

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

**Tokubetsu Juyo token**

Type: Tachi

Mei: Nobukane (Ichimonji)

Koshirae: Kin-nashi ji Aoe-mon kin kanagu saya, ito-no-maki tachi koshirae

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun

Sori: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 4 rin ( 2.85cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 Cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 6 bu (20 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame, mixed with nagare hada, and some parts of the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, and primarily on the bottom half, there is midare utsuri. The hamon is choji based hamon mixed with gunome and togari. There are frequent ashi, yo, and the habuchi is almost all nioi. At the koshimoto there are kinsuji, nie suji, and sunagashi. The boshi is a small midarekomi boshi with togari, a komaru and return. The nakago is ubu with a kijimata shape. The nakago tip is a saki ha-agari kurijiri, and the yasurime are a slightly deep sujichigai. There are two mekugi-ana and one is closed. On the omote above the second mekugiana (the original mekugiana) at the center, there is small size two kanji signature.

According to the Meikan sword book, the Nobukane name was listed as being either a Ko-Bizen or Fukuoka Ichimonji smith. This Nobukane is supposed to have been the "Bizen Sansaku" smith Ichimonji Nobufusa's son; his older brother was Nobumasa, and they worked around the Tenpuku (1233-34) era. There are a very few Nobukane signatures, and only four blades are extant today, and all the styles are different. There is a Ko-Bizen style with frequent ko-nie, and a Ko-Ichimonji style sword. The hamon are in an Ichimonji style with a nioi based beautiful active choji midare hamon, or with a prominent gunome hamon just like on this tachi. His signatures contain the "Nobu" kanji which are written with the right shoulder angled down, and the "Kane" kanji which are written with the opposite right shoulder angled up. Judging from the signatures, his different styles arise because they came from either different periods in the career of one person, or from more than one smith who succeeded to the name: because of very few works available, we are not sure about this today. The hamon are a slightly prominent gunome as I explained before, and vertical variations are not prominent, and the first impression is similar to the next generation smith Nagamitsu. With this kind of hamon, this could possibly be an example of an innovative new work at this time. Also, the Kijimata shaped nakago is ubu and this is very valuable. This is a valuable tachi containing an example of Nobukane's signed work. In the "Tokugawa Jikki" (an official record), around Kanei 3 (1626), September 10th, a Nobufusa tachi was given to Seikanji Chunagon Tomofusa Kyo during the Go-Mizuno emperor's "Nijo gyoko" (visit to Nijo castle). The third shogun Iemitsu and the former shogun Hidetada were proceeding to Kyoto, and invited the emperor to Nijo castle. They tried reconcile differences between the Bakufu and the imperial court. From September 6th for five days, there were major political meetings and banquets held. During this meeting, 36 tachis were listed as being given to each noble family besides the Seikanji family. Also, this Nobukane tachi has an Itomaki no tachi koshirae made in the early Edo period with highly skilled gold and urushi work (it is listed as the 23rd Juyo Tosogu item). All the kanagu has the Tokugawa main family Aoi-mon and the royal family's second Kiri mon. The "Kanei Gyoko Ki" (Kanei period record of visits) contains written details about the visit, and a picture of Onna Kazu-no-miya (she was the Go-Mizuno emperor's second daughter, and her mother was the former shogun Hidetada's daughter Tofukumonin Masako). It can be seen that her ox carriage roof has both the Kiri mon and the Aoe mon. This is not conclusive evidence, but in my opinion, this tachi is possibly the same one listed in the "Tokugawa Jikki", and we are looking for additional evidence to confirm this.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

## **Juyo Tosogu**

### **Kan-u zu kozuka**

#### **A kozuka with a picture of a Chinese general**

Mei : Nagatsune with kao

Ichinomiya Nagatsune was born in Kyoho 6 (1721 ) and was the son of a sake maker in Echigo Suruga. At the age of 13, he moved to Kyoto, and became a student of the Goto school smith Hoi Takanaga, and his early craft name was Sessan. He studied painting from Ishida Yuteii, who was Maruyama Okyo's teacher. Today you can see from his carving sketch books and original paintings that his painting skills were far better than that of the other gold smiths. He was well established as a gold smith artist, in part from his great painting skills, and was considered one of the three best master Kyoto gold smiths, along with Otsuki Mitsuoki and Tetsugendo Shoraku. Somin was admired as the best gold smith in the west, and in the east, Nagatsune was considered the best. At age 50, he received the Echizen Daijo title, and passed away in Tenmei 6 (1786), at 66 years of age. This kozuka is in Nagatsune's horimono sketch book, and you can recognize his artistic skill. His katakiribori are accurate and delicate, especially in Kanu's beard, where his hand goes around beard, and in his facial impressions. You can feel the life and dynamism, and this is a more than a simple gold smith's work. Also, with the skillful hirazogan use, this is a very unique work, and it almost feels like Kan-u will start to move. This kozuka fully displays Nagatsune's artistic power and excellent gold smith work.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 687**

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 687 issue Shijo Kantei To is May 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 May 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.

## **HINTS:**

Type: Katana

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu (69 cm)

Sori: 7. 5 bu (2.27 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 7 rin (2.65 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 3 rin (1.9 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 5.5 bu (16.82 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri blade with an ihorimune, a standard mihaba (width), and the widths at the moto and saki are different. The upper part has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with nagare hada and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, some parts of the ji are whitish, and the jihada has a dark color. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture, and in some places, the hamon valleys dip down and almost reach the edge. Both the omote and ura have the same hamon. There is a worn down nioiguchi and nie and sunagashi. The nakago is a little suriage, and originally the tip was narrow, and there is a unique nakago shape. The nakago tip is iriyamagata, the mune edge of the nakago is square shaped (kakumune) and hamon edge of the nakago is round. The yasurime are katte-sagari, and there are two mekugiana. On the omote side of the nakago, next to the original mekugiana on the mune side there is a two kanji signature. The ura side, under the habaki toward the mune side has a suriage-mei: the name of the sword smith who made the blade suriage.

## **Teirei Kanshou Kai For March**

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

Meeting Date: March 8, 2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of March)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ooi Takeshi

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

Mumei: den Aoe Yoshitsugu

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada mixed with mokume hada; some places have ohada; the fine visible hada and appears like a chirimen type hada. There are frequent jinie, and pale straight and midare utsuri along the hamon.

Hamon: suguha; there is a tight nioiguchi, ko-nie, ko-ashi; and some places have saka-ashi. Around the monouchi the hamon is mixed with a Kyoto type saka-ashi hamon.

Boshi: straight; the tip is komaru; and there is a slightly long return.

This is an o-suriage mumei katana with an origami by Honnami Mitsutada, and this is described as a den Aoe Yoshitsugu. This Yoshitsugu is not the Ko-Aoe smith, but is supposed to be by Yoshitsugu who worked around the end of the Kamakura period who has blades dated in the Kareki and Gentoku periods. It was very difficult to judge individual smith's names here, so, if you look at this as Aoe work from the end of the Kamakura to early Nambokucho periods (Che-Aoe), it would be good enough. During this period, exemplary smiths were Tsunetsugu, Suketsugu, Yoritsugu and Naotsugu, and many of them have the "Tsugu" kanji in their name. The jihada are ko-itame mixed with mokume hada, and there is a fine visible hada, and sumihada (dark spots from the shingane become visible). There is pale straight and midare utsuri along the hamon, and it is called dan-utsuri. The shape has some koshizori left; there is sori at the tip; the widths at the moto and saki are different; and the kissaki is not long and is a chu-kissaki, and from this, you can judge this as Aoe work from the end of the Kamakura period. Among the Aoe answers, some people looked at this as early period Ko-aoe (end of Heian to almost the Kamakura period), and some looked at this as later period mid-Nambokucho work, and smiths such as Tsugunao and Tsuguyoshi. Ko-Aoe hamon are a suguha type mixed with many ko-midare; there are frequent nie, a slightly worn down nioiguchi; uneven utsuri, and dark areas which are jifu utsuri. The utsuri are along the hamon, and are dan utsuri which have straight and midare patterns. This unique utsuri was seen up to the Nambokucho period's Aoe work. Because of this, and because on the ura side around the monouchi, the hamon dips towards the edge, they are judged as Rai smiths because of the Kyo-saka-ashi. Some people voted for Rai smiths such as Rai Kunitoshi and Rai Kunimitsu. Indeed, a Rai school characteristic hamon does contain Kyo-saka-ashi, but there are no dan-utsuri in the jihada, and their jihada have a stronger nie type utsuri which is different from this blade. At the end of the Kamakura to the Nambokucho period, in

Aoe work, there are few smiths who are known to have made this type of hamon, and they are Suketsugu and Sanetsune (both have Juyo Bijutsu Hin classified blades).

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

Mei: Izumi-no-kami Kunisada

Length: 1 shaku 9 bu

Sori: slightly less than 2 bu

Design: hira zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; some parts of the hada are visible. There are dense thick jinie and chikei.

Hamon: straight yakidashi at the moto; above this the hamon is notare mixed with gunome and ko-gunome. There are frequent ko-nie, ashi, kinsuji, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru and a slightly long return.

This wakizashi is hira-zukuri with a mitsumune, and if we judge the period from the shape it is confusing. In the Shinto period, a tanto a little over 1 shaku is a sunnobe tanto (today we call this a wakizashi), and there was a limited production of this sort of blade. Mainly they were made during the early Edo period around the Keicho to Shoho eras, and during the Keian period. Around the mid-Edo period, there are a very few works like this seen. After this period, around the latter part of the Edo period and the Bakumatsu period, many of them were produced. So if you see a Shinto period tanto or a slightly over 1 shaku sunnobe tanto, please remember these facts. This is a short wakizashi with a yakidashi, and above this, the hamon is a notare mixed with small size gunome and choji. Around the kissaki, there is a large wide gunome hamon, and this, a narrowboshi which is straight with a long return. The entire hamon shows characteristic Shin-Kunisada (1st generation) style details. The yakidashi at the moto is a suguha style but the middle is a little expanded, and this is characteristic of his style. In the Shinto period, there are known three characteristic yakidashi styles, the "Kyo yakidashi", "Osaka yakidashi" and "Edo yakidashi". The Kyo yakidashi is a straight yakidashi and middle looks a little expanded or wider. The Osaka yakidashi originates from the moto, and the hamon becomes gradually wider. The Edo yakidashi is straight and has almost no change. Kyo and Edo are similar but there are small differences as were just mentioned. Usually, Osaka shinto smiths use Osaka yakidashi. Exception are the Shodai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke and the Shodai Izumi no

Kami Kunisada who preferred the Kyo yakidashi. The reason is supposed to have been influence from their teacher Kunitoshi. They moved to Osaka early in their careers, and are supposed to have influenced the yakidashi style for later Osaka smiths. The nakago signature is unique, and the style is seen in his late work from Shoho 2 (1645) February to Keian 3 (1650) February. This style signature is called a "Dowa" mei, soso style, and Kunisada used it for short time. The Shodai Kunisada is supposed to have passed way on Keian 5 nen in May, and some people are of the opinion that this is a Inoue Shinkai daimei (he was born in Shoho 2 nen, and at this time he was about 16 years old). In the Shinto period, this type of soso style signature was started by Izumi no kami Kunisada.

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

Mei: Bizen Osafune Norimitsu saku  
Bunki Gannen(1) 8 gatsu bi

Length: 2 shaku 5 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, mixed with mokume-hada. There are fine ji-nie, chikei, and a fine visible hada with pale midare utsuri.

Hamon: mainly choji mixed with gunome and open bottom gunome; there is a tight nioiguchi, ko-ashi, frequent yo, a little bit of ko-nie, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi with a slightly sharp tip, yakisage and a return.

This katana is about 2 shaku, so it has a short length, a thick kasane, and is solidly built. There is sakizori, and from the shape, you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi period. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and there are pale midare utsuri, and a clear beautiful jihada, and from this, you can judge this as a typical uchigatana from this period. In the latter Muromachi period, country smith's jihada are not always good. But at this same period, Bizen smiths' chumon-uchi (special order) swords were carefully made work with characteristic jihada which are a tight itame hada, and bright and refined, just like this katana. This is such a well made work that many people voted for master smith names among the Sue Bizen smiths such as Yosozaemon jo Sukesada, Jirozaemon jo Katsumitsu, Sakyoshin Munemitsu, and Jirobyoei jo Harumitsu. Most people voted for Yosozaemon no jo Sukesada and Jirozaemon no jo Katsumitsu. If you looked at this as Sue Bizen work, it would be good enough. According to the Meikan sword book, Osafune Norimitsu's active period was during the Nambokucho period from around Oan to the Tensho period. Usually his work is seen with the same prefecture's smiths Norimitsu (written with a different "Nori" kanji) and Sukemitsu who were active around the Bunei priod. After this period, work is dated from the

Bunmei, Meio, and Eisho period. This is dated Bunki 1 (1501), and close to the Eisho period, but compared with the Eisho date oshigata, the signature is different. From this fact, this is supposed to be made by a smith who was active after the Bunan (1444), Bunmei, and Meio (1469-1492) periods. Please look at the reference materials for these details.

#### **Kantei To No 4: katana**

Mei: Nagayuki oite Settsu no kuni tsukuru kore

(Note: this Nagayuki mei is also read as Choko in Japan)

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada, there are fine ji-nie, chikei, and pale midare utsuri.

Hamon: choji mixed with gunome, togariba, open bottom gunome, kawazoko choji.

There are small tobiyaki in places, and ashi, yo, a tight nioiguchi, ko-nie, sunagashi, and the hamon is bright and clear

Boshi: slight notare hamon, and the omote is sharp; the ura has a komaru and return.

Horimono: both the omote and the ura have bo-hi with marudome.

The katana's widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a shallow sori, a chu-kissaki, and from the shape, you can judge this as being a Shinto work made after the Kanbun period. From the tight ko-itame refined jihada with pale midare utsuri, and a prominent choji hamon, people focused on voting for Ishido school smiths. Most people voted for Edo Ishido smiths such as Tsunemitsu, Mitsuhiro, and Sakon Korekazu, or Chikuzen Fukuoka Ishido smiths such as Moritsugu and Koretsugu. Beside these, some people voted for earlier period Sue Bizen smiths and a few people voted for the Kishu Ishido and Osaka Ishido smiths. Nagayuki originally came from Kishu, and studied with the Kishu Ishido Kawachi no kami Yasuhiro school. Later he moved to Osaka, and was very active and became famous at the Osaka Ishido school. His dated blades are concentrated in the Tenwa to Jokyo periods. After Jokyo 4 (1687), there are no dated blades, and the reasons are unknown. He has two type of hamon: midareba and suguha, and he was proficient with either style. His midareba are choji mixed with togariba. Many of his sakizori uchigatana works are based on open bottom gunome, mixed with double gunome and modeled after the Sue Bizen style. Among the many Ishido schools, the Nagayuki name is identified with the Osaka Ishido school. If you compare Shinto and Shinshinto work with early periods, and Ichimonji and Osafune work, beside small differences in the nioiguchi, the Koto period smiths' choji hamon



have a plump round top, and the tips of of the ashi are a tight nioiguchi. Shinto and Shinshinto smiths' choji hamon tops are tight and hard looking, and the tips of the ashi are likely to appear more soft. These small differences are important and critical points.

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

Mei: Bishu Osafune Iesuke  
Oei 23 nen 2 gatsu bi

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 2 sun

Sori: slightly less 2 bu

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada, and the entire hada is visible. There are ji-nie, and pale midare utsuri.

Hamon: open bottom gunome mixed with choji, gunome, ko-gunome, and in some places, square shaped gunome. There are ashi and yo; the habuchi is a nioi type habuchi, but the upper half has nie; there are frequent fine sunagashi, and a little tobiyaki.

Boshi: the omote is a shallow notare, the tip is a little sharp, and there is a shallow return. The ura is a shallow notare, the tip has a little hakikake, and there is a small return.

Horimono: the omote has katana hi, and the ura has futasuji hi, and both have marudome.

This hirazukuri wakizashi is long for its width, and is somewhat thick. There is sori, and this shape is seen often in the early Muromachi period around the Oei period. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, the hada is visible, there are ji-nie, and midare utsuri. The hamon is mainly open bottom choji and gunome, the boshi is midarekomi, the tip is sharp, and there is a shallow return, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as Bizen work. The prime Osafune smiths in this period, Morimitsu and Yasumitsu are the most well known. They produced many works, their skill of both high, and they made the same type of blades. Other Oei Bizen smiths are Moromitsu, Iesuke and Noriie. Their predecessors had already started to work during the Nambokucho period, but very few of the early works are left. Their actual active period is supposed to be from the beginning of the Muromachi period. Moromitsu has a blade dated during the Eiwa period, and for his generation he is a more senior smith than Morimitsu and Yasumitsu. He has many Oei period blades, and his jihada have large patterns. Iesuke and Noriie have dated Nambokucho period blades, but they became famous from the Muromachi period, and later they had successors who continued their traditions.

Looking at the whole of their work, Iesuke's work in this period seems to be more similar to Yasumitsu than to Morimitsu.

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 685 (in the February, 2014 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 685 in the February issue is a tanto by Naoe Shidzu Kanetomo

The tanto is wide, long, and is slightly thin. There is a shallow sori, and from the shape, you can judge this as Nambokucho period work. Naoe Shidzu along with a group of students of Mino no kuni Shidzu Saburo Kaneuji is supposed to have moved to the same prefecture's Taki-gun, Naoe-go and started their school. Their active period is supposed to have been the Nambokucho period and the early half of the Muromachi period, when they absorbed the same prefecture's Seki group. Their jihada are itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada. Towards the hamon boundary, the nagare hada become a masame type hada, the hada is visible, and there are ji-nie, and frequent chikei. The hamon are notare mixed with larg size gunome, and gunome-choji, and the entire habuchi has hotsure. There are dense ko-nie, frequent sunagashi, kinsuji and a bright nioiguchi. This looks like Soshu Den plus Mino Den work. People made a point of Soshu Den and voted for Shidzu Saburo Kaneuji. People also made a point of Mino Den and voted for Seki smiths such as Kanetomo and Ujifusa. Either answer is understandable. Kaneuji's tanto are 6-7 sun, a small size, his hamon are a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome, the habuchi has hotsure and kuichigai-ba, or it is a notare hamon mixed with large gunome. Either hamon is accompanied by bright beautiful thick ji-nie (which is seen in high class Shoshu Den smiths' work), and kinsuji and sunagashi. Kanetomo's style is a mix of Shoshu Den and Yamato Den. His boshi are a prominent omaru with a short return. If this were work by Seki smiths such as Kanesada and Ujifusa, the shape are either larger with the upper half having sakizori, or a short size with a strong uchizori and a poor fukura. Their jihada has whitish utsuri, the hamon are gunome-choji mixed with gunome and togariba, the boshi are midarekome with a jizo style point. These smiths are established the Mino Den style. Naoe Shidzu is between the two schools and eras. It is not a mistake, and they are a transitional style for Mino Den which mixed the Shoshu and Yamato Den styles. In voting, most people voted for Naoe Shidzu smiths such as Kanetomo, Kanetsugu, and Kanenobu. There are very few signed Naoe Shidzu works, and the work of these smiths is very similar, and it is supposed to be very difficult to judge individual smith's names, so all same school's smith's names are treated as a correct answer. Shidzu Saburo Kaneuji is an almost correct answer, but the styles are different as was explained, and his yasurime are mainly kiri or katte sagari. Usually we never see higaki yasuri, and please note this observation.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai