip is sharp; the ura is a slight midarekomi with a sharp komaru. Both sides have a return which connects with the muneyaki around the monouchi. The nakago is suriage, the nakago tip is a very shallow kuri-jiri, the yasurimeai are not clear, and there are two mekugi ana. Above the second one (the original ana) the mune side has a kakioroshi mei (the date and name together with the name last) long signature.

The Yamato Teigai school founder Kanenaga worked at the end of the Kamakura period around the Shoo era (1288-93), but there are some opinions that he worked at a possible earlier time. All the school's smiths use the "kane" kanji, and this school was prosperous until the Muromachi period. Kaneyoshi was one of

these, and according to the sword book “Meikan”, there were 7 smiths listed from around Karyoku (1326-29) to Eiroku (1558-70) who used the “kane” kanji. In the “Kozan Oshigata” a tanto is listed with the same date as this tachi. There is an opinion that this Kaneyoshi moved to Seki in Mino, and changed his name to Kaneyoshi using a different kanji, and he started the Yoshisada school. In addition, he was the same person as Yoshisada Kaneyoshi. However, there is very little historical data or information and currently we cannot be certain of that. The “Kaneyoshi” mei on the Juyo token sword is seen on one tanto and two hirazukuri wakizashi (these blades also have midare hamon), and is also seen in Muromachi period Sue-Teigai blades. But this blade is dated during the late Nanbokucho period on Koryaku 1 (1379), and the hamon is notable: it is obviously different from the school’s usual suguha hamon. Their hamon can contain ko-gunome, togariba, and are ko-notare, which reminds us of Seki Mino hamon. Because of this hamon, different opinions are expressed. There are other smiths whose hamon are not primarily suguha. There are Juyo Token classified blades dated Enbun or Joji and signed “Kaneuji” (using the same kanji as the famous Kaneuji) consist of tanto and wakizashi (he used Shizu Saburo Kaneuji’s early mei and kanji for “Kaneuji”, and he didn’t follow others in moving to Mino and remained in Yamato). Kanetomo’s hamon are mainly ko-gunome, ko-notare, and gunome. Also, in early Muromachi times, signed Kanemune katana are mainly ko-gunome and similar to this tachi. From these examples, it is possible, that from Nambokucho times, some of the Teigai school smiths started making midare hamon, and later Sue Teigai smiths succeeded in using this style. This blade has a thick nakago kasane, (judging from this, originally, the upper part of the blade was very thick). The “kakirososhi mei” style of signature is where the date is written first, and the signature follows, and this is a characteristic Yamato style. Smiths in other areas, such as Rai Kunitoshi, Unrui, and Aoe, usually write their signature above the date. Also, the nakago mune is noticeably round, which shows the Teigai school’s character. There are very few works from this school in this era, and from its date and style, this tachi is an important example.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishi Akira )

## **Meitan kansho**

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

#### **Juyo tosogu**

Ashi (reed) with shirasagi (egret) zu fuchi and kashira

A fuchi-kashira with a picture of reeds and egrets

**Mei: Shunsho-do Konkan (kao)**

After the Genroku era, the toso kinko world was very prosperous with the activity of the founder of machibori, Yokoya Somin, and his school's smiths along with the Nara school smiths such as Yasuchika, Toshikazu and Joi. Iwamoto Konkan was born in Edo in Enryo 1 (1744) when machibori smith works were at their peak, and his active period was around Anei to Kansei. At the same time, there were other famous smiths working, such as Oomori Teruhide and Kikuoka Mitsuyuki. Konkan's original family name was Asai, and his early name was Ryoden, and later he changed his name to Konkan. The Iwamoto family's shodai (founding generation) Chubei is supposed to have been a Yokoya school smith, and Konkan was a student of the fourth generation Ryokan. The fifth generation Ryokan passed away at an early age, and the young student Konkan led the school as the sixth generation. Konkan came from the Yokoya school, but his early work, and at the same time his masterpiece, the "Uka moko zu tsuba" (design of a wild tiger under the rain) was done in Meiwa 7 (1770) when he was 27 years old, and is obviously modeled from Nara school Yasuchika work. Konkan studied mainly Yasuchika's Nara school carving techniques, and he studied a good part of the Yokoya and Nara schools' work, and this affected his work. He established a sophisticated Edo sensibility with his original style. Most of Konkan's works were fuchi-kashira and this is one of them. This fuchi-kashira uses shibuichi chirimen-ishimeji surface, with takabori-iroe, and design is based on ashi (reeds) and shirasagi (egrets). There are two shirasagi (egrets), one is standing by the water, and the other is opening its wings, ready to fly. There is a contrast of quietness and movement, and the color of the metal is perfect. Judging from this work, Konkan was a first class artist who used realistic images.

(Explanation by Iida Toshihisa )

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 669**

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 669 issue Shijo Kantei To is November 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 November 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: tanto

Length: slightly less 7 sun 1 bu (21.4 cm)

Sori: uchizori

Motohaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 2 sun 7 bu (8.2 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

This is a hira zukuri tanto with a mitsumune, and both the mihaba and kasane are standard. It is uchizori, the mitsumune center surface is wide, and this has a small size sophisticated tanto shape. The jihada is tight ko-itame, there are thick dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and nie utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are strong bright nie in the entire hamon, the nioiguchi is bright and clear, and there are frequent kinsuji and sunagshi. The omote side horimono is a koshi-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is almost ubu, (the tip is a little bit suriage) and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are kattesagari, and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a two kanji signature located under the mekugi ana along the center. On the ura side there is a date. On the omote side, in the mei, the top kanji is distinctive, and the top radical in the next kanji is also distinctive.

## **Teirei Kanshou Kai For September**

The swords discussed below were shown in the September, 2012 meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Date: September 8th (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of September)

Location: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Hiyama Masanori

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: katana

Mei: Hizen kuni junin Minamoto Tadayoshi

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 7 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada, some parts are mixed with ko-mokume; the entire fine hada is visible; there are ji-nie, chikei; under the machi there is an angled pale mizukage.

Hamon: suguha type hamon with shallow notare; there are ko-ashi, yo, and in places, some sunagashi and kinsuji; around the monouchi the yakiba is wider; there is wide dense nioiguchi, and some places have kuichigaiba and ko-nie.

Boshi: straight omaru style, wide yakiba, and very shallow return.

This blade has a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a long chu-kissaki and a thick kasane, from this shape, you can judge this as a copy of Nambokucho era work from around Enbun and Joji. This is an osuriage shape, and either a Keicho-Shinto or Shinshinto katana. But the thickness is not prominent, and the jihada is not muji type, and from these characteristics, you can think of this as a Keicho Shinto work. The Shodai Tadayoshi's name was Hashimoto Shinzaemon, and in Keicho 1, he went to study with Umetada Myoju along with the horimono carver Munenaga. Tadayoshi studied sword making, and Munenaga studied horimono, and they returned their province and their school became very prosperous. In the Shodai Tadayoshi's time (Keicho to Genna) his work had a wide mihaba, and were utsushimono or copies of older swords such as Yamato Den, Yamashiro Rai school suguha work, Shizu Naoe, Bizen smiths such as Chogi, and smiths such as Sadamune, Hiromitsu, Akihiro, and Muramasa. On this sword's hamon around the monouchi area, the yakiba is a little wide, there is a suguha style with notare, the nioiguchi is not a belt type, it is a little bit narrow, and there is a wide variance in the width of the nioiguchi, and the valleys in the notare hamon have nie. This kind of work is seen often in the 5 kanji Tadayoshi's time. Usually, the Shodai Tadayoshi's jihada are itame, and do not become ko-itame, the hada is visible, and sometimes the hada is rough, which produces a feeling of an older blade. However, this sword has "junin" and the "Minamoto" last name, and in the "tada" kanji, in the bottom part, one stroke is toward the outside, and from these details, this supposed to be Genna 5 to 6 work, and looks like it was copied from old Go work, and still has an old classic feeling. After he received Musashi daijo title (Genna 10, Feb. 18), his jihada became a refined komenuka type. Among Hizen's first three generations, the hamon ashi, and yo stand out, the width of the hamon are variable, i.e. wide and narrow, and there are strong nie and and the swords are dynamic. This kind of blade should be

Shodai work. On some of them, mizukage often appears in the machi area, and some are continuous and become utsuri. After the Nidai Omi daijo, the jihada become more refined and elegant, and branch school smiths often had darker ji and visible jihada.

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

Mei: Kanesaki

Length: 7 sun 3 bu

Sori: uchizori

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, mixed with nagare hada, there are dense ji-nie, and whitish utsuri.

Hamon: narrow suguha, there is a strong nioiguchi, frequent ko-nie, and a tight nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with falling shape, a komaru and a slightly deep return.

This is a narrow tanto, with a standard kasane, an uchizori shape, and with a with suguha hamon. From these details, the first impression that it is from the end of Kamakura era, and is Yamashiro Rai school work. But looking carefully, the habuchi nie are not strong as Rai, the entire jihada is whitish, the boshi return is wide and falling, the kaeri is close to the mune and stops abruptly, the uchizori is too strong toward the tip, the fukura is poor, and from the bottom, the kasane suddenly becomes thin and remains this way to the tip. This kind of tanto shape is seen from many Sue Seki smiths. This is a Kanesaki tanto, and it is hard to find individual characteristics. Also, Seki smith work at the end of the Muromachi period does not have much character and it is difficult to judge this as Kanesaki's work. From this viewpoint, it is fine to look at this as just Sue Seki work. Among the Sue-Seki smiths, the best smith for "Rai utushi" (a copy of Rai work) is Nosada (Kanesada), and because this tanto is well made, it is very understandable that many people voted for him. Rai Kunitoshi and early Rai Kunimitsu works are good models for Sue-Seki smiths. As I explained before, this reminds us of Rai school work. In their work the mihaba, kasane and length are well balanced, there is a common or standard uchizori in tanto, the hamon have more ko-nie, the jihada have clear bo-utsuri (called Rai utsuri). Few people voted for the Soshu smith, Shintogo Kunimitsu. If this were his work, there would be a refined jihada with dense ji-nie and frequent chikei, and the hamon would have prominent kinsuji.

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

Mei: mumei den Norishige

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 1 bu

Sori: slightly over 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and some places have oitame; the entire jihada is tight, there are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and a dark color.

Hamon: suguha type mixed with gunome, ko-choji midare and ko-midare; the bottom half around the koshimoto shows a ko-choji type hamon with a variable width; there are ashi, yo, a slightly wide nioiguchi, dense nie, and some parts have rough nie; there are fine kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru; the tip has fine hakikake.

This is a tachi with a standard mihaba; the widths at the moto and saki are different; the koshimoto has funbari; there is an ubu shape, a high koshizori, and the tip has sori. From this you can guess this is a tachi from around the end of the Kamakura period. This is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, and is mune with an ubu nakago, and is judged as a den Norishige tachi. Usually Norishige works are itame hada mixed with oitame and mokume, and have a dark unique jihada called Matsukawa-hada. Hamon are a notare style, mixed with gunome, and the hamon are small or narrow. There are dense ji-nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi. Among Norishige's works, this tachi has an old classic feeling, and the first impression is of Ko-Boki or Ko-Bizen work, a style which sometimes is seen in his work. From this, majority of people voted for an early Kamakura smith, from Ko-Bizen, Ko-Hoki and Ko-Aoe, which is understandable. Also, the jihada do not have much Matsukawa-hada, but some parts have a little bit of oitame hada, and the hamon has an old classic ko-gunome and ko-midare pattern and there are strong nie, and in some places, bright strong nie along with frequent fine kinsuji and sunagashi. From these characteristics, you can guess a high ranking Soshu Den smith, and from the shape and dark jihada, you can guess from the end of the Kamakura period, and a Hukurikudo smith, and from this it is possible to guess Norimune.

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

Mei: Rai Kunitsugu

Length: slightly over 8 sun 4 bu

Sori: almost none

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: ko-itame; the entire jihada is tightly forged; there are dense ji-nie, fine chikei in places there are small areas with an ohada type jihada; there is clear bo-utsuri and a clear jihada.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, and kaku-gunome: there are ko-ashi, yo, dense abundant ko-nie, yubashiri, fine kinsuji and sunagashi, and the nioiguchi is bright and clear.

Boshi: straight with a shallow notare; the omote is round with a small return; the ura's tip is a little narrow and there is a togari type hamon.

Horimono: the omote and ura both have katana hi and tsurehi through the nakago.

This tanto has a wide mihaba, thick kasane, a long size, and almost no sori. From these characteristics and tanto shape, you can guess this is from the end of the Kamakura to early Nanbokucho period. There is a tight ko-itame hada, a refined jihada, and there are thick dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, a clear hada, and clear bo-utsuri. The hamon is ko-notare mixed with gunome, and ko-gunome, and there are frequent nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi. From these details, you can guess this is the work of a Rai school smiths, such as Rai Kunimitsu or Rai Kunitsugu. Their boshi often have a tip which is a little sharp. There are Rai Kunimitsu blades dated Kareki 1 to Kano 2, and Rai Kunitsugu blades dated Kareki 2. From this evidence, they were active at almost same time, and their work is similar. It is difficult to find clear differences between them, so either name is fine. I think among the Rai Kunitsugu characteristics, we can say that his notare hamon are prominent, his yakiba are wider compared with Rai Kunimitsu, and hataraki in the jihada and hamon and his nie are stronger. As for this work, Rai Kunitsugu's work has some Soshu Den characteristics, and some of the old sword books treated him as a one of the Masamune Jutetsu, and in the "Meizukushi" it says that Rai Kunitsugu may have been in Kamakura.

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

Mei: Fujiwara Hirozane

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 6 bu

Sori: slightly over 2 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with oitame and mokume; the entire jihada is visible and rough; it is a unique jihada; there are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and an angled mizukage under the machi.

Hamon: gunome midare hamon mixed with ko-notare, ko-gunome, square gunome, and togari; the upper part of the hamon is an active beautiful midare hamon; there are ashi, a wide nioiguchi, frequent nie, and some places have rough nie (ara-



nie); there are yubashiri and some nijuba; there are fine sunagashi and kinsuji mixed with nie-suji, and some places have thick yubashiri type tobiyaki and the nioiguchi is worn.

Boshi: the omote is a shallow notare, the tip is shap, and there is a small return; the ura is notare with a ko-gunome hamon and straight, the tip is narrow, there is a small round jizo type shape and a return; both sides have hakikake.

This katana is not too wide, there is an okissaki, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a shallow sori, and it looks like an o-suriage shape derived from a large Nambokucho tachi. There is funbari, and from these characteristics, you can guess that this is either an ubu shape or close to it. From this, you can guess this is either a Keicho Shinto or a Shinshinto katana. For this katana, the most important point is the jihada. This is an itame hada mixed with mokume and visible and with a rough hada: this characteristic is often seen in Horikawa work. The school's work seems to copy Soshu Den smiths such as Shidzu, Masamune, Sadamune, and Sa, and this looks like a copy of Sa work. If you look at the hamon carefully, there are some parts that have a wide nioiguchi and a tight nioiguchi, and some parts that have an uneven nioiguchi and worn down nioiguchi: these are Horikawa school characteristics. This is a very rare Hirozane katana, and he has very few works left today. He has katana, naginata, wakizashi, and all together just four items. He has very few works left, and sword books before WWII give the opinion that he was the same person as Kunihiro because the hiro kanji is similar to Kunihiro's. Today's opinion is that he is a different person from Kunihiro, but was very close to Kunihiro, and he was a daisaku smith. Recently, in the late Fujishiro Matsuo's opinion was that Hirozane's "fuji" kanji in Fujiwara is very similar to Osumijo Masahiro's "fuji", and this could be Masahiro's early name. Because Hirozane's work is very limited, it is difficult to study his characteristics. It is impossible to judge something as Hirozane's work, and if you look at this as Horikawa school work, such as Kunihiro or others in the school, it would be fine.

### **Shijo Kantei No 667 (in the August, 2012 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 667 in the August, 2012 issue is a wakizashi by Minamoto Kiyomaro.

This has a wide mihaba for a wakizashi, it is long, there is a large kasane (the blade is thick), and a shallow sori, and from this shape, you can guess this is a Keicho Shinto or Shinshinto work. The fukura is poor, and this shape is often seen

in Shinshinto times. At the Bakumatsu period (at the end of the Edo period) in Shinshinto work, the jitetsu are often a muji type with a very tight ko-itame hada, just like Bizenden Den style smiths such as Suishinshi Masahide and Taikei Naotatane. But Soshu Den smith's works often have a large visible itame and mokume hada, with dense ji-nie and frequent chikei. Among the Soshuden smiths, Kiyomaro's Yamaura school is known for a strongly forged jihada. The itame hada is mixed with nagre hada, and the hada is visible; there are abundant ji-nie and frequent chikei. In particular, Kiyomaro's clear bright jihada is well known. There are few of his early works which seem to follow his master Kawamura Toshitaka's work: a tight ko-itame becoming a muji type hada; the hamon has a straight yakidashi; and above the yakidashi, there is a choji hamon with a tight nioiguchi. His distinctive characteristic work is called Yotsuya Masamune, and these are seen frequently in the Tenpo, Koka, and Kaei periods, especially, around the Tenpo and Koka eras. The hamon are a gunome midare, and the choji are prominent. The midare waves are close to each other, and there are long ashi, a wide nioiguchi, bright and clear dense nie; in some places there are bright strong nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. From the signature, this was made around Kaei 3, which is his later work. Around Kaei times, Kiyomaro's hamon are midare hamon, the choji are not prominent, and the entire hamon are formed from large sized gunome. The hataraki consisting of kinsuji and sunagashi become more gentle. His boshi are midarekomi, the tips are sharp with hakikake. His student Nobuhide's work has many detailed horimono, but Kiyomaro's work just has hi type horimono, and usually we never seen detailed horimono. During his Kiyomaro signature period, the nakago tips are kurijiri, and the yasurime are sujichigai or osujichigai. Many of the signatures are on the omote the three kanji "Minamoto Kiyomaro" located under the mekugi ana on the mune edge. The ura side has date in a slightly higher location. Often, the omote and the ura signatures become reversed, i.e. the mei might be on the ura rather than the omote. In the Meiji and Taisho period, newly made Shinshinto work was not evaluated highly, even for first class master smiths. These evaluations changed dramatically after WWII. Fujishiro Yoshio reevaluated the Shinshinto smiths along with Kiyomaro's work, and promoted Kiyomaro's high artistic values. Others, such as Honnami Koson appreciated Sa Yukihide's excellent skills, and established his name as a master smith. These two major authorities evaluated Kiyomaro and Sa Yukihide's work. Before the war, when Fujishiro Yoshio dealt with many Kiyomaro swords, many of them still had newly made koshirae. I remember that Fujishiro wrote that Kiyomaro sword koshirae were not always well made or were high class koshirae. From this, I can conclude that many of the samurai who ordered swords from Kiyomaro may not have been samurai with high positions. There is a big difference in the evaluation of Kiyomaro's work between today and the time he was working, and this difference might be much greater than we think. At this time, most people voted for the correct answer.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.

