

**NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL**  
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**Meito Kansho**  
**Examination of Important Swords**

Classification: Juyo Token

Type: Tachi

Mei: Ichi (Yoshioka Ichimonji)

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 2 bu 9 rin (76.65 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 7 rin (2.05 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 1 rin (2.75 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu (1.5 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane : 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Kissaki length: 7 bu 5 rin (2.25 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 8 bu (20.6 cm)

Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly narrow shape, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is funbari at the moto, a large koshi-sori, and a small kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and there are two types of utsuri: suji shaped (straight line) and midare-utsuri above the hamon, midare-utsuri close to the shinogi-ji, and clear dan-utsuri. The hamon is based on chu-suguha mixed with ko-gunome and square shaped gunome. There are frequent ashi, and especially on the ura side there are prominent saka-ashi which are almost nioi or a part of the nioiguchi; there are some ko-nie, and kinsuji at the habaki-moto. The boshi on the omote is a shallow notare, there is a sharp tip and yubashiri. The boshi on the ura is a slight midarekomi with a komaru. The nakago is ubu, the tip is slightly shortened, and the yasurime are sujichigai. There are three mekugi-ana. On the omote above the first mekugi-ana, towards the mune edge, there is a mei made with a fine tagane (chisel).

The Ichimonji school was prosperous in the mid-Kamakura period. But in the late Kamakura period, the Osafune school became popular, and around the Osafune

area the Fukuoka Ichimonji school was absorbed by the Osafune smiths and school, and the Fukuoka Ichimonji school declined. The Yoshioka Ichimonji school was located on the opposite shore of the Yoshii river in Yoshioka (today this is around Okayama City, Higashi-ku, Seto-cho, Mantomi) and they preserved the Ichimonji school. They produced smiths who used the “suke” kanji in their signatures, such as Sukeyoshi, Sukemitsu, Sukeshige, and Sukeyoshi (written with a different “yoshi” kanji from the first Sukeyoshi).

Their signature are simply an “ichi” (一) kanji, or a long signature with a location which is not often seen, or a signature with some titles such as “Sabyoe-no-jo” and “Sakon-no-shogen”. The Yoshioka Ichimonji (一) ichi kanji show good strong strokes and show a good character since old times. The oldest “Yoshioka” kanji on a signed blade is Sukeyoshi’s in Kagen 3 (1305) which belonged to the Sakai family. Their later works are recognized during the mid- to late Nambokucho period, and include names such as Sukehide and Suketsugu which are very rare. After this period, the Ichimonji school which started in the early Kamakura period disappeared. There are very few gorgeous choji hamon like the Fukuoka Ichimonji hamon. Their hamon show either prominent small gunome or are a suguha type hamon mixed with ko-gunome, or are very close to a suguha hamon. They are in the same style as seen in the area from other smiths at the time and are transitional work, and their hamon are a saka-ashi type. This tachi is ubu with an “—” kanji signature, and has a characteristic end of Kamakura period narrow elegant tachi shape. The jihada is well forged and the hada is almost invisible. The hamon is based on chu-suguha and mixed with ko-gunome, square gunome, and saka-ashi (especially prominent on the ura side). This is a sophisticated tachi similar to Kagemitsu and Chikakage’s work, and in a well preserved condition. From the characteristic signature, shape, jihada, and hamon, this is definitely a Yoshioka Ichimonji work. However, the utsuri is very special. Above the hamon, there are suji (straight) utsuri, and above this, there are midare utsuri. The utsuri style is like Aoe’s dan-utsuri, and this is very interesting. Is this an accident, or (as I can imagine) influenced by Aoe smith work, or by some smith who has Aoe school skills. This is an interesting work, and at the same time an important example of the school’s work. This belonged to the Owari Tokugawa family in the Edo period, and has an origami (certificate) which says it was written by “Honnamisouke 17 dai, Honnami Koichi, Bunka 13 nen, daikinshi 250 mai”, (the 17<sup>th</sup> generation Honnami Souke, Honnami Koichi, written in 1813, and cost 250 mai. The tachi also has an old saya.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

## Juyo Tosogu

Ritsuba zu (standing horse design) kozuka

Mei : Kanoe-saru( year) Mou-tou (early winter ) Natsuo with kao

This is a kozuka, and you can see the horse has dignity. He is trying to start moving forward and simultaneously paying attention to something behind him, or he is moving and paying attention to something: he is quietly looking back over his shoulder. This is a Manen 1, Kanoe-saru period in winter time, and one or two Adonis buds are showing. It is a rare gold smith and artist who can put this much feeling in a kozuka. The balance of design is excellent, and it is a very high level of work. This definitely has to be by Natsuo. In addition, his smooth tagane (chisel) work is well known by everybody. On the omote side is an iron ground, with a layer of sukedashi and takabori (carving technique), and for iron, it has a very smooth feeling. On the ura side there is a shibuichi ground with katakiri-bori and gold hira-zogan (inlay). Katakiri-bori means to use only chisels to create the entire shape and volume, and no one can compete with Natsuo's technique. His chisel work is notable for the spare number of chisel strokes he uses, like the Maruyama Shijo school's skillful and powerful brush strokes, and Natsuo established this kind of skill. I feel Natsuo is the best artist capable of showing atmosphere or movement or spirit. Natsuo produced many animals with all kinds of spirit, sometimes very gentle, and sometimes included very strong winds or movement just like a storm. There is a gentle but clear cold wind passing through the horse. The horse's face has a strong expression, but at the same time is shows some melancholy. I wonder, 150 years ago, maybe Natsuo made a kozuka with a sentimental feeling for the passing winter and was waiting for the new spring buds.

Explanation by Kubo Yasuko

Note: currently this kozuka is on exhibit at the NBTHK museum's special exhibition.

## Shijo Kantei To No. 685

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 685 issue Shijo Kantei To is March 5, 2014. 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 March 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: tanto

Length: 9 sun 7 bu (28. 12 cm)

Sori: very slight

Motohaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Motokasane: slightly less than 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 1 bu 5 rin (9.5 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a hirazukuri tanto with an ihorimune, a wide shape, long, a little thin, and with a shallow sori. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada. Near the hamon the hada is masame with prominent nagare-hada and the hada is slightly visible. There are ji-nie and frequent chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The entire ha-buchi is hotsure with dense ko-nie, frequent sunagashi, kinsuji and a bright nioiguchi. The horimono on both the omote and ura sides are katana hi with tsure hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are higaki and there are two mekugiana. On the omote side, the nakago has a signature under the mekugi along the center.

## **Teirei Kanshou Kai For the New Year**

The swords discussed below were shown in the January, 2014, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: January 11, 2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of January)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kubo Yasuko

The Heisei 26 New Year's Teirei Kanshou Kai was attended by more than 70 people in addition to members. As customary, there was a single vote, and the people who received prizes were:

Teni prize : Oowa Yasuhiro

Chii prize: Miyano Teiji

Jini prize: Matsumoto Hironosuke

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 January 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 sword smith's name.

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

Mei: Bishu Osafune ju Chikakage

Genkyo 2 nen 8 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 2 bu

Sori: slightly over 9 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; there are thick dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: ko-choji mixed with ko-gunome; ko-notare with square shaped gunome and the bottom half of the hamon has saka-ashi. There are ashi, and some parts have saka-ashi; there are yo, nioiguchi, frequent ko-nie, nie inside of the hamon, kinsuji, sunagashi, and the top of the hamon has tobiyaki.

Boshi: both sides are slightly notare; tips are sharp and there is a short return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi with marudome.

This is slightly long with a large sori, and the widths at the moto and saki are different, and there is an elegant tachi shape. The jihada has midare utsuri, and from this, many people voted for a Ko-Bizen name. But if it were a Ko-Bizen tachi, there are several differences: the tip is slightly uchizori, the hamon is mainly ko-midare, and dark parts of the utsuri are uneven. The kissaki is small but the tip has sori, and from the kasane, you can judge this as a late Kamakura period tachi. The hamon is ko-choji, mixed with ko-gunome, konotare, and square shaped gunome and saka-ashi are prominent. There are also frequent saka-ashi, and from these characteristics, it is possible to judge this as Kagemitsu and Chikakage work. Chikakage is supposed to be from the Nagamitsu school, and has signed blades – from Bunpo at the end of the Kamakura period to Jowa in the early Nambokucho period, and he is considered to be a student of and younger than Kagemitsu. Naturally, his style is similar to Kagemitsu's. The little differences show in the jihada, ha-nie and in the boshi. Among the mainstream Osafune school smiths, Kagemitsu's jihada are a well forged tight itame hada and bright, and many of Chikakage's jihada are visible. This tachi has frequent nie even inside of the hamon, and his blades have frequent ha-nie. Chikakage's boshi are not as well

done as Sansaku boshi from Nagamitsu, Sanenaga, and Kagemitsu. From these characteristics, the Chikakage answer is a good guess. Nagamitsu and Sanenaga answers are reasonable, but their tachi don't have many square shaped hamon features, and many of their ashi are straight. If this were Sanenaga's work, there would be a tight nioiguchi.

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

Mei: Bishu Osafune Masamitsu

Eitoku 2 nen 11 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 8 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and there is a visible fine jihada. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, and along the mune side, a pale midare utsuri; along the hamon edge, there is straight utsuri.

Hamon: based on a shallow ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji, togariba, square shape d gunome and the entire hamon is small. There are ko-ashi, yo, a nioiguchi, ko-nie, fine sunagashi, and tobiyaki.

Boshi: midarekomi with a sharp tip and return.

Horimono: omote and ura both have bo-hi carved through the nakago.

This is a Masamitsu tachi dated in the Eitoku era (1381-1383). Masamitsu is Kanemitsu school smith along with Motomitsu and Tomomitsu. Motomitsu and Tomomitsu were active around the Embun and Joji periods (1356-1367). Masamitsu was active Joji to the Muromachi period's Oei era (1394-1427) as seen in this tachi's date. A tachi shape after the peak of the Nambokucho period and in the later periods, became gradually less exaggerated and narrower. This tachi has a standard mihaba or width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. This type of shape matches with the period. Also, the shape is the same as the common Kosori school, and they are in the same area and worked in the same period. The hamon is based on a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji, togariba, square gunome, and the entire hamon is small. There is a nioiguchi with ko-nie, and the boshi is midarekomi with a sharp tip and return, and these are characteristic Kosori school details. Some sword books categorize Masamitsu as a Kosori smith and many people voted for Kosori smiths such as Hidemitsu and Moromitsu. Of course, these are good enough answers, and were treated as almost correct answers. Masamitsu is a master smith, and there is a bright nioiguchi when compared with usual Kosori work, and there are no jifu type kawaritetsu in this tachi. In voting, some people voted for Yasumitsu. That answer seems to come from the fact that

there are open bottom togariba in some places, and the hamon is small when compared with Morimitsu. If this were Oei Bizen work, the sakisori would be stronger, the jihada visible, and there would be prominent chikei. Also, in many of their horimono the hi stops at the machi instead of being carved though the nakago.

### **Kantei To No 3: katana**

Mei: Nagasone Okimasa

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 9 bu

Sori: 4.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itamehada mixed with mokume hada. There are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and the shinogi-ji has a masame hada.

Hamon: yakidashi at the koshimoto, and above this there is a continuous gunome hamon like a juzuba hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, thick nioiguchi, frequent thick nie, kinsuji and long sunagashi.

Boshi: the omote is straight with komaru; the ura is a shallow notarekome; the tip is sharp; and both tips have fine hakikake.

Okimasa was active from the Kanbun to Genroku periods from the dates and kinzogan saidanmei on his swords. On this kanji signature, the "masa" kanji is an unusual kaisho style. There is another rare kaisho style signature on a blade dated Empo 4 (1677). From the style, this katana seems to be made in the same period. Okimasa is known to have been active from the Jokyo (1684) to around the Genroku period (1688-1703) and his work has a Shinto shape. But like this katana from around the Empo period his early work includes many Kanbun Shinto shapes, where the widths at the moto and saki are different, and which have a shallow sori. Possibly from the shape, the bright jihada and hamon in this masterpiece, many people voted for Kotetsu his teacher, instead of for Okimasa. This has a straight yakidashi at the koshimoto, and above this continuous gunome which is a Juzuba style. But the ha-nie are somewhat rough, some parts of the work are rough and rustic when compared to his teacher. Above the yokote, this does not have a gunome hamon, and the boshi return is stiff and these details are different from Kotetsu's. In voting, some people voted for Kazusanosuke Kaneshige and Hojoji school smiths. Both of these smiths do not often have yakidashi. Okimasa's gunome are two continuous fused gunome, and this is a characteristic of his style which is obvious on this katana. Kazusanosuke's characteristic gunome hamon are one and two and one and two grouped continuously. On the Hojoji school's continuous gunome hamon, either the top of the hamon is straight, or sometimes there is a Juzuba style hamon, but their hamon are small.

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

Mei: Kunihiro

Length: slightly over 8 bu 1 bu

Sori: uchizori

Design: hira zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada, and slightly visible. There are frequent ji-nie, and fine chikei.

Hamon: straight yakidashi, and above this it is notare and has gunome and togari; there is a high yakiba. There are nie ashi, thick nioiguchi, frequent thick nie, frequent long sunagashi, kinsuji, and some places have yubashiri, and muneyaki.

Boshi: shallow notare; tsukiage; the tip is sharp; there is a long return which and continues to form muneyaki.

Horimono: omote has koshi-hi; the ura's bottom half has futasuji hi, and both are carved through the nakago.

This tanto's hamon is based on a gunome hamon. There is a wide nioiguchi, frequent dense nie, frequent long sunagashi, and kinsuji. The boshi is a shallow notare, tsukiage, and there is a sharp tip and long return, and these are strong characteristics of the Samonji style. But looking at it carefully, the kasane is thick, it is uchizori, the fukura is not as poor as a real Samonji, and the nie are different from Samonji's. From this, you can guess this is a copy of Samonji's work. Looking at Shinto time smiths who copied Samonji, the Horikawa school smith Kunihiro and the Dewa daijo Kunimichi names come to mind. Compared with these two smiths, Kunihiro's works are a larger size, and Kunimichi's nagarehada is prominent. This tanto is a smaller size than Kunihiro's Samonji copies, and the jihada is visible. But this is not a typical Horikawa school unique jihada, which is dry looking, whitish, and which has a visible jihada. There are no mizukage which are often seen in Horikawa school work, and the nioiguchi is brighter than his usual work. This is a masterpiece among Kunihiro's copies of Samonji work. That's why you can guess that the hamon and boshi are Samonji copies, but it is difficult to judge the individual name. In voting, beside the Kunihiro and Kunimitsu names, some people voted for the Shinshinto smith Kiyomaro. Kiyomaro respected Samonji, and often copied his work. From the style, this answer is understandable, but if it were his work, there should be more strong nie, strong sunagashi and sunagashi inside of the gunome hamon.

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



Muei: Awataguchi Omi no kami Tadatsuna

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 6 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; there are thick dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: chu-suguha; there are ko-ashi, a dense nioiguchi, dense ko-nie, a bright nioiguchi, and fine sunagashi; on the omote side at the monouchi, there are long kinsuji.

Boshi: the omote side is straight with a komaru; the ura side has togari with a komaru; both tips have hakikake.

Horimono: the omote has futasuji hi and the ura has bo-hi; both are finished with marudome.

This is a Nidai Awataguchi Omi no kami Tadatsuna (Ikkanshi Tadatsuna) katana with a suguha hamon. It has a dynamic healthy shape, and at first it looks like a Kanbun Shinto style. At the tip, the mihaba is not too much narrow, and it has a strong sori. This kind of shape is supposed to be seen on a Jokyo to Genroku period (1684-1703) katana. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei and a refined jihada. It is suguha, and there is a wide and bright nioiguchi and dense ko-nie. At first appearance, this is a Shinto with a refined jihada and beautiful suguha hamon. Most people voted for Hizen to names. Actually, Hizen to and Osaka Shinto works are very similar. We can point out several differences with this katana though: The nioiguchi on Hizen to are often very clear and defined with usually just one uniform line, but on this katana the nioiguchi has different thin and wide parts. Hizen boshi are a fine komaru along the fukura, the tip has a wider boshi, there is a komaru and return, and this is one of their characteristic points. Here, on the omote side around the monouchi area, there are long strong kinsuji which appear and disappear inside of the nioiguchi. Ikkanshi Tadatsuna's work has either long ashi with choji hamon, toranba, notare with gunome, or are suguha, and his hataraki are variable, but his clear kinsuji are slanted, and please remember that this is one of his characteristic points. From the shape and kinsuji, some people voted for Satsuma Ippei Yasuyo. If this were his work, the ha-nie would be stronger, and many of his jihada are rougher.

### **Shijo Kantei To No 683 (in the December, 2013 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 683 in the December issue is a tachi by Rai Kunitoshi (dated Genko 1, 1331 )

This tachi is slightly narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Kamakura period. Sometimes the Rai school swords have wa-sori, and this characteristic is seen often in Rai school work. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and bo-utsuri, and a characteristic Kyoto style refined jihada. Rai school utsuri on tanto are clearer, and on tachi are more pale. The school's unique jihada is called Rai hada. The hamon is based on suguha mixed with frequent ko-choji and ko-gunome. There is a bright nioiguchi and ko-nie. The boshi is straight with a komaru and there are muneyaki. The nakago signature has the name and date together in one line. From these characteristics, almost no people missed the Rai school. Most people voted for Rai Kunitoshi, and besides him, some people voted for Rai Kunimitsu and Rai Kunitsugu. Generally, Rai Kunitoshi tachi styles are narrower, the hamon are suguha, and the suguha style hamon is mixed with ko-choji, and ko-gunome, and are mainly gentle looking. This is his last year's work at the age of 81 and is dated Genko 1 (1321). The hamon has more prominent ko-choji and ko-gunome than his usual work, and it is a vigorous midare hamon. From the style, and the signature, in the "kuni" kanji, the inside four dashes are sloped downwards towards the left in an extreme manner, and some people think that this work could have involved Kunitoshi's son Kunimitsu. As you see, this is a little different from mainstream Rai Kunitoshi work, and Kunimitsu has work very similar work to this. Also Kunitsugu has a few tachi similar to this, and Kunimitsu and Kunitsugu both have three kanji signatures. For these reasons, only at this time, not only Kunimitsu, but also the Kunitsugu name are both treated as correct answers. But today, there are less than 10 signed Kunitsugu tachi. Most of them are a little wider, and the jihada and hamon have strong hataraki. For almost correct answers, some people voted for Rai Kuniyuki and Ryokai. Kuniyuki has narrow blades, mainly with ko-choji and midareba hamon, and in this case, the hamon is mixed with ko-midare and there are uneven kijimata shaped yubashiri on top of the hamon, and there is a more classic look. Also, Kuniyuki signed with two kanji, and we usually do not see three kanji signatures. Ryokai's jihada are itame mixed with masame type jihada with a whitish appearance. His hamon are mainly suguha or a suguha style. There are few prominent ko-choji hamon and gorgeous hamon, and in these cases, the habuchi are soft. Also, he signed with two kanji and we usually never see three kanji signatures.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

