

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 671
December, 2012

Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bunkazai
Type: katana
Mei: Tsuda Echizen-no-kami Sukehiro
Enpo 7 nen, 2 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu (71.2 cm)
Sori: 5 bu (1.5 cm)
Motohaba: 8 bu 4 rin (2.55 cm)
Sakihaba: slightly over 1 sun (3.2 cm)
Motokasane: slightly over 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)
Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 rin 5 rin (3.8 cm)
Nakago length: 7 sun 6 bu (23.0 cm)
Nakago sori: none

Commentary:

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, and the angle at the top of the mune is sharp. There is a wide mihaba and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a standard kasane, a shallow sori, and a long chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight fine ko-itame and there are dense thick ji-nie and a clear jihada. The hamon has a very short yakidashi, and is an ogunome-midare hamon. Some places have round ball-like tobiyaki. The hamon becomes a toran-midare hamon. There is a wide nioiguchi, dense ko-nie, and a bright nioiguchi. The boshi has a wide yakiba and is straight; the tip is komaru and there is a long return. The nakago is ubu and the katana mune ridge is very thin. The nakago tip is iriyamagata, the yasurime are osuji-chigai, and there is a one mekugiana. On the omote side next to the mekugi-ana, on the shinogi ji, there is fine sosho style seven kanji mei. On the ura side next to the mekugi-ana, on the shingi ji, with one kanji higher than the beginning of the mei on the omote side, there is a date. The Nidai Sukehiro, son of the Shodai Sukehiro was born in Kanei 14 (1637). His common name was Jin-no-jo, and he received the Echizen-no-kami title around Meireki 1. In Kanbun 7 1666 his lord, Aoyama Inba-no-kami Munetoshi (he was the Osaka castle lord for 16 years from Kanbun 2 to Empo 1) gave him salary of 10 nin

buchi (a salary for 10 people). Sukehiro passed away in Tenwa 2 (1682) on March 14 at the age of 46 years. At that time, Osaka was an active place for swords, as the first generation smiths had moved from Kyoto or other areas and established themselves and their work, and the second generations flourished from this foundation. In a historical Osaka record, “Nanba jan” (in Empo 7), and “Nanba kaku” (in Empo) were listed as Sukehiro’s residence. That was Fushimi Itachibori, and a later name was Tokiwa-cho. Today that area is around the Osaka-fu Chuo-ku Toriwa-cho 1- chome area. In the same town where Sukehiro lived, there also lived Echizen no kami Kanesada, Hitachi no kami Muneshige, Kawachi no kami Yasunaga, Sagami no kami Kunimasa, Omi no kami Tadatsuna, and Settsu no kami Tadayuki. Around that area, over 30 sword smiths were living, and these also included Inoue Shinkai, and Omi no kami Sukenao. In addition, there were all kinds of sword craftsmen and related shops, such as horimono carvers, polishers, saya makers, saya finishers, sword dealers, kanagu makers, tsukamaki craftsmen, same shops, and menuki shops. A little farther away, next the riverside, there were steel and iron wholesalers such as Kawasakiya, Chigusaya and Amagasakiya. In this environment, the Osaka Shinto smiths were working hard to create a new type of sword which had never been seen before, and finally the Nidai Sukehiro developed the original Toranba midare sword. Because of this, many smiths were influenced by Sukehiro’s style and many of these works are still present today. Among these are the Nidai Echizen no kami Kanesada (Itakura Gennoshin Terukane) who used to live next door to Sukehiro, and who made many swords in a similar style to Sukehiro’s. His characteristics included a flat or thin hiraniku, a sharp angled ihorimune, and toranba style hamon. This excellent katana used to have a Juyo Bijitsu Hin classification, and later was moved up to Juyo Bunkazai. This was Sukehiro’s peak work when he was around 43 years old. The nioiguchi in the hamon is very clear, and even among his works, we could say that this is one of his best katana.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishi Akira)

Meitan Kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba & kodogu

Juyo tosogu

Baiju (plum tree) sukashi tsuba

Mumei: Hayashi Matashichi

This tsuba has a strong feeling for iron which says "Iron is the king of metals". There were many tosogu smiths in Higo who used to use iron, but with their highly accomplished techniques they used all kinds of different details. Among these craftsmen, Hayashi Matashichi is the most famous and popular.

Matashichi was born in Keicho 18 in Kumamoto. His original name is Seijuro Shigeharu, and Matashichi was his smith (craft) name. At that time, his father worked for Kato Kiyomasa as a gun smith. After the Kato family was removed their daimyo position, Matashichi left gunsmithing, and worked for Hosokawa family, and died at the age of 87 in Genroku 12.

In this plum tree sukashi tsuba, the iron jihada is moist looking and has a color called "yokan" (sweet beans). This ability to work iron comes from his excellent skills as a gun smith, and you can appreciate the very attractive original jitetsu made by Matashichi. This tsuba jitetsu is an example of his skill, and shows Matashichi's unequalled work. It has the winter plum's spirit and magnificent elegance, and I could say it is dignified work fit for a king. This is an excellent tsuba, which demonstrates Matashichi's great skill, using an inflexible iron material and produces a life-like appearance.

(Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya)

Shijo Kantei To No. 671

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 671 issue Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2013. 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 January 5, 2013 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: tachi

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 1.5 bu (73.17 cm)

Sori: 8 bu (2.4 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)
Kissaki length: 1 sun 3 bu 5 rin (4. 1 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 6 bu (20.0 cm)
Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. It is suriage, there is a high koshizori, the tip has sori and there is an o-kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, the entire jihada is tight, there are thick dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, bright midare utsuri and a bright jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are frequent ashi and yo, and the entire hamon is a saka-ashi type. There is a bright nioiguchi, ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The omote and ura both have horimono which are bo-hi with marudome at the bottom half. On the omote side under the bo-hi there is a bonji and kurikara. On the ura side under the bohi there is a bonji and suken (part of the kurikara and suken extend into the nakago). The nakago is suriage, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. Some of the yasurime are new and the new and old yasurime are both kattesagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature located at the bottom half of the nakago and close to the mune.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For November

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

Date: November 10th (2nd Saturday of November)

Location: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Iida Toshihisa

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 November 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: tanto

Mei: Bitchu kuni ju Tsuguyoshi saku
Koan 2 nen 10 gatsu hi

Length: slightly less than 9 sun 1 bu

Sori: none

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame hada, mixed with nagarehada; there are jifu: there are chikei, ji-nie, and midare utsuri; some places include suji utsuri and become dan-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha with very shallow notare: there are some ko-ashi and yo; the habuchi is tight, bright and clear. The boshi return becomes muneyaki, and there is a deep yakisage (continuation of the muneyaki) up to the machi area.

Boshi: shallow notarekome, tsukiage, kaori with a long return, and which continue to become muneyaki.

This hirazukuri tanto has is a wide mihaba, a slightly long length, no sori, and a small kasane (i.e. it is thin), and this is a common Nambokucho era Enbun and Joji period tanto and wakizashi shape. Among the Nambokucho smiths, this kind of very thin shape are seen often in the work of the Hasebe school in Kyoto, or the Bitchu Aoe school. This is a dated Koan 2 Aoe Tsuguyoshi tanto. Let's pay attention for the notable utsuri. There is a bright midare utsuri, but looking at it carefully, one sees between the utsuri and hamon, that there are one or two suji (line) utsuri. This kind of midare utsuri and suji-utsuri together is called dan-utsuri, and this is a major characteristic of the Aoe school. Some parts of the jihada are mixed with a darker jihada (jifu) which is a different color from the other areas. This is different from shingane appearing from under the kawagane, i.e. from too much polishing. There are frequent ji-nie, and the jihada surface is prominent or glossy. The Aoe school work often has this kind of jifu, and this supposed to be one of the characteristics in their jihada. In the Nambokucho era, the Aoe school had two kinds of hamon: one is called a "Bichu Aoe saka-ashi" with an active midare hamon. The other style is a suguha style just like this tanto. At the same time, other school's smith's hamon were mainly nie-deki. But the Aoe school, with both suguha and midare hamon styles, are nioi-deki. There is an especially tight nioiguchi at the habuchi, and many of the nioiguchi are very clear. At this time, usually many of their boshi are a little notarekomi, tsukiage where the tips are sharp, or have a ko-maru and return and these characteristics are seen in this tanto. This boshi has long kaeri, which continues to form muneyaki up to the machi area. Such a long yakisage or continuation of the muneyaki is unusual, but long boshi kaeri are seen often in Nambokucho era Aoe work. In voting, people are supposed to recognize these points, and many people voted for Aoe school smiths names. As I explained before, the Nambokucho Aoe school had two kinds of hamon, midare and suguha, and most of smiths made both types. Among them,

Tsuguyoshi has the most suguha work, and from this tanto, the Tsuguyoshi name is the most reasonable.

Kantei To No. 2: wakizshi

Mei: To-to Hosokawa Chikara no suke Minamoto Masayoshi

Tempo 8 cho Tori toshi moushun (beginning of spring)

Kippu mei (supplemental mei for the horimono artist): hori Honjo Kamenosuke
Minamoto Yoshitane

Length: 1 shaku 6 sun 3.5 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: fine tight ko-itame, which becomes a muji type hada; there are ji-nie.

Hamon: choji mixed with gunome, gorgeous midare hamon, there are ko-ashi, a tight nioiguchi, and ko-nie.

Boshi: straight, komaru with return, mixed with small tobiyaki.

Horimono: both omote and ura have bo-hi which stops in a yahazu shaped end; there is also a tsure-hi; at the bottom half; inside of the bo-hi there is a nobori-ryu relief, and under it is a frame; on the omote side inside the frame there is a tamonten relief, and on the ura side inside of the frame there is a zochoten relief.

This wakizashi is a Shinshinto period work by the skilled smith Hosokawa Masayoshi. Masayoshi, along with his fellow student Naotane, followed his teacher Suishinshi Masahide's example in going back to classic swords for models. He made many old style blades, such as Ko-Ichimonji work with gorgeous choji midare hamon, Soshu Den style jihada and hamon with frequent nie, and this is an example of one of his Bizen-Den wakizashi. Initially, this wakizashi shows a gorgeous juka-choji hamon which is similar to an old blade. But the ko-itame jihada is too fine, and almost has no visible pattern or grain, which is a Shinshinto characteristic muji type jihada. The gorgeous midare hamon has a tight nioiguchi, and part of the ashi go through to the edge of the hamon, so these jihada and hamon features show Shinshinto characteristics. Also, the horimono on the omote and ura are very precise, and full of realistic relief, and compared with old horimono, they have a strong decorative element. In Shinshinto times, many smiths made choji midare hamon swords, but in most of Masayoshi's choji midare hamon, the tops of the choji loops are square when compared with other smiths; some parts of the choji are squashed together; the bottom of the choji loops are wide on the left and right which somewhat suggests the shape of an open fan. These are Masayoshi's characteristic features, and this wakizashi shows this. In voting, besides Masayoshi, some people voted for Bizen Den style smiths such as

Suishinshi Masahide, Naotane, and Koyama Munetsugu. Most of Suishinshi's Bizen Den work have smaller hamon. If this were Naotane's work, note that many of his hamon have clear utsuri, even though he was a Shinshinto smith. Koyama Munetsugu's midare hamon are continuous with the same type of repeated pattern. Also, the horimono on this sword is Honjo Yoshitane's work. He made horimono for Shinshinto smiths such as Suishinshi and Naotane. He was a famous horimono-shi (horimono carver) in late Edo times, and his refine carvings are excellent. On the nakago, Yoshitane signed his horimono mei by himself, and this is very rare.

Kantei To No 3: tachi

Mei: Bizen kuni Osafune ju Chikakage

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun

Sori: 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume hada, there are jifu, and the entire jihada is slightly visible. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: suguha type ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji, and square shaped elements. There are ko-ashi, some saka-ashi, ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: shallow notare, slightly sharp, a komaru and return.

This tachi has no visible funbari around the habaki moto, and from this, you can guess this is osuriage, and certainly suriage. The shape has a chu-kissaki, is somewhat wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a strong sori, it is koshizori, the tip has sori, and the jihada has bright utsuri. From these details, it is easy to guess this as being a Kamakura period Bizen work. The hamon is a suguha style mixed with ko-gunome, and there are square shaped features with saka-ashi. The boshi is a shallow notarekomi with a komaru and return which is a Sansaku-boshi style. These are features seen in work from around the end of the Kamakura period in Osafune swords. In voting people paid attention these points, and many people voted for Kagemitsu and Chikakage. This is an Osafune Chikakage tachi. Chikakage is supposed to have worked in the Nagamitsu school, and his active period was from the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nambokucho period according to his dated blades. This was the same period when Kagemitsu was active or slightly later, and Chikakage may have been a junior student in the school. His style is supposed to be similar to Kagemitsu's, but show less refined workmanship. In particular, compared with Kagemitsu's tight refined jihada, many of his jihada are visible. Also, this tachi contains jifu type jihada and the hada is only slightly visible. In his hamon, he includes sakaashi, the same as Kagemitsu, but his hamon have more nie than Kagemitsu's and this kind of characteristic is seen in this tachi. Looking at the boshi, above the yokote there

is a straight hamon, and then a shallow notare, a small sharp tip and a return. This is a Sansaku boshi which is same as Nagamitsu and Kagemitsu's, but Chikakage's character shows above the yokote in the straight hamon and sharp tip. Also, the tachi shinoji-ji is high, and this is one of his characteristic details. Besides almost correct answers, many people voted for Motoshige. Motoshige has often has a soft jihada, the same as Chikakage, and the hamon are mainly gunome with saka-ashi, and the boshi tip is sharp. However, many of his jihada are mixed with nagrehada, and the hamon are usually wider with square shaped features, and his boshi are not a Sansaku style boshi.

Kantei To No 4: wakizashi

Mei: Etchu no kami Masatoshi

Length: 1 sahu 1 bu

Sori: uchizori

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with nagare hada; there are abundant ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: gunome mixed with gunome-choji; ko-notare, and the hamon contains sharp shaped features; there are ashi, yo, and in places a wide yakiba with a gorgeous midare hamon; there are dense nie, and some places show mura (uneven spots); there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, yubashiri, tobiyaki and a clear hamon.

Boshi: shallow notare, and tsukiage; on the omote, the tip is round; on the ura the tip is sharp and there is a return; there are hakikake at the tip.

This is a wide blade and very thick. It is uchizori, and has an extremely poor fukura, and very sharp appearing shape. It may be a yoroidoshi, or an exaggerated Kamakura period Norishige style uchizori tanto, and this is a very unusual shape. In Koto times, there were very few blades which were so thick. In addition, the jihada has abundant nie, and is bright and clear. The hamon has frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and abundant hataraki, which was very well done in Soshu Den work, but which was never duplicated by Shinshinto smiths. From these characteristics, the period for this sword should be the Keicho-Shinto period. In the Keicho era, many smiths produced Soshu Den style blades which emphasized interesting nie work, and this is one of them. Please pay attention to the yakiba in the boshi. Both the omote and ura are a shallow notare, tsukiage style, and the ura tip is sharp with a return which is a Mishina boshi. This is a Mishina school work in Kyoto: an Etchu no kami Masatoshi wakizashi. The Mishina school smiths such as Etchu no kami Masatoshi, Iga no kami Kinmichi and Tanba no kami Yoshimichi are originally from Mino, and often some parts of their work shows some Mino

characteristics. On this wakizashi there is nagarehada, and the sharp or jagged type yakiba shows this character. Parts of the hamon show tobiyaki and muneyaki, and there are double and triple parallel lines, which remind us of sudareba, and this kind of midare hamon is seen often in Mishina school work and this is Tanba no kami Yoshimichi's strongest characteristic. It is also seen in the work of Etchu no kami Masatoshi and Iga no kami Kinmichi. In the case of Tanba no kami Yoshimichi, his nie are strongest among the three of them, also form mura, and the vertical lines are prominent, and more visible than on this wakizashi. In the case of Iga no kami Kinmichi, there are not many Mishina boshi seen in his works, and many of his hamon contain square shape gunome. On this wakizashi, each midare hamon element's top is close others, and some part look like there is no yakiba, and this is an important characteristic for Masayoshi's midare hamon. In voting, besides Mishina school smiths, some people voted for Dewa daijo Kunimichi. Kunimichi is Horikawa school smith, but he made Mishina style boshi, and from this, it is understandable. But usually many of his jihada are itame mixed with mokume hada, a barely visible Horikawa jihada, and the midare hamon often have saka-ashi. Also, we have never seen a Mishina style sudareba hamon in his work.

Kantei To No. 5: tanto

Mei: Yoshimitsu

Length: 7 sun 7 bu

Sori: uchizori

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed in places with ohada; there are large ji-nie, frequent chikei, a clear hada, and bo-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha, but at the koshimoto it is mixed with ko-gunome; there are frequent ko-nie; the habuchi has fine hotsure, uchinoke, there are some ni-juba, and the nioiguchi is bright and clear.

Boshi: there are frequent nie; it is straight with a komaru.

This is a long tanto for the mihaba. There is a standard kasane, and it is uchizori, which is a typical late Kamakura period tanto shape. From mid to late Kamakura times, there were more tanto made when compared the eras before, and excellent tanto smiths appeared such as Awataguchi Toshiro Yoshimitsu and Rai Kunitoshi in Kyoto, and Shintogo Kunimitsu in Soshu, and all of them produced highly sophisticated work. This tanto is work is from the Awataguchi school smith, Toshiro Yoshimitsu. In Edo times, Yoshimitsu was considered a "Tenka 3 saku (three best smiths)" along with Masamune and Go Yoshihiro. Also he was considered the best of the group, and people used to say that all Daimyo families tried to obtain his blades. The jihada is places is a mixed ohada, but there is a tight and fine ko-

itamehada, dense thick ji-nie, frequent chikei, and bo-utsuri. This has an Awataguchi school original, elegant nashiji-hada. The hamon is formed from ko-nie with beautiful bright nie, and it is an elegant suguha with a bright nioigchi. Yoshimichi's hamon from above the machi to the upper part of the blade are a continuous ko-gunome appearing like a row of small beans. Around the fukura area the yakaba becomes very narrow, and his boshi nie are stronger than in any other area. From the boshi into the jihada, the nie look like they are falling down in vertical lines. These are Yoshimitsu's characteristics, and this tanto shows these characteristic points. In voting, people caught these points well, and many people voted for Yoshimitsu. Some people voted for other smiths from the same era such as Rai Kunitoshi and Shintogo Kunimitsu. If it were Rai Kunitoshi's work, he does not have the characteristics of Yoshimitsu's hamon and boshi. In particular, his jihada and hamon nie and chikei are usually more gentle when compared with Awataguchi work. If it were Shintogo's work, many of his itame and mokume hamon are more prominent, and hataraki such as chikei in the jihada and kinsuji in the hamon are more frequent. A few people voted for Awataguchi Kuniyoshi, who is one generation older than Yoshimitsu. Kuniyoshi's nijuba are more prominent when compared with Yoshimitsu, and this tanto has nijuba. From this point, this is an understandable vote, but Kuniyoshi's work almost never shows Yoshimitsu's common characteristics, such as continuous ko-gunome above the machi, and a narrow yakiba around the fukura, or his characteristic boshi

Shijo Kantei No 669 (in the October, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 669 in the October issue is a tanto by Shintogo Kunimitsu dated Kagen 22.

This tanto has a small size, and the mihaba and kasane are both standard. With the uchizori and this elegant shape, you can judge this as a mid-Kamakura era tanto. Also, the mitsumune with a wider middle surface is a characteristic seen among Soshu Den high ranking smiths, such as Shintogo Kunimitsu, Masamune, Sadamune, Hiromitsu and Akihiro. Shintogo Kunimitsu is known as an excellent tanto smith and as a Kamakura period master smith along with Awataguchi Yoshimitsu. Yoshimitsu tanto have all kinds of shapes, often just like other Awataguchi work. There were all kinds of shapes for tanto, and the biggest one is called Hirano Toshiro has a length of 9 sun 9 bu tanto with a wide mihaba. Some have a standard mihaba with a 1 shaku length. Some have a standard length with a big mihaba and a wide shape which appears fat like an exaggerated hocho shape. Few of Shintogo's tanto are over 9 sun, but are usually around 7 sun to 8 sun 5 bu in length, with a usual width and shape, and we have not often seen

exceptionally large sized tanto. This is a very healthy excellent tanto even among the Kunimitsu's work. There is a Shintogo tanto which has a large size and is called "Aizu Shitogo", but the size is 8 sun 4 bu. His jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are dense thick ji-nie and frequent chikei, and a Soshu Den characteristic strong jihada. Most of his tanto have bo-utsuri. Also, the mune edge has utsuri, and the hamon side along its lower part has fine suji utsuri: sometimes one line or sometimes two lines, just like Aoe style work. In the case of suguha hamon we often see with parallel utsuri lines. We cannot see that on this tanto, but Kunimitsu's jihada are often a tight ko-itame mixed with a large wave Ayasugi type nagarehada. This is also called "okina no hige"(an old man's beard) and is one of his characteristic points. His tanto boshi have nie which are stronger than in any other area, and the nie appear to fall down along a line. Shintogo's tanto hamon are mostly suguha, and the hamon vary from a wide suguha to a narrow ito suguha (thread-like suguha), but either one has strong bright thick ha-nie, a bright clear nioiguchi, and kinsuji and sunagashi everywhere. He has two types of tanto: a wide style with more frequent nie, abundant kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki, which are strong Soshu Den features. The other style is just like this tanto, (there has no been too much polishing for this tanto, so this is the original shape), a somewhat narrower hamon with nie, chikei, and kinsuji which are less gentle looking. The tanto's nakago tips are kurijiri, and the yasurime are kattesagari. Among his signatures there are few long signature with a date, but many of them are on the omote side, and along the center are two kanji for "Kunimitsu". Today, we are aware of some signed and dated from the Einin to Genkyo eras, but there are not many dated blades available. Concerning his characteristic signatures, since historical times people talked about "saji hokukan", which mean that the left side of the Kunimitsu kanji "kuni" is j like the romanji "z" shape, and the upper part of the "mitsu" looks like the kanji "hoku" (north), and the hints mentioned this. At this time, people caught these characteristic points, and most people had the correct answer.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.