

**NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL**  
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**Meito Kansho**  
**Examination of important swords**

**Juyo Bijutsuhin**  
**Important Art Object**

Type: Tachi  
Mei: Ohara Sanemori

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 7 rin (70.2cm)  
Sori: 7 bu 3 rin (2.2 cm)  
Motohaba: 8 bu 5 rin (2.55 cm)  
Sakihaba: 5 bu 4 rin (1.65 cm)  
Motokasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)  
Sakikasane : 1 bu (0.3 cm)  
Kissaki length: 7 bu 9 rin (2.4 cm)  
Nakago length: 7 sun 2 bu 4 rin (21.95 cm)  
Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly narrow width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. It is slightly thin, there is a large sori, and a small kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, and the entire jihada is composed with a large pattern, and the jihada is just slightly visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, and mainly from mid- to upper half, there are jifu-utsuri, and a slightly dark hada. The hamon is yaki-otoshi at the moto, and above it, a ko-choji hamon mixed with ko-gunome, square gunome, and small togari. There are frequent ashi and yo, slightly uneven thick fine ha-nie, niesuji, kinsuji, sunagashi, and the top of the hamon has small yubashiri tobiyaki. The boshi on the omote is almost straight, the ura is a shallow notare, and both are yakizume, the tip on the omote has hakikake, the ura has niesuji. The nakago is suriage, the tip has a shallow ha-agari kurijiri, and the yasurime which are new on the ura are osuji-chigai. On the omote, the original old yasurime are not visible. There are three mekugi-ana, and on the omote next the third mekugiana on the mune side, there is a signature composed with four slightly large kanji.

From historical times, Hoki no kuni Ohara Sanemori has been known as Yasutsugu's son according to many old sword books, and he is a representative of the Ko-Hoki smiths. Many of his kanji signatures are long, whereas all the other Ko-Hoki smiths used a two kanji signature. Sanemori's signatures are "Hoki kuni Ohara Sanemori tsukuru"; "Ohara Sanemori"; and "Sanemori tsukuru", and his kanji styles are not always the same, but vary. Also, rarely, there is a "katsu" (victory) kanji with a signature, may be this is a some kind of prayer. However, another opinion is that the kanji should be read as "suguri", which is the last name of a Korean immigrant, but there is no conclusive evidence for this.

The Ko-Hoki style can be compared with Ko-Bizen work: their jihada are dark, the jihada patterns are large, and there is a slightly prominent visible hada. The hamon are yaki-otoshi at the moto, there are dense nie, and a clear prominent ko-gunome hamon. There are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, abundant hataraki, a worn down nioiguchi, and a country (non-mainstream) style. Compared with Yasutsuna, Sanemori's hamon are smaller, and this is a one of his characteristic points.

Among Sanemori's small existing number of swords, there is a Juyo Bunkazai tachi owned by the Wakayama Toshogu (shrine), the number 51 Juyo Token classified ko-tachi, and a tachi without any classification which was the Hitachi province's Tsuchiura clan's tachi. These have horimono at the koshimoto such as a su-ken, short koshi-hi, and bonji and this is a notable point.

This sword was the Tokugawa shogun family's tachi, and in Showa 12, it was classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, and owner was the 16<sup>th</sup> Tokugawa shogun Iyasu. The tachi is listed in the "Kiya Oshigata" and next to the full size oshigata, it is written "This is an oshigata of a tachi in the Momiji-yama treasure hall, so please take care of it". The Momiji-yama name is Edo castle's small hill between the main tower and western enclosure.

In Genna 4 (1619), after Iyasu's byosho (mausoleum) was built on Momiji-Yama, successive shoguns' byosho (treasures) and books were put there (this was called the Momiji-Yama bunko or library). The treasure warehouse was supposed to provide storage for the Genji family's swords and armors. According to the Kiya-oshigata book, this tachi was in the same warehouse or library. Another treasure was a Rai Kunitugu signed tachi classified as Juyo Bunkazai, and there were all kinds of valuable items related to the Tokugawa family.

The tachi shows Ko-Hoki characteristic points: the moto has a yaki-otoshi, some parts have ko-gunome, in places the hada is visible, there are kinsuji and sunagashi, and a typical Ko-Hoki style. But the top of hamon has yubashiri and tobiyaki, and this reminds us of the work of Ayanokoji Sadatoshi and Rai Kuniyuki and this is interesting. This tachi is suriage, slightly narrow, has a large koshizori, elegant tachi shape. This is a rare work, and at the same time has historical value. This is an elegant and really beautiful example of Sanemori's work and an important item for the research and study of Sanemori's style.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

## No.706 Tosogu Kanshou

**Wachigai (circle design) sukashi tsuba**

**Mumei: Akasaka Sandai Tadatora**

Akasaka tsuba are famous and known as iron sukashi tsuba, along with other groups such as those in Kyoto, Owari, and Higo. The school was prosperous in Edo's Akasaka, from right after Edo bakufu (government) was established in the Kanei period up to the Bakumatsu period.

In the Bunsei period (1818-29), the 8th generation Tadatoki submitted a history of the school's origin to the bakufu. From this history, we can recognize the work of each generation in the school's history. Among the school's smiths, work by the shodai (first generation), the nidai (second generation) Tadamasa, and the sandai (third generation) Tadatora are called Ko-Akasaka work and have no signatures. Beginning with the yondai (the 4th generation) Tadatoki, they signed their work. The Akasaka tsuba's iron forging was often sanmai-awase, and many of their themes are devoted to designs from nature and historical stories. Usually the shapes are thick in the center of the tsuba, and the sukashi work becomes more apparent at the rim, and there is a round shape.

Generally, the shodai, nidai, and sandai's Ko-Akasaka work have are thick when compared to other generations, the iron is well forged with a good color, and they are elegant. Notably, thicker shapes, a large seppa-dai, and a dynamic shape are supposed to indicate the sandai Tadatora's work.

This tsuba is supposed to be the sandai Tadatora's work. The wa-chigai sukashi design and pampas grass, suggest Musashino scenery, and this is seen often in the first three generation's work. The rim is thick, and the large seppa-dai shape shows the sandai's characteristic points, the iron color is very good, and this is dynamic elegant work.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

## Shijo Kantei To No. 706

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 706 issue Shijo Kantei To is December 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 December 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: 2 shaku 2 sun 6 bu (68.48 cm)

Sori: 5.5 bu (1.67 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 1 rin (1.55 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 1 rin (2.75 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 5 bu 4 rin (16.8 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshi-sori with funbari, the tip has a sori and there is a chu- kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and the hada is slightly visible. There are thick dense ji-nie, thick kawari-tetsu type chikei, jifu and midare-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon's width is narrow for the mihaba, entire hamon is small, there is a nioiguchi with ko-nie, kinsuji, fine sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi. The nakago is almost ubu, but the blade is a little machi okuri, on the nakago's mune side, the bottom half is rubbed and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari, and there are three mekugi ana. On the omote side, next to the original mekugiana along the mune side there is a long kanji signature and the ura has a date. This smith's signature is never seen with a gyaku-tagane style.

## **Teirei Kanshou Kai For October**

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

Meeting Date: October 10, 2015 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of October) at 1:00 pm.

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Iida Toshihisa

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**

Mumei: Rai Kunitoshi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 7 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: chu-suguha; there are ko-ashi, some yo, a dense nioiguchi, and frequent nie; the hamon is bright and clear.

Boshi: straight, with a komaru and return.

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

The tachi has no funbari at the habaki-moto, and so you can guess this is a suriage shape, but entire sori is a wa-sori shape. The jihada is mixed with o-hada in places, but most of jihada is a fine tight ko-itame hada. there are thick dense ji-nie with bo-utsuri, and a beautiful refined jihada. The hamon is a gentle suguha with a dense nioiguchi, and the boshi is straight with a komaru and return, which strongly shows Yamashiro Rai school characteristic points. From this, many people voted for Rai school smiths or the Enju school smiths which was influenced by the Rai school.

This is a Rai Kunitoshi tachi. The shape is a narrow and elegant tachi shape, and this kind of shape, except for Ryokai, is seen Rai Kunitoshi and Rai Kunimitsu's early work. This kind of gentle suguha hamon is seen in both smiths' work. It is difficult to judge an individual name from the shape, jihada and hamon and either of these smiths' name is fine.

Rai Kuniyuki has blades with narrow shapes and wider shapes. His hamon are based on suguha, but many of them are noticeably mixed with ko-choji and are ko-midare. There are not many like this with a gentle suguha hamon.

This tachi has some areas with a soft and tired jihada, and some places have a whitish color and look like utsuri. However, this is different and was not originally utsuri, and these areas later developed a whitish jihada. Possibly on the first impression, this looks like whitish utsuri, and some people voted for Ryokai and Enju. The healthy jihada areas have a pale and smoke-like bo-utsuri. In judging utsuri, it is important to determine if the likely utsuri comes from original healthy forging work of develops from a whitish and tired jihada.

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

Mei: Higo Daijo Sadakuni

Kiritsuke mei: Yamano Kanjuro te nite (by his hand) 1 no-do otosu.

Length: 9 sun 7 bu

Sori: slightly less 1 bu

Design: the omote is kiriha zukuri, the ura is hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; there are chikei, ji-nie, and the hada is slightly visible.

Hamon: the omote is suguha and the ura is a shallow notare; both are mixed with ko-gunome and ko-notare. On the omote, there are yubashiri shaped nijuba, and sunagashi and ko-nie.

Boshi: shallow notare-komi, a ko-maru, and a slightly long return.

Horimono: on the omote in a koshimoto-hi there is a fudo relief carving. The ura has bonji and under the bonji, gomabashi.

This tanto has horimono such as bonji and gomabashi, is wide and long, and has katakiriha shape. This kind of shape was seen in early times in the work of Sadamune and Nobukuni. The Soshu-Den style became very popular in the Keicho-Shinto period, and Yasutsugu and other Echizen smiths liked and used this style.

This is an Echizen Shinto Higo Daijo Sadakuni tanto.

Sadakuni has blades dated during Keicho 14 (1609), and is supposed to have been very close to Yasutsugu and the Shimosaka smiths. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, the hada pattern is visible, the ji is a dark color, there are jifu

areas in iron called “ Echizen-gane”. The hamon is based on suguha with a slight notare, and mixed with ko-gunome and ko-nie. the boshi is a shallow notarekomi, with a long return. The shape, the jihada and the hamon are Echizen Yasutsugu’s characteristic points.

In voting, a majority of people voted for Yasutsugu. However, looking at the tanto carefully, compared with Yasutsugu’s work, the hamon width is narrow, the notare hamon is a shallow suguha, and the gunome are not prominent. Also, the jihada and hamon have less nie, and these characteristics are different from Yasutsugu’s work.

Among the Echizen smiths, Sadakuni’s specialty is suguha, a gentle hamon, nie in the jihada and hamon are less common, and these are his characteristic points. Some people voted for Kunihiro. Maybe they look at the Echizen school’s visible jihada as Horikawa’s zanguri ( rough) jihada and voted for his name. But if were a Horikawa jihada, the jihada would not have a dark color like Echizen steel. The mokume hada is not prominent compared with Echizen’s, and the boshi yakikomi ado not have a long return like this tanto.

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

Mei: Suishinshi Masahide with kao  
Bunka 5 nen 8 gatsu bi (1809)

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: straight yakidashi, and above that, a continuous round top o-gunome hamon. There is wide nioiguchi, frequent nie, and some places have rough nie; the hamon is bright and clear.

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

This is a Shinshinto Suishinshi Masahide toranba style o-gunome midare katana. The toran-midare hamon was created in the Kanbun period by Tsuda Echizen no kami Sukehiro in Osaka. Because of the gorgeous, large and active hamon, in later periods many Shinshinto smiths, such as Suishinshi Masahide, Tegarayama Masashige, Ozaki Suketaka, Kato Tsunahide, the Tsunatoshi brothers, and Ichige Tokurin tried to recreate it. All these Shinshinto smiths’ common characteristics are: the Shinshinto characteristic shape with a shinogi ji which is narrow for the width, poor hiraniku (i.e. a relatively flat blade), a long kissaki, and the jihada is a too tight muji type kagami tetsu (mirror-like iron). Also the nie in the jihada and

hamon are less fine, bright or clear when compared with Sukehiro's original, and this sword is less refined work than Sukehiro's.

This katana does not have as narrow a shinogi ji as most Shinshinto work; there is some hiraniku; the jihada is a ko-itame hada mixed with fine chikei; the hamon is bright and very clear, and at first sight, this is as good as Sukehiro's work.

But pay attention to the nie in the hamon. Sukehiro's nie are fine and also even, jihada, and become yubashiri, and overall, the entire are uneven. Also Sukehiro's yakidashi's width becomes wider as it goes forward towards the point, and that style is called Osaka yakidashi, but this yakidashi is different. The yakidashi's width is everywhere the same and forms a straight line parallel to the edge. Another big difference is that this toranba midare hamon's gunome have round tops, and the left and right slopes of the gunome are the same as an o-gunome hamon. Sukehiro's toran-midare hamon gunome have two different slopes: the one side is a gentle slope, and other side has a steep slope, and this is an important difference.

Among the Shinshinto smiths, the toranba-style left and right gunome slopes in the midare hamon show characteristic points. Many of works by Suketaka, Tsunahide, and Tsunatoshi are Sukehiro's style, and Masashige and Tokurin's works are Suishinshi's style. In Masashige's midare hamon, the tops of the gunome the and valleys are sometimes show a togari shape. Tokurin's hamon details have a repeating rhythm of one, two, three, and one, two, three, etc.

#### **Kantei To No 4: wakizashi**

Mei: □ shu Osafune Mori □

Oei 21 nen □

Length: slightly less than 1 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 1 bu

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume, and the hada is slightly visible. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, and straight utsuri.

Hamon: mainly ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji, and the midare hamon valleys are open. There are frequent ashi, and nioiguchi type ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tips are a slightly narrow togari, and there is a shallow return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are katana-hi with marudome. There are traces of soe-hi.

In the early Muromachi period, during the Oei period (1394-1427), the Bizen Osafune school had sword smiths who produced very sophisticated work. We call this group of smiths and swords Oei-Bizen, and among these, Morimitsu and Yasumitsu are two of the best master smiths.

This is a wakizashi which is long for the width; it is thick, and the tip has sori. This is a common shape in the early Muromachi period around the Oei period. The jihada is itame mixed with prominent mokume hada, and the hada is visible. There are chikei, and the top of the hamon has straight utsuri. The hamon is mainly gunome mixed with choji, and the midare hamon valleys are wide and this style of hamon is called "koshihiraki ha".

These are characteristic points for all Oei-Bizen smiths. Additionally, Oei-Bizen boshi are described as a "candle's center", which is midarekomi with a sharp tip, and this wakizashi shows these characteristics. Many Oei Bizen hi (groove) horimono are finished with a marudome end above the habaki and this is another one of their characteristic points.

This is a typical Oei-Bizen work, most people voted for Morimitsu and Yasumitsu. Both smiths' techniques and style are equally high, and it is difficult to judge an individual name. Generally, Morimitsu's hamon are a large size and have gunome or features which are round. Yasumitsu's hamon are smaller, and have a tendency to be mixed with togari.

The midare hamon are generally gentle, and either smith name's is fine at this time.

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

Mei: Higo no kami Fujiwara Teruhiro

Length: slightly less than 1 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Design: hira-zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame hada, which is a bit tight and mixed with nagare hada; there are frequent ji-nie, and chikei.

Hamon: based on a notare hamon and mixed with ko-gunome; there is a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, kinsuji and yubashiri.

Boshi: on the omote it is slightly shallow notarekomi, with a round tip and return; the ura is straight, with a round tip and is slightly tsukiage, and there is a return.

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

This is a Higo no kami Teruhiro wakizashi. Higo no kami Teruhiro originally came from Mino. Later he is supposed to have become a student of the Umetada Myoju school in Kyoto, the same as his son-in-law Harima no kami Teruhiro. He worked for Fukushima Masanori, and moved to Gei-shu in Hiroshima.

After the Fukushima family was abolished, his descendants worked under the Asano family. His existing blades are few when compared with Harima no kami Teruhiro. Importantly, he has no long swords left today, but the two Teruhiro's have similar styles. The shapes are typical Keicho Shinto shapes which are wide just like this wakizashi, and many of the jihada are a tight ko-itame mixed with nagare hada and this characteristic hamon may come from their original Mino ancestor's style. The hamon are mainly notare, and there is a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, and the hamon is bright and clear and the same as the Myoju school's smith the Shodai Tadayoshi.

This wakizashi shows Teruhiro's characteristic points very well, and many people voted for him. It is difficult to judge differences between Higo no kami Teruhiro and Harima no kami Teruhiro work. This may be an over simplification, but Higo no kami's work is somewhat classic, and Harima no kami's works are a more modern typical Shinto style. Harima no kami's jihada are tighter when compared with Higo no kami's. Harima no kami's hamon have a wider nioiguchi and many of his jihada and hamon are bright and clear.

In voting, some people voted for Tadayoshi. If it were Tadayoshi's work, it would be rare to see this much prominent nagare hada, and Tadayoshi's hamon are a Hizen to characteristic style, and the nioiguchi has a uniform width everywhere. There is a clear nioiguchi which has a belt-like appearance. Some people voted for some Keicho shinto smiths such Kunihiro and Yasutsugu. If it were Kunihiro, the jihada would be a visible itame hada called "zanguri" (rough). If it were Yasutsugu's work, the jihada would be darker, with prominent mokume and called "Echizen gane". Both of these two smiths' jihada would be not mixed with this much strong nagare hada.

## **Shijo Kantei To No 704 (in the September, 2015 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 704 in the September issue is a wakizashi by the Shodai Izumi-no-kami Kunisada.

This blade is wide, long, and slightly thick, and with sori, and this kind of shape is seen often in the Keicho Shinto period.

Shin Kunisada's usual style seen in katana, from the Kanei to around the Shoho periods are a Shinto shape, and many of his jihada are a tight ko-itame. The hamon have long straight yakidashi, and above this, a round topped small choji and gunome. There is a dense nioiguchi, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. The boshi are straight with a komaru, and the yokote has tobiyaki and mixed with muneyaki.

Other than that, his early work, just like this wakizashi, have a Keicho Shinto shape, the jihada is a tight ko-itame, the hamon has a straight yakidashi at the moto, and above the yakidashi there is a shallow notare hamon mixed with gunome and togari, which is Seki type work. There is a tight nioiguchi, and worn down nie. The boshi are a Sanpin style, similar to his actual teacher Echigo no kami Kunitoshi's work.

The wakizashi's workmanship is as good as Kunitoshi's work. In Kunisada's later work, one of his characteristic points is muneyaki, however muneyaki is seen sometimes in Kunisada's early work. This wakizashi shows Kunisada's characteristics which were seen in his his later work, and the hint referred to this. A majority of people voted for Kunisada, and besides him, some people voted for Kunitoshi.

As I explained above, it could be possible to look at the muneyaki as a Kunisada characteristic feature. Beside this characteristic, the wakizashi's workmanship is very similar to Kunitoshi's, and it is difficult to judge the difference. So the Kunitoshi name was treated as a correct answer at this time.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai