

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

Classification: Juyo token

Type: Katana

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Yosozaemon-no-jo Sukesada  
Tenbun 6 nen 2 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 2 shaku 5 bu 4 rin (62.25 cm)

Sori: 8 bu 1 rin (0.45 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4cm)

Nakago length: 1 sun 1 bu 7 rin (3.55cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1cm)

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with a mitsumune ( the middle mune ridge width is narrow), and a sharply angled high shinogisuji. It is slightly thin,wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. The moto shows funbari, there is a large sori, a prominent sakizori, and a long chu-kissaki. The entire jihada is a tight ko-itame hada, there are dense jinie, and fine chikei. The entire hamon has a high yakiba, there are open bottom gunome mixed with gunome and choji, square shaped gunome, togariba, and some places have a double midare hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, thick even ko-nie with some large nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, tobiyaki, yubashiri, frequent muneyaki, and the entire hamon becomes hitatsura. There is a bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi has a wide yakiba and is midarekomi, the tip ko-maru, and the return continues to form muneyaki which is continuous to the the machi. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a square with a ha-agari type kurijiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari. There are two mekugi-ana and the first one is the original. On the omote shinogi ji, there are larger kanji and a long signature made with a thick tagane (chisel), and the ura has a date.

After the latter half of the Muromachi period, the Bizen area produced many Sue Bizen smiths. In particular, there are many Sukesada smiths and we have seen Sukesada swords signed in with all kinds of special titles. Among these, there were many excellent swords, and the pre-eminent smith is this one, the Shodai Yosozaemon-jo Sukesada. He was the son of Hikobyoei-no-jo Sukesada and his last name was Nakagawa. There is a tanto dated Tenmon 6 (1537) signed as being made when he was 71 years old, and from this, his birth date is known as Oei 1 (1467). His work with special titles started to appear in the Bunki period (1501-04), and the last work with this title is from around Tenmon 10 (1541). Including swords made without a title during the period when we see his signed work, he appears to have been working for half a century, and at that time, he was a very long lived smith.

He produced many styles: his master works have open bottom gunome with fukushiki (double) gunome. Works are based on suguha and notare, where the bottom half is a midare hamon and the upper half is suguha style hamon. This blade has a different pattern where this pattern of two types of hamon are used differently. There is a midare hamon at the koshimoto and monouchi, and between these areas the hamon is suguha. Another type of pattern has fukushiki gunome only at the koshimoto. Yet another pattern is a hitatsura hamon just like this katana. Both of them are well done and you can imagine his very high level of skill. Beside his characteristic ihorimune, sometimes there are marumune. In case of bo-hi horimono, many of them have tsurehi or small companion grooves, and other Sue-Bizen smiths also do this. Also, Sukesada made a fair number of a thick yoroi-doshi type tanto.

This katana's shape is short with sakizori, a short nakago, and this is a typical end-of-Muromachi period uchigatana style. The shinogi has a sharp angle from the shinogi, is thin, and this style is sometimes seen in Sue-Bizen smiths' work, and is especially more likely to be seen with hitatsura hamon work. The jihada is a refined ko-itame hada, and there are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and the steel is well forged. The hitatsura hamon has a free midare hamon pattern, with vertical alterations, and the whole hamon has a bright nioiguchi and is very well finished with a very high standard of work.

In Bizen, after the second half of the Muromachi period, the older characteristic nioiguchi hamon, and ji-utsuri are not seen too much. The jihada and hamon changed to have more nie, and because of this, usually the utsuri is not as prominent, and you see these features in this katana.

This katana is lively and from the signature, we recognize that this is work made when the smith was seventy one years old. Considering his long working period and many works with his signature, either he was unusually productive and healthy, or in his latter years, he might have been the head of a sword smith's studio such as the "Sukesada studio" with excellent students. However, this work shows his excellent level of skill and supports his excellent reputation.

Explanation by Ishii Akira and picture by Imoto Yuuki.

## **Juyo Tosogu**

Junishi zu (12 animal design) tsuba

Mei: Mogarashi Nyudo Soten sei

Eshu Hikone ju

Mogarashi Soten is known as representative of the Hikone-bori school which produced detailed and unique carving work. Originally he come from Kyoto, and his first name was Shuten, which was later changed to Soten. His patron was a high ranking official in Hikone whose name was Kawatita, and Soten adopted the first name of his patron: this was the name Kitagawa. There are two generations of this smith with the same name. From dated signatures, the Shodai is known to have been born in Sho-o 1(1652), and his active was the early Edo to mid-Edo period. His signed works are often seen with themes like Chinese or sennin figures (an unworldly man) carved in iron with a sukashi background, and gold, silver, and copper zogan-iroe (colored inlay), with a gold rim. Today, most of these are supposed to be either Hikone bori studios' mass production work, or to be imported from other prefectures. Comparing these mass production works to his original signed works with either takabori, nikubori or ji-sukashi, his carving work shows full and rich volume, the iroe was made with good materials and they are glowing, and the signature brush strokes are strong and deeply carved.

This is typical of his excellent work with his original signature. On the shakudo nanako background, 12 animals are shown in rich nikuoki takabori, with bright iroe using gold, silver, and copper. The gorgeous theme shows Soten's real abilities and at the same time shows his active Genroku period cultural background.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 695**

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 695 issue Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2015. 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, 2015 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: slightly over 2 shaku 6 sun 4 bu (80.1 cm)

Sori: 9.5 bu (2.88 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 6 rin (1.7 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45cm)

Kissaki length: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 9 bu (20.9 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. The widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori, fumbari, and the tip or boshi falls a bit towards the edge. There is a small kissaki, a narrow shinogiji, and rich hiraniku. The jihada is itame mixed with ko-mume, there is some nagarehada, and the entire jihada is visible and has a large pattern. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, jifu, jifu utsuri and a dark colored jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are small hotsure, uchinoke, yubashiri at the habuchi, a worn down nioiguchi, dense nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and yaki-otoshi starting a little above the machi. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi with kakudome. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is slightly shortened and has a kengyo shape, but was originally kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari, and there are four mekugi-ana and one is closed. On the omote side of the nakago, above the original mekugi ana, on the mune side, there is a two kanji signature, and the bottom kanji is larger than the top kanji and biased more towards the right side.

## **Teirei Kansho Kai For November**

The swords discussed below were shown in the November 8, 2014, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: November 8, 2014 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of November) at 1:00pm

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ooi Takeshi

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

Mei: Nagamitsu

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 1 sun

Sori: slightly over 7 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, some parts o-hada. There are dense ji-nie and clear midare utsuri.

Hamon: hoso (narrow) suguha; some places have a shallow notare type hamon and some places have small white spots. There is a bright and clear tight nioiguchi.

Boshi: shallow notare, tip is komaru and there is a short return.

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

This blade is narrow with a large sori, but the fumbari is gone, and from this, you can imagine this is a suriage tachi. The shape differs from the usual early half of the Kamakura period classic tachi shape, and the upper part certainly has sori. From this you can judge this as a narrow tachi which was popular again in the latter half of the Kamakura period.

Also, from the clear midare utsuri with a nioiguchi hamon, you can judge this as Bizen suguha work. The finely forged itame jihada is beautiful with its tight nioiguchi. The boshi is a shallow notare, and there is a ko-maru and return which is a Sankaku-boshi, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as Nagamitsu's late work or as being from other smiths around him.

Beside Nagamitsu's name, many people voted for Sanenaga. Among the Osafune school smiths, Sanenaga's work has the clearest utsuri along with Nagamitsu's. He has many simple suguha type hamon, and also the tightest nioiguchi among the school's smiths, and his big characteristic point with a midare hamon mixed with ko-notare. Sanenaga's boshi are Sansaku boshi, and the tachi shows these characteristic points, and from this, we treated him as a correct answer with the same points as Nagamitsu.

If it were Kagemitsu's work, the forging will be tighter, and the ji bright, with a clear refined jihada. If it were Chikakage's work, the forging in the hada is visible, the opposite from Kagemitsu, and there are ha-nie, and many of his boshi above the yokote are straight or have a shallow notare, which is a unique Sansaku boshi style.

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

Mumei: Ni-o

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 4 sun 5 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada with nagare; some places are mixed with masame hada, and a slightly tight jihada. There are ji-nie, a slightly dark colored ji, and a pale and whitish jihada.

Hamon: hosu suguha, some parts are a very slight ko-midare; there are ko-gunome and ko-ashi type. There are ko-nie, fine hotsure, and a slightly soft nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight; there are fine hakikake and the tip is yakizume.

This is a katana judged as Ni-o work. In the late Kamakura period at the Ni-o school, the names of Kiyotsuna and Kiyohisa are known. Neither of them have much work left today, and with suguha work like this katana, it is difficult to judge the differences between them. Also, in the same period and in the same school, there are a couple of smiths whose names are listed in the Meikan, and if you look at as Ni-o work, that is sufficient.

The katana is o-suriage, there is a large sori, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is some fumbari left, the kissaki is small, and the tip has sori. From this, you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Kamakura period. The Ni-o school strongly influenced Yamato-den in this period, and many of their swords are thick and have a high shinogij-i. But compared with the mainstream Yamato school work whose shinogi-ji are wider, the Ni-o swords are narrower, and this katana shows this characteristic point. The jihada shows nagarehada, the suguha hamon has hotsure, the boshi is yakizume, and the jihada and hamon can be recognized as an old Yamato den style. But the jihada is whitish, the hamon alterations and nie are gentle, and there is an especially soft appearing nioiguchi, so you can judge this as Ni-o work.

In voting, from the narrow shape with an elegant suguha hamon, many people voted for the Rai school and the Enju school. However, Ryokai was related to Yamato smiths, and he has many works similar to the Ni-o school. But this katana does not have a wa-zori and Rai jihada, and also the boshi is not ko-maru with a return. If were work from the Enju school, at the monouchi area and boshi, many of them have ni-juba, and the nioiguchi will be a little worn down. Their boshi have a large round shape and a short return, and their soft nioiguchi are prominent.

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

Mei: Mino no kuni junin Fujiwara Nagasada  
Ganji gan-nen (1) 8 gatsu oite Efu saku kore

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5.5 bu

Sori: slightly less than 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame hada, with some nagerehada; the hada is a barely visible. There are strong ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: gunome mixed with o-gunome, gunome-choji, and large togariba. There are long ashi, yo, strong nie, a little yubashiri, muneyaki, kinsuji, frequent sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: shallow notare; the ura has ko-ashi; both tips have hakikake; the point is komaru with a slightly long return.

The katana's widths at the moto and saki are not different. It is wide, and there is a shallow sori with an o-kissaki. Also for the mihaba (width), the shinogi ji is narrow, and it is a thick and heavy katana, and from this you can judge this as Shinshinto period work. There is an itame jihada with frequent chikei, the hamon is gunome mixed with ogunome, and nie, and it is a large midare hamon. There are long ashi, frequent sunagashi and kinsuji, and among the Shinshinto smiths, this is similar to the work of Minamoto Kiyomaro and his school.

Okachiyama Nagasada has two types of jihada: one is a typical Shinshinto tight jihada, other strongly shows the forging just like on this katana, and you have to pay attention to this type of detail. His shapes do not show the Kiyomaro school's characteristic poor hiraniku, fukura, and sharp appearing shape. His hiraniku and fukura are standard, and he also prefers mitsumune which are not seen often in the Kiyomaro school, and this is an important detail. Maybe because he is a Mino smith, many of his hamon are midare hamon mixed with togariba, and this is a one of his characteristic points. Very few his boshi are midarekomi and the tips are sharp. Most of his boshi are either a suguha style or slightly notare, with a komaru and return. His hamon hataraki and nie are gentle, and his nioiguchi are little worn down compared with the clear bright Kiyomaro school nioiguchi.

In voting, many people voted for Kiyomaro school smiths, and this is a reasonable evaluation. From now on, if you consider Nagasada's characteristic points, your critical judgement will improve.

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

Mei: Yokoyama Ueno Daijo Fujiwara Sukesada

Bizen Osafune ju-nin

Kanbun 8 nen 8 gatsu pi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; there are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, mizukage below the machi, and a bright jihada.

Hamon: a slightly angled yakidashi at the moto, and above this the entire hamon become wider; four open bottom gunome and choji are clustered together, and this is a repeated midare hamon theme. There are small ashi and yo, a tight nioiguchi, nie, some tobiyaki, frequent muneyaki and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: wide straight yakiba, and the tip has some hakikake; there is a round point and long return.

Ueno daijo Sukesada's father Shichibyoei Sukasada lived until 98 years of age. Around the Meireki period, he is supposed to have made his father's daisaku. He himself was long lived and lived till the age of 89. Late in his career, his younger brother who later become his adopted son, Yamato daijo Sukesada, worked and made his daisaku and daimei following his lord's order before he received his own title. From this history, and the unique style seen on this katana (the fukushiki gunome's large size and distinctive style) we can recognize this as the work of Ueno daijo Sukesada and these three smiths. But each smith's shape was different during their active periods. The katana's width at the moto and saki are different, and there is a shallow sori and short chu-kissaki and these are Kanbun Shinto shape details, and it is supposed to be Ueno daijo Sukesada's work.

Because Ueno daijo Sukesada had a long working life, he made many types of shapes. Generally many of his shape have a standard width and thickness with an ihorimune. His jihada and hamon might have been influenced by Osaka shinto work, and many of his jihada are a tight ko-itame, the hamon have an angled yakidashi, there are large vertical midare hamon variations which remind us of toranba, and also o-gunome midare hamon. There are ko-nie, and the jihada and hamon are both bright, and his work seems to reflect a Shinshinto style. His boshi are straight, with a ko-maru and long return, and sometimes stop there. However, some boshi have a long return just like the Osaka Shinto style.

His hamon have characteristic styles. Most of them have four clustered gunome and choji in one group and also are a large midare hamon. Many of the group's gunome are slanted away from the center, and sometimes there are just four simple gunome clusters forming a continuous hamon. Because his hamon have prominent muneyaki, and each midare hamon peak is tight, and there are fine ashi and yo, just like crab claws, one could say these characteristics are Koto period relics.

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

Mei: Higo no kami Kuniyasu

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri



Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itamehada; there are strong dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a bright jihada.

Hamon: the moto has an angled yakidashi; the hamon is a choji midare, and some parts have kobushi-gata (fist shaped) choji. The gunome hamon is the same on both sides. hamon. There are ashi, some yo, ko-nie, some fine sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: wide yakiba, straight, with a komaru and long return.

Higo no kami Kuniyasu was third son of the Shodai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke. He worked for his older brother the Nidai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke (Nakakawachi) and made kobushi gata (fist-shaped) choji hamon, and some of them are as good as his older brother's. This is very similar to his brother's work, and many people voted for Nakakawachi, and of course, this was treated as a correct answer.

The widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a shallow sori, and a slightly short chu-kissaki, which is a Kambun Shinto shape. The jihada is a bright ko-itame hada, and the moto has an angled yakidashi. The hamon is a midare hamon with a bright nioiguchi and frequent ko-nie. The boshi is wide around the tip of ko-shinogi. There is a komaru and along return which is called komaru sagari. These show Osaka Shinto characteristic points, and most people voted for Osaka Shinto smiths' names.

But some people missed the answer in the first vote and they could not find the correct answer even at the third vote.

This may have been partly because the beginner's books' kobushi-gata choji shapes are drawn like either ko-choji lined up and squashed together to become one mass, and the center of the mass rises a little, and the bottom of the mass is narrow, just like a fist shape. Alternatively there are continuous ko-choji along the top with a strong round shape, and each is separated by a small valley. These might have been judged as different from what we see here.

This katana's prominent kobushigata choji are continuous ko-choji but the tops are weakly rounded and shaped more like sloping shoulders, and the top of the clustered gunome form an almost straight line, and overall appearance of the clustered gunome is a hakoba or square style. There are long ashi, and also the choji's narrow sections are not prominent. This kind of style is seen in the work of both Nakakawachi and Kuniyasu, but more likely are prominent in Kuniyasu's work. Some other people voted for Yamato no kami Yoshimichi. Yoshimichi is a Mishina school smith, and many of his yakidashi are straight, and his midare hamon are a little smaller.

**Shijo Kantei To No. 693 (in the October, 2014 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 693 in the October, 2014 issue is a katana by Magoroku Kanemoto.

This is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not different. There is a sakizori and a slightly long chu-kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as being from the latter half of the Muromachi period. This is itame hada mixed with nagare hada. There is a visible hada and whitish utsuri, with a Gyosho style Sanbonsugi hamon, and most people voted for Magoroku Kanemoto. Many of his boshi are either midarekomi with togari, or a jizo type. There are not many straight and komaru boshi like on this katana and the hint referred to this.

Magoroku's katana nakago tips are iriyamagata, and sometimes a shallow ha-agari type kurijiri. His yasurime are takanoha, and his mei are sometimes long, but most of the time, on the omote side around the mekugi ana, there is a two kanji signature. As almost correct answer, a few people voted for the Shodai Kanemoto, Kanesada, Kanenori, and Kanefusa.

The Shodai Kanemoto's hamon are not a strong sanbonsugi shape: his hamon are gunome mixed with choji and gunome-choji, and are an irregular midare hamon. There are fine uchinoke, yubashiri, rough ha-nie, and sunagashi. Many of them have a long signature, such as "No-shu Akasaka ju Kanemoto".

Other Sue Seki smiths have sanbonsugi hamon work, but they are different from Magoroku's Gyosho shape sanbonsugi, and please pay attention this.

However, in looking at Japanese swords each person may look at different things. In the long peaceful mid-Edo period, many people are supposed to have valued the beauty of the sword. And in war time, many people supposed to have looked at them as weapons; just like Miyamoto Musashi said, "a sword is not necessarily of high workmanship: it is more important to cut bones." Today, we do not do such a type of tameshigiri (cutting tests) and many people might think that a meito is a great balance of practicality and beautiful craftsmanship. The idea is that "being a wazamono (a sharp effective sword) is not necessary for being a meito".

Today Magoroku is ranked as a Sue Koto first class smith, and in the Bakumatsu period, his work was ranked as saijo-oo-wazamoto (the best practical sword), but when he made swords, they were Gendaito at that time. Since at the time he produced his swords, the Sengoku warrior loved and used his swords. Today his swords have a high reputation as meito. People's evaluation and viewpoint about swords could be little different today when compared to the past.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

