

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

Classification: Juyo Bijutsuhin

Type: Katana

Mumei: den Nagashige

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu 6 rin (71.1 cm)

Sori: 4 bu 5 rin (1.38 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 7 rin (2.95 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 5 rin (2.25 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane : 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 5 bu 2 rin (4.6 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 5 bu 7 rin (19.9 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, slightly wide, with a standard thickness, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a shallow sori and a long chu-kissai which has an o-kissai-like style. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, and on the omote side some places have nagarehada. The entire jihada is well forged, but the hada is barely visible. There are thick dense ji-nie and frequent chikei. The hamon ko-gunome mixed with ko-notare, square gunome, and togari. Overall, the entire hamon is small midare hamon. There are some uneven thick nie, kinsuji, nie-suji, and prominent sunagashi. The nakago is o-suriage, the tip is a very shallow kurijiri, and the yasurime are sujichigai. There are three mekugiana and no signature.

Soshuden was established by Masamune, and the style spread all over Japan in the Nanbokucho period, and even the mainstream Bizen sword smiths were affected. Bizen smiths such as Chogi, Kanemitsu, and Morikage escaped from the traditional Bizen style and created the Soden-Bizen style. In particular, Choji is the first one listed in the school. People used to say that "Among the Bizen swords, if

a blade does not look like Bizen, it should be Chogi's work. His styles are different and dynamic and have strong nie hataraki.

This katana is supposed to be by Chogi's older brother Nagashige (it belonged to a descendant of the head of the Shimazu family). According to the sword book "Kokon Meizukushi", in the Bizen Osafune school

lineage, the smith's father was Mitsunaga, and the grandfather was Sanenaga.

Judging from the signatures, this could be true.

Nagashige has a couple of well known blades: a tanto classified as Kokuho which is supposed to have been Honnami Kotoku's sashiryo (a small blade he wore) which is signed "Kinoue-inu" (12 animal cycle date) and the date was Kenbu 1 (1334); a tachi classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin and a tanto dated Kenbu 2 (1335); and a tachi classified as Juyo Token and dated Koei 1 (1342). Among these, the two tachi have a suguha hamon with a low yakiba mixed with ko-gunome. The shobu-zukuri tanto is dated Kenbu 2 and is based on Kanemitsu and Motoshige style kaku-gunome (square gunome). The tanto dated Kinoue-inu has nie and very frequent hataraki in the hamon, and in places some you can see Chogi's "ear shape hamon", but the height of the hamon is a little low and there is not much emphasis on vertical variations in the hamon.

From this, Nagashige's signed work shows a wide range of styles. His mumei work tend to be decided (judged) as his work from the Chogi style, but the hamon are not large and do not show much vertical variation, judging from the Kinoue-inu signed tanto. This katana is the same, and the entire hamon is a small size, but the jihada and the hamon's nie style and the hataraki in the hamon are similar to Chogi's dynamic style. Also, some parts of the hamon show the ear shape midare pattern, and this was judged as being Nagashige's work, and this seems to be a very reasonable conclusion.

The katana has a black urushi Satsuma uchigatana koshirae with excellent kanagu work showing the Shimazu main family's cross shaped mon. In Satsuma, two schools of kenjutsu, the Togo-jigen-ryu and the Yakumaru-jiken-ryu have been present since the early Edo period. There is a famous unique posture called "Tonbo"(dragonfly) and a demanding practice style called "Tachigi-uchi". From these kenjutsu schools, Satsuma hayato (brave combatants who lived in Kagoshima since historical times) produced characteristic koshirae. Compared with the usual koshirae, the hilts are long and thick, and the ryugo (the narrow portion in the center of the hilt) are not prominent, many of them are without menuki, and the fuchi and kashira are high and large. These schools felt that the tsuba's protective function was not graceful, and wanted to be sure that a tsuba did not hit the side of the swordsman's head with their unique posture, and consequently, the tsuba was usually small. Also, a kaeritsuno, a hook-like horn inlay near the hilt was put there to prevent the scabbard from slipping out under the obi.

Because the kenjutsu style was intended to draw a sword from the saya and defeat enemies, the kaeritsuno's shape is different from the usual hook-like shape along the side of the outside facing surface of the saya, and this is different from other areas (for a reference, see the Token Bijutsu No. 546 introduction concerning

descriptions and judgments). The koshirae is a typical functional style, and shows the Satsuma bushi's simple and sturdy style and spirit very well.

Explanation and the photo by Ishii Akira.

## Juyo Tosogu

Gekka shirasagi zu (design of an egret under the moon) tsuba and kozuka

Mei on the tsuba : Gyonen 63 (age 63) Masayuki

Mei on the kozuka : Gyonen 61 (age 61) sai Masayuki

Hamano Masayuki was Nara Toshinaga's pupil, a famous master smith, and his works are considered to be at the same level as the "Nara sansaku (the three best master smiths)", Toshinaga, Joui and Yasuchika. His styles are diverse, and he inherited his teacher Toshinaga's style and took the essence of Joui and Yasushika's work. His dynamic engraving styles, taka-nikubori, sukidashibori, and shishiaibori, show excellent skills. The sword magazine article "Soken kicho" ("unusual koshirae") by Inaba Tsuryu said that Masayuki's carving technique is "well skilled, shows nature, and is simple but at the same time dynamic". Masayuki's school produced great master smiths, such as Noriyuki, Naoyuki, Iwama Masatoshi and Horie Okinari and the school was prosperous.

This tsuba and kozuka were made by Masayuki at the ages of 63 and 61. The design on the tsuba is an egret in moonlit night. On the tsuba's theme, we look at a one egret which means "a head facing straight ahead for peace". This is a design containing a moral: there is trouble down the road in the future indicated by the moon and clouds. The egret is standing on one leg on the front of a boat and represents a symbol of a peaceful journey. These are made of almost the same materials and with the same techniques. The solid and careful carving is a strong inheritance from his teacher Toshinaga. The ura side shishiaibori carving shows Joui's personality and this also shows characteristic Nara school Masayuki's work very well.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

## Shijo Kantei To No. 697

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 697 issue Shijo Kantei To is March 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 March 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: katana

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu (69.99 cm)

Sori: 3 bu (0.91 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 1 bu (3.3 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 2 rin (3.4 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 6 rin (21.4 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a poor hiraniku, a shallow sori, a chu-kissaki, and the sharp mune angle is prominent. The jihada is tight ko-itame, there are dense ji-nie, chikei, and a clear jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In the hamon in some places there are tobiyaki, ashi, a dense nioiguchi, thick nie, a bright and clear nioiguchi, kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is iriyamagata. The yasurime are sujichigai with kesho and there is one mekugiana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long signature under the mekugi on the mune side. The ura side has the smith's former name and signature.

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

The swords discussed below were shown in the January, 2015 meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: January 10, 2015 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of January)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

The Heisei 26 New Year Teirei Kanshou Kai was attended by more than 70 people besides the members. As customary for this meeting, there was a single vote, and the winners are listed below. All of them received a prize after the lecture.

Teni : Maki Douchi, Miyano Teiji, and Ota Shiro

Chii: Takemoto Fukuichi, and Kasho Seiichiro

Jini: Shinna Etsuji, and Myoga Akinori

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: tanto**

Mei: Bizen Osafune Motoshige

Joji 4? nen 3 gatsu bi

Length: 9 sun 6.5 bu

Sori: slight

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; some places have a jifu type jihada; there are ji-nie and chikei.

Hamon: kaku-gunome, and the entire hamon is a continuous midare hamon; there are ko-gunome, ashi, and a nioiguchi like ko-nie.

Boshi: small midarekomi; the omote is round; the ura is sharp towards the mune side and there is a return.

Horimono: on the omote there is a futasuji-hi with marudome. On the ura there is a sankozuka no ken.

This is a wide, long blade, and is thin for the width, and this is an Enbun-Joji shape, and obviously mid-Nambokucho period work. In this period, the continuous kaku (square shaped)-gunome hamon is seen in the Bizen mainstream smith Kanemitsu and other smiths associated with him, and many people voted for their names. If it were Kagemitsu, the hamon would be a "kataochi-gunome", and on the top of the hamon, the left side of the tops of the gunome slant down, and on the right side of the hamon, the tops of the gunome are slanted up, and you can see this is different. This is a Motoshige tanto. His exceptional features are: 1) strong ha-nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki, strongly influenced by the Soshu Den style; 2) suguha mixed with kaku-gunome and saka-ashi; 3) the entire hamon is a suguha

style mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji, square gunome, and there are saka-ashi which he made on and off throughout his career. But many of his signed works have continuous kaku-gunome hamon, just like the tanto.

In this case, the top of the hamon is not a kataochi shape, just a straight line with no vertical variations, and this characteristic point is conventional, and you can see that on this tanto. Also, if you look at the jihada carefully, besides being mixed with nagarehada, some parts have jifu, and this is one of Motoshige's characteristic points. This wakizashi was recently classified as Juyo-token. The Joji 4 period is when Motoshige's last work appeared and this is a valuable reference tanto.

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

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Minamoto-byoei Sukesada saku kore nari

Ensho 6 nen Tsuchinoe Tora 8 gatsu jo kichijitsu

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: slightly less than 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: based on open bottom gunome and mixed with square shaped gunome, togariba, and ko-gunome; the entire hamon has a high yakiba, and is a midare hamon. There are ashi,yo, slightjy uneven dense nie, and in places there are some kinsuji and sunagashi (especially frequent on the omote and ura iin the koshimoto area); there are tobiyaki and yubashiri.

Boshi: wide yakiba, midarekomi and a return.

This is slightly wide, the widths at the moto and saki are not much different, the tip has sori, it is thick, and ther is a chu-kissaki, and a dynamic shape. Also, the boshi has a wide yakikomi, and from these characteristics you can judge this uchigatana as work from the end of the Muromachi period, especially after the Koji and Eiroku periods (1556-1567). The jihada is a tight ko-itame, the jihada is not visible, and ther is a refined jigane. In this period, among the many unrefined or roughly forged jihada appearing all over the Japan, this is a well forged jihada. Most of the time this kind of example is mainstream Sue-Bizen work, and often specially ordered work with smith's title in the signature. Beside this, the hamon are based on open bottom gunome, which are seen most during the Muromachi period in Bizen work, and in some placves there are fukushiki (double) hamon. These are characteristic Sue-Bizen characteristic points.

This is a Minamoto-byoei Sukesada katana. There are many Sue-Bizen smiths at the end of the Muromachi period. Among these, this Sukesada's most active period was in the Genki and Tensho eras (1570-1591). Usually his shapes are dynamic, and we seen many well made master works. There is another smith active in the same period, Magouemon-no-jo Kiyomitsu. If this were Kiyomitsu's work, his jihada are only slightly visible, and the jigane is less refined. With the same Sukesada

name, some people looked at this as Yosouzaemon work. But his active time was mainly from the Bunki period to around the Tenmon period (1501-1554), and many of his works are shorter than this katana, and are katate-uchi katana and the shapes are different from this one.

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

Mei: Hizen kuni Bichu daijo Fujiwara Masanaga

Kawachi no kami Fujiuji Masahiro

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 6.5 bu

Sori: 6.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame hada, with a slightly visible hihada; there are dense ji-nie, and fine chikei.

Hamon: yakidashi at the koshimoto; above this is a gunome midare mixed with choji, ko-gunome, and square shaped gunome. There are ashi, yo, frequent thick nie, sunagashi and tobiyaki.

Boshi: straight with komaru and a long return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago.

This katana has a tight ko-itame hada, and the midare hamon's lower part has nie and nioi, a dense nioiguchi, and in some places, the midare hamon's valleys and ashi end going towards the edge and they also end along a straight uniform line parallel to the edge. The boshi is straight along the fukura, and round and with a return. From these characteristics, it is not difficult to judge this as Hizen work. Looking at the jihada, the entire jihada is dark, the hada is slightly visible, and the moto has a suguha type yakidashi. The areas between the midare waves are suguha or a shallow notare with a low yakiba. There are also very narrow bottom uniquely shaped choji. From these characteristics, among the Hizen smiths, you could think about Bo-Hizen work.

In voting, there were almost no mainstream smith's names, and more than half of the people voted for Masahiro, Yukihiro, or Tadakuni. If it were Tadakuni's work, there are usually more prominent sunagashi and kinsuji. If it were Hiroyuki's work, there are not many hamon like on this katana which has a high yakiba and a gorgeous midare hamon. Also, his hamon have more space between the midare waves, and are less sharp or defined and less dynamic.

This is a very rare gassaku katana made by the Nidai Masahiro and his own son the Sandai Masanaga. As Nidai Masahiro's work, this is well done, and included the Shodai's name, so we treated that as a correct answer at this time. The Nidai Masahiro has many wide and thick sword, just like this katana, and his boshi tend to have long returns.

Some of the other answers were Shin-Kunisada and Kunisuke, maybe because if the yakidashi at the moto, the midare hamon with straight round omaru boshi with a return. Their works usually have gunome mixed with choji, and the entire hamon is smaller, and is a tight midare, and the vertical alterations in the yakiba are different heights are not prominent like this.

#### **Kantei To No 4: tachi**

Mei: Yoshifusa

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 4 bu 6 rin

Sori: 6.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; entire jihada is well forged. There are jienie, chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: based on a choji hamon, and mixed with ko-choji, ko-gunome, and togari.

There are frequent ashi, yo, thick fine ha-nie, and some places have kinsuji, niesuji, and sunagashi.

Boshi: suguha style; the entire boshi has hakikake and there is a round return.

This is a Fukuoka Ichimonji Yoshifusa tachi. The tachi sori is not too large for a tachi. The moto has funbari, a slightly narrow shape, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The upper half has a moderate sori, but this is not uchizori. From jihada and hamon, you can judge this as work from after the mid-Kamakura period. Looking at the jihada, it is a little pale, but there are light and dark shades of midare utsuri, and from this, you can infer this is Bizen work. The hamon cannot show all its details in the picture, but the entire hamon is small, and based on a variable choji hamon. From these details, it is appropriate to look at this as Ichimonji work.

Yoshifusa is of course the Ichimonji school's representative smith. At first, you can see the gorgeous choji hamon, with each choji cluster large, and with a high yakiba, and for an example you can see the sword named Okadagiri. Yoshifusa has a number of styles, and more than we might think: (1) Mainly in nie: there are prominent sunagashi and kinsuji; (2) Less vertical variations in a small midare hamon with densenie, which reminds us of the Ko-Bizen style; (3) a tight suguha mixed with ko-gunome and saka-ashi, with a late Osafune style, and a gentle look. This tachi is between the styles (1) and (2) and different from Yoshifusa's spectacular high yakiba with a choji hamon. In voting, Yoshifusa name came up very few times, and this is understandable. From this perspective, if you look at this as Ichimonji work, it is enough.



Some other opinions were Ko-Bizen or Ko-Ichimonji work, partly because of the classic looking old style hamon. However, on many of those swords, the utsuri are usually a darker jifu-utsuri, and the entire yakiba is lower than on this tachi.

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

Mumei: Hakushu ju Hironori saku

Houji 3 nen 8 gatsu bi

Length: slightly less than 8 sun 3 bu

Sori: very slight

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with mokume hada; there are ji-nie, and fine chikei.

Hamon: based on a kaku-gunome hamon mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, and togari. There are some ko-ashi, yo, even ko-nie, a long yakisage return, muneyaki, yubashiri, and the entire hamon is hitatsura style.

Boshi: straight; on the omote tip is sharp; on the the ura the tip is round, and both sides have a long return.

Horimono: the omote has bonji, and the ura side has koshi-hi with marudome.

This is a Hakushu Hironori tanto. This is a standard length and width. The blade is thick and the the shape is similar to a Muromachi period yoroi-doshi, and the fukura is a little poor.

The boshi is noticeably long, and from these characteristics, this is from around the end of the Muromachi period. The jihada's tobiyaki and yubashiri are prominent, and there are muneyaki, and from this, the hamon could be classified as hitatsura. In this period, hitatsura hamon were seen all over the Japan, not only in particular schools. As a candidate you can imagine the Tsunahiro Sue-soshu smiths, Shimada, Wakashu Fuyuhiko, and Sue-bizen smiths.

Looking at the hamon, the square shape gunome hamon is prominent, especially on the omote side, and the boshi's long return is straight, not midare. This style is seen mostly in the Tsunahiro school's Hakushu Hironori hamon, and this tanto shows these characteristics very well. Hironori was adopting the Soshuden style, but very rarely used mitsumune, and his mune are mostly ihorimune. Also, his work sometimes has a standard length with a shallow sori, and the shape show his characteristic points. Most of his jihada, in the case of ko-itame hada, are well forged and this tanto is typical.

Some other opinions were Shimada and Horikawa Kunihiro. In Shimada's hitatsura hamon, the top of the hamon is sharp and continuous into the muneyaki. The Kunihiro answer may come from the Tensho-uchi (Tensho shape) style. If it were his work, the nie would be more prominent, the kinsuji and sunagashi are prominent, and there are more Soshu Den details in his work.

## **Shijo Kantei To No 695 ( in the 2014 December issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 693 in the December issue is a tachi by Ko-hoki Yasutsuna

This has an almost standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori with funbari, the tip has uchizori, and there is a small kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as work from the end of Heian period to the early Kamakura period.

The entire jihada has a large pattern itame and mokume hada, a dark color, and jifu utsuri. The hamon has yaki-otoshi at the koshimoto, and above this it is a classic ko-midare style which is seen in all locations in this period. There is a worn down nioiguchi, dense nie, and inside of the hamon some hada is visible. These are typical Yasutsuna characteristic points and most people voted for him.

Sanemori and Yasuie were accepted as almost correct answers. Beside these, some people voted for Awataguchi Kuniyasu and Unjo.

Sanemori has all kinds signatures such as "Hoki Ohara Sanemori", "Ohara Sanemori", and "Sanemori tsukuru" and his signatures do not follow uniform rules like Yasutsuna's. His yasurime are usually sujichigai.

Considering Yasuie's work, the Kuroda family's ancestral tachi is classified as Kokuho and is famous. The shape of the tip of the nakago and the yasurime are the same as on this tachi. Also, the signature's "yasu" kanji is small and "ie" kanji is large, and that is similar to this work.

Yasuie's hamon are Ko-Hoki work, and are midare hamon with prominent ko-choji. The upper half of the hamon has more pronounced vertical alterations, and there are more hataraki inside of the hamon. This is a more spectacular hamon than Yasutsuna's, and has more feelings of technical mastery. Besides this tachi, Yasuie's work is very rare.

Kuniyasu's active period was very close to Yasutsuna's and naturally their tachi shapes and hamon closely resemble each other. Beside a nashi-ji hada, he has a larger size itame and mokume hada, the hada is visible, and there are prominent chikei, and from this, that answer is understandable.

However, if it were Kuniyasu's work, the utsuri becomes bo-utsuri, the top of the midare hamon has intermittent kijimata shaped yubashiri, and some parts of the hamon are soft, which is similar to the same area's Kyoto smith Ayanokoji Sadatoshi's work. Also, if we compare both, Kuniyasu's ha-nie are finer than Yasutsuna's, and the ashi and yo hataraki are more delicate and fine.

Unjo's jihada has jifu-utsuri, and often yakiotoshi at the koshimoto. His signature's "un" kanji is more to the right side than the "jo" kanji and this writing style is similar to this tachi.

But if it were Unjo's work, the tachi shape would have koshizori, at the same time the kissaki has sori, and the entire shape would be a wa-zori shape. Also, based on the same suguha type of hamon, his hamon are a more modern style, at the koshimoto, the ko-choji and ko-gunome hamon together become a midare hamon, but often the upper half becomes a simple suguha style; also his boshi are round and have a large return, and these are differences from Yasutsuna's work.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai