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**Meito Kansho**  
**Examination of Important Swords**

Classification: Kokuho

Type: Tachi  
Mei: Nobuyoshi

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 4 sun 2 bu (73.3 cm)

Sori: 9.5 bu (2.9 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu (2.75 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu (1.8 cm)

Motokasane: slightly less than 2 bu (0.62 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 8 bu 3 rin (2.5 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun (15.4 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly narrow width, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a large koshizori, funbari, the tip has sori, and there is a short chu- kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame. There are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, clear mizukage at the machi, and a pale dark color jifu type utsuri from the center to the upper half of the blade. The hamon is based on a wide suguha, and is mixed with ko-choji, ko-gunome, and is ko-midare. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, thick even fine hani, some places have sunagashi, and the entire hamon is bright and clear. The boshi is straight with a komaru and a small return. The nakago is ubu, the tip is kurijiri (but the tip is trimmed a little bit) and the yasurime are sujichigai. There are two mekugi-ana. On the omote above the mekugi-ana, a little towards the mune side, there is a large size two kanji signature.

Ryumon Nobuyoshi's birth and his family line are still unknown, the same as for other Yamato school smiths. His signed blades consist of only tachi with two kanji

signatures, and there are only ten of them known. There are some articles focused on the study of his work. One is "Some inquiries about Ryumon Nobuyoshi" in the magazine "Museum" issue number 475 issue by Ogasawara Nobuo. The other is in the NBTHK journal issues 405 and 519 in the "Meito kansho" and "Meito katana ezu jusei" articles researched by Tanobe Michihiro. There is a one Juyo Bijutsu Hin blade with a soko-mei (the nakago was filed, and mei is consequently weak), and we can recognize the date "Einin 6 (1298) nen 3 gatsu hi", and from this, Nobuyoshi's active period was during the latter half of the Kamakura period. He has two types of signatures: in the "延" kanji the right side radical is written like "正", or is written with a "氏" radical. Also, there are two styles of work: one is a Yamato schoolstyle and other is a Bizen style which is unusual for a Yamato school smith. His Bizen type work consists of two styles, one is a Ko-Bizen style and other is Ichimonji style. Two of his Bizen style works have origami written by Honnami Kōchū and Kōyū stating that these are definitely Bizen works. His Yamato style work with the "延" kanji signature use both types of signatures, and the Bizen style which has vertical variations in the hamon are more likely to use the "氏" type kanji. Many of his Yamato style jihada are a tight ko-itame and have a refined hada, while his Bizen style jihada have a prominent visible hada. Both types of work have abundant utsuri, with slightly different appearances and colors: they can be a dark or pale color. At the end of the Edo period, Nobuyoshi was identified as a "Senjuin school Ryumon smith" and it is not sure where this appraisal came from. In the old sword book "Okinsho", there are Ryumon smiths who use the "Yoshi" (吉) kanji such as Yoshiyuki and Nagayoshi. The location Ryumon ("Dragon's Gate", and today this is Yoshino-cho, Hiraobe, Yoshino county, Nara,) belonged to Kofukuji Temple, and from these facts, they are supposed to have been related to the Senjuin school. Their work is based on Yamato Den work, but their hamon have vertical variations which is different from other schools. After the Edo period for kantei purposes, people seemed to decide to classify such work as Senjuin work. This tachi has an ubu nakago, and the Nobuyoshi mei contains a "正" type kanji, and is excellently preserved. The upper half has a pale jifu type utsuri, there are thick fine ji-nie, and this is certainly in a Ko-Bizen style. The workmanship is excellent, and it is known as one of his best works in the sword world. It is said that this belonged to the emperor Gomizunoo, who was enthroned on Keicho 16. The tachi has a refined well made elaborate koshirae described as "Kin-nashiji kikumon chirasi makie raden saya Itomaki no tachi koshirae" and a gorgeous bag described as "Konji kinran tachi fukuro". These special additions makes the entire and koshirae tachi more valuable. This belonged to the Kasuga shrine's chief priest's Mizutanigawa family for a long time. After them, it belong to Inoue Junnosuke who was a Meiji and Taisho period diplomat and an imperial household agency bureaucrat. After the 2nd war, the famous politician Kimura Tokutaro, who had positions as minister of justice and minister of defense, donated it to the NBHTK, and today this is a one of the best items in the collection.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

## Juyo Tosogu

Urumi-urushi(old looking urushi) take-nuri (bamboo) saya aikuchi tanto koshirae  
Kozuka mei: Natsuo                      Warikogai mei: Natsuo saku  
Koiguchi mei: Natsuo                      Kurikata mei: kao  
Kojiri mei: Natsuo saku                  Menuki: mumei

This is a tanto koshirae, and all of the whole metal work was made by the great engraving master smith Kano Natsuo who was active from the Bakumatsu to Meiji periods. The first impression is of plain elegance, and you can imagine what kind of person might have used this koshirae. The entire saya is painted an urumi (old looking) brown color, and all of the metal items have a little bit of kata-kiribori (horimono like carving) with flowing elegant carving on the polished silver surfaces. If you look at the signature on the saya, it is not clear, but you can read a "Hashiichi" signature. Hashiichi signed in his work with "Hashi" in hirakana and "Ichi" the Japanese number one. His name is Hashimoto Ichizo, and from the Bakumatsu to Meiji period, he was a well known urushi master and his work included saya. In particular, his best speciality is takenuri, and people call it Hashiichi's takenuri. This is his special takenuri: he built up urushi on the wood base, and made bamboo nodes and grooves. Then he polished the surface, and painted it with urumi urushi, and polished it again. This is not elaborate decorative work, but shows a soft sophisticated elegance, and if you look at it carefully, at each bamboo node, the small details in the wood surface are excellent. Natsuo's carving work on the solid silver surface use his specialty sharp kata-kiribori, a subtle carving technique which preserves the great balance of the work. The menuki has no Natsuo signature, and they are not definitely his work. The koshirae has bamboo leaves with snow yo-bori (carving) and entire tanto koshirae has a feeling of intense cold.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

## Shijo Kantei To No. 684

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 684 issue Shijo Kantei To is February 5, 2014. Each person may submit one vote. Submissions should include 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 February 5, 2014 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 8 sun 1 bu (54.84 cm)

Sori: 3.5 bu (1.06 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 8 rin (2.35 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 1 sun 1 bu 6 rin (14.7 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a shinogi-zukuri wakizashi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a shallow sori and a chu-kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with ko-mokume and entire jihada is tight. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are some tobiyaki, the hamon has vertical variations and there is an active midare hamon. There are yo, ashi, a bright nioiguchi, ko-nie, and fine sunagashi.

The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is ha-agari-kurijiri. The yasurime are kattesagari, and there is a one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, under the hole, the nakago has a long signature towards the mune side. On the ura side, under the hole, on the center there is a sword go name (a popular name) and a saidan mei (cutting test). This smith often has saidanmei.

### **Shijo Kantei To No 682 (in the 2013 November issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 682 in the November issue is a tachi by Awataguchi Kuniyasu.

This is a narrowblade and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori, funbari, the tip has uchisori, and there is a small kissaki. From the shape you can judge this to be work from the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period. Kuniyasu has two types of jihada. One is an Awataguchi like characteristic nashi-ji jihada. The other is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and chikei are prominent like on this tachi, and the hint refers to this. There

are pale utsuri, and this shows a Kyoto style character. Usually, Awataguchi blades are based on suguha hamon with ko-midare, and there are bright thick ha-nie. Kuniyasu's hamon are often a suguha type hamon mixed with ko-choji and are ko-midare. There are yubashiri on top of the hamon, intermittent nijuba, frequent ashi and yo, ko-nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and a midare hamon. The waves or groups on the midare hamon are close to each other. There are delicate vertical variations, and a soft nioiguchi, just like on this tachi. We can say that this tachi is not similar to the Awataguchi school smith Hisakuni's work, and is more like Ayanokoji Sadatoshi work, and voting for the Sadatoshi name is understandable. But usually Kuniyasu's signatures are two kanji, and as you saw on the oshigata, his "yasu" or "安" kanji is a unique shape, and if you catch this characteristic, it is possible to come up with his name. Sadatoshi's boshi are straight with ko-maru, or midarekomi. Either one has frequent hakikake, and have kaen and nie kuzure, and often are a very dynamic style. Kuniyasu's boshi are straight with a komaru, or a shallow notarekomi with komaru, and they are more gentle looking. In voting, a majority of people voted for Kuniyasu. As an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Sadatoshi and Awataguchi Kunitsuna. Kunitsuna's hada show a prominent large size itame hada and mokume hada for the Awataguchi school, and his name is understandable. Kunitsuna has two types of tachi. One has a typical end of Heian to early Kamakura period narrow shape, and the other has a wider shape. But his tachi tips are not uchizori like Kunitomo and Kuniyasu, and often his tachi tips have sori. Compared with usual the usual Awataguchi school work, his hamon are wider and have variations, and prominent strong ha-nie. Besides the correct and almost correct answers, a few people voted for Ko-Hoki Yasutsuna. His jihada are prominent larged size itame and mokume hada for this period, and the answer is understandable. If it were his work, his usual jihada are a prominent dark color, and there are jifu utsuri. His ko-midare hamon are a worn down nioiguchi, there are strong ha-nie, the hada pattern is visible inside of hamon, and has country looking work.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.