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**2018 Gendai Toshoku Ten**  
**2018 Modern sword and Craft Competetion**

**Tachi, Katana, Wakizashi, Naginata and Yari Division**  
**Prince Takamatsu Memorial Prize**

Type: Tachi

Mei:

Omote: Harima kuni ju Takami Kuniichi saku kore

Hajajunshin Koki 2677 nen Uguisu-naku (nightingale song)

mune: hori Sofu

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 7 rin (79.0 cm)

Sori: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)

Saki kasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 9 rin (3.6 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 1 bu (21.5 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.3 cm)

**Commentary**

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is wide and thick, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a slightly short chu-kissaki which resembles an Inokubi style kissaki. The kitae has a ko-itame hada, and the entire ji has some nagare type hada, and the hada is just visible. There are ji-nie, and jifu-like clear midare-utsuri. The entire hamon has a high yakiba. The hamon's vertical variations are not prominent, and the hamon is based on choji mixed with ko-gunome, square gunome, and togari. There are frequent ashi and yo, the hamon is nioi-deki (based on nioi), and there is a bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi is midarekomi, the tip is sharp and there is a komaru and return. The horimono on the omote is a Tama-

oi Nobori-ryu. On the ura, the horimono is bonji and a “Namu hachi-dai-Ryuo” kanji carving. The nakago tip is shallow ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are a deeply filed sujichigai and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote written above and below the mekugi ana there is small sized long kanji signature. On the ura above the mekugi-ana and along the center, there are kanji for “Haja Junshin”, and under the mekugi-ana towards the mune side there is a date.

Takami Kuniichi became the first student of the Kawachi Kunihiro in Nara in Heisei 4 (1992). He studied for 7 years under Kunihiro, and in Heisei 11 (1999) he became independent. During his apprenticeship period, he studied basic tagane (chisel) techniques with Yanagimura Senju. After Heisei 9, for 5 years, he worked at the Nitoho tatara as a trainee Murage (a person who operates the tatara) to learn about steel making. He seriously studied Japanese steel making as well as Japanese sword making, and after he became independent, he received many “excellence” awards, the NBTHK chairman’s award, the Sword Smith’s Association award, and the Kunzan award. He has been producing many excellent Bizen-den style works. He is 37 years old, and from Heisei 23 (2011) he studied at the Osaka Art University’s Craft Art department, and in Heisei 28 received a bachelor’s degree and graduated, and I have to admire his love of learning. Also, every time, I have seen him, he is always asking for evaluations of his work, and all kinds of questions about swords. I would imagine that his ambition and quest to learn derive from his teacher Kunihiro, and his persistent efforts led him to today’s results.

This tachi reminds us of a mid-Kamakura period tachi with its shape and width, because the difference in the widths at the the moto and saki are not too prominent, the large koshi sori, the tip with sori, the chu-kissaki with its Inokubi kissaki style, and its dynamic shape. Beside this, the soft appearing hamon is based on a choji style hamon mixed with many types of structures, and has an uneven midare hamon appearance. It has a natural appearance, and there are no prominent vertical variations. With these details, among the Ichimonji schools, it is very close to Yoshioka work. The noteworthy point is the utsuri, and the clear dark areas are uneven, and this clear midare utsuri shows a classic feeling. Since his teacher Kunihiro received the Masamune award in Heisei 26 (2014), this kind of utsuri reminds us of the classic feeling seen among the school’s work. We could say with this tachi’s hamon’s composition and its high level of perfection, it really deserves this praise.

However, 9 years ago in August, Takami’s workshop in Sayo-cho, Hyogo prefecture suffered a huge amount of damage from heavy rains and was partially destroyed. He was determined to recover from this misfortune, and the next year, Heisei 22 at the Shinsaku Mei To Ten, he received the number one position in the group receiving the excellence award. Since then he has not received the excellence prize, so at this time, his receiving the Prince Takamatsu Memorial Award deserves extensive congratulations. Today Takami is 44 years old, and we are looking forward to seeing more of his best work in the future.

Explanation by Ishii Akira. Illust by Imoto Yuki.

## **2018 Gendai Toshoku Ten 2018 Modern Sword and Craft Competition**

### **Chokin (metal carving) Division**

#### **Kunzan award**

**Mei: Jinji yuraku ari sanko kokon nashi moji sukashi tsuba  
Heisei Hinoto-tori doshi Yoshiyuki saku**

If you ask for a sukashi tsuba with character today, nobody can make one better than Kawashima Yoshiyuki. An artist who deserves this kind of compliment has again produced a master work.

Kawashima Yoshiyuki received the Chairman's award last year, the Kunzan award the year before, and this year he received the excellent award for the third time. His first exhibit was in Showa 61 (1986), and he already has more than 30 years of experience. Recently, his technique has reached towards perfection, and every year his workmanship is becoming better. This year, he is 70 years old, and his motivation to produce excellent work has never declined and there are no other people following in his footsteps. This level of accomplishment has derived from his steady level of activity.

The tsuba's nikudori (volume), the kanji's composition, and all of the details were well controlled by the artist. As we said in last year's introduction, his spirit and dedication leads to excellent work. Although this is a work in iron, it has a warmth and feeling.

His attention and care to details and his thoughts help define Kawashima's attitude in designing and making his tsuba.

We are now looking forward to seeing what he will produce next year.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

### **Shijo Kantei To No. 737**

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 737 issue Shijo Kantei To is July 5, 2018. 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 July 5, 2018 will be accepted. If there are sword smiths with the same name in different schools, please write the school or prefecture, and if the sword smith was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

### **Information:**

Type: Tanto

Length: 9 sun 3.5 bu (28.33 cm)

Sori: Uchizori

Motohaba: 7 bu 8 rin (2.35 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 4.5 bu (10.45 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a hirazukuri tanto with a mitsumune. It is wide, long, and thick. There is almost no sori, but the tip has a little uchizori. The jigane is a tight ko-itame, there are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, nie utsuri, a unique hada, and the jigane is clear. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In the hamon, there are ashi and yo, frequent ko-nie, a bright and clear ko-nie, and fine kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are a shallow kattesagari. There are two mekugi-ana, and one is closed. On the omote side under the ubu mekugiana, on the center, there is a three kanji signature.

## **Teirei Kanshou Kai For May, 2018**

The swords discussed below were shown in the May, 2018, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion is about the makers of these blades and their work.

Meeting date: May 12, 2018 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of May)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Hinohara Dai

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

Mei: Tomonari saku

Length: 3 shaku 1 sun 7 bu

Sori: 1.05 sun

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume, and the hada is just visible. There are abundant ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, a slightly dark steel color, and pale jifu utsuri.

Hamon: the entire yakiba is low, and mainly komidare; the habuchi has fine hotsure, and some uchinoke. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru

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

Mumei: Ko-Aoe

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 4 bu

Sori: 1.05 sun

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with ko-mokume, and hada is slightly visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, jifu utsuri, and the steel's color approaches a dark blue.

Hamon: suguha style ko-choji midare mixed with ko-midare. There are frequent ashi and yo, a worn down nioiguchi with nie and some sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

### **Kantei To No 3: tachi**

Mei: Sanenori (Ko-Ichimonji)

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 8 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, there are ji-nie and jifu utsuri.

Hamon: suguha style ko-choji midare mixed with ko-midare, and above the monouchi it is suguha. There are frequent ashi and yo, ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

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

Mei: Kunitsuna ( Ko-Bizen)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 2 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume, and the entire hada is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, and some jifu style utsuri.

Hamon: there is a wide yakiba, and a suguha style ko-choji midare hamon; the upper half has slightly large clusters of choji, and the bottom half has a slightly smaller sized hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, frequent nie, and especially on the bottom half, there are abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: on the omote and the ura the boshi is straight with a komaru.

## **Kantei To No 5: tachi**

Mei: Yasutsuna

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 6 sun 4 bu

Sori: 9.5 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume, some places have nagare hada, and the entire jihada shows a large pattern and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, jifu, jifu utsuri, and a dark colored steel.

Hamon: from the machi there is a yakiotoshi, and above this there is a suguha style ko-midare hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome; in some places, the habuchi has hotsure. There is a slightly worn down nioiguchi with abundant nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: shallow notare style with a komaru.

Horimono: the omote and ura have bo-hi with kaku-dome.

## **Lecture**

Today, for this Kantei To, we are displaying swords from Ko-Bizen Tomonari to Ko-Hoki Yasutsuna, and these are five old blades dating from around the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period.

Note that the No.1 to No.4 blades are Ko-Bizen to Ko-Ichimonji, and are related to Ko-Aoe work. We selected blades showing a transition, and you can observe how the styles changed.

For the Kansho To group, or additional swords present for appreciation we have:

Katana: Kinzogan-mei Sukezane

Wakizashi: Mumei Mitsutada

Tachi: mei: Yasuhiro (Osafune, late Kamakura period)

Katana: Mumei, Den Chikakage

From the kantei to and the kansho to you can recognize work from the Ko-Bizen, Ko-Ichimonji and Fukuoka Ichimonji (with a gorgeous large choji hamon) groups. We also have Mitutada's hamon with large choji mixed with Kawazuko choji; there are latter half of the Kamakura period Osafune works which show many of Nagamitsu's round top choji mixed with gunome; there are later Osafune works in

a suguha style hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome. You can examine work from the end of the Heian period, and from the early Kamakura period to the end of the Kamakura period and examine Bizen hamon and their evolution during this period.

The first sword, No.1, is a Tomonari tachi classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, and the length is 3 shaku 1 sun 7 bu, and we usually never see his work with such a prominent long length and large width.

This sword's shape is different from Tomonari's usual shapes, but the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a large koshizori with funbari, and the sori at the tip is not prominent. Also, this type of hamon is common in other groups, and is a classic komidare style hamon. We could think about this as being one of the long and large dynamically shaped blades sometimes seen at the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period, such as O-Kanehira and Sanetsune's work in the Kunozan Toshogu.

Tomonari is one of the two best master smiths in the Ko-Bizen school along with Masatsune. Their typical differences are : Tomonari's jigane and hada are barely visible; there is a dark steel color; either the jifu utsuri is not prominent, or there is a pale utsuri. His ko-midare hamon are especially classic looking even among the Ko-Bizen smiths.

Examining Masatsune's work, we see that many of his jigane are tight and bright, his utsuri are relatively clear, his ko-choji hamon are prominent and show a precise definition or a feeling of technical expertise.

This tachi's shape is different from Tomonari's usual shape. Other than this point, it is not difficult to say that this tachi shows Tomonari's characteristic points very well.

When I was student, I heard from the one of Token world's experts that classic looking hamon are complicated midare hamon, and there are no repeated elements or groups, so each part of the hamon is unique, and this kind of hamon is called classic looking.

Today, in this kantei to commentary, from the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period, ko-choji and ko-midare hamon are seen in various places, and many people talk about a "classic komidare appearance". The No.1 Tomonari tachi's ko-midare shows a more classic elegance than the usual Ko-Bizen hamon and I would say that this is exactly what the experts point out.

At the first examination, Tomonari's hamon is not composed of prominent round top ko-choji which is often seen in Ko-Bizen work. His hamon is a small and complicated midare, there are frequent hotsure along the yakiba, uchinoke, and kinsuji, and from this abundance of details, the hamon outline is hard to clearly define.

Although Tomonari's hamon are not excessively decorative or contrived, we feel strongly that this hamon illustrates the era's quiet beauty and grace. We can understand why the early historical experts ranked Tomonari as a top master smith in the Ko-Bizen period.

For the next No. 2 katana, because we could not locate a suitable Ko-Bizen hamon blade, we exhibited a blade judged to be a Ko-Aoe katana which has almost the same hamon as the Kobizen tachi.

The nakago has one mekugi-ana. At the first examination, it appears to have an ubu nakago, but from the nakago condition and entire katana's sori and shape, this sword has experienced a large degree of suriage or shortening. The original length is supposed to have been over 2 shaku 8 sun 5 bu, so it is a very long katana

The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, and the entire hada is fine and visible. The steel color is slightly dark blue, and the jiba (jihada and hamon) show Ko-Aoe characteristics.

At this time, we prefer to focus on the hamon. Of course between Ko-Bizen and Ko-Aoe there are small differences, and this sword's hamon seems to resemble a typical Ko-Bizen ko-midare style hamon. This is the reason we are showing it here.

Commonly Ko-Bizen ko-midare style hamon are overall just like the hamon on this katana with a low yakiba, round top ko-choji mixed with ko-midare, and we do not see much high and low variation in the yakiba. From the moto to the tip we see the same hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, abundant nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

In contrast to this, the No.3 blade, a Ko-Ichimonji Sanenori tachi has the same small midare hamon, the choji hamon has large conspicuous choji clusters when compared with the No.2 katana, and there are small areas with high and low yakiba variations. The hamon shows some signs of the next period's Fukuoka-Ichimonji work.

The No.4 tachi is by Kunitsuna who is supposed to be a smith listed in the meikan working in "Ko-Bizen around the Tempuku era (1233-4)".

If we trust the Meikan's listing period or date, this tachi was made about 50 years after the earliest Kamakura period work. The choji hamon has large clusters which are more conspicuous than ko-choji, and the entire hamon is based primarily on this clustered pattern.

The workmanship leaves an impression that this was made just a short time before Fukuoka-Ichimonji work is seen.

From this time, after maybe some decades, gorgeous large choji hamon appeared like this kantei to's Sukesane Fukuoka Ichimonji work. Next, we see the transition to the next period's smiths Mitsutada, Nagamitsu and Kagemitsu.

Of course these four blades have no dates on them, and so our hamon transition story is only an educated guess as to how the hamon evolved during this period.

Among Ko-Bizen work, we see smiths who were good at making wide suguha hamon, such as Yoshikane and Kunitsugu, and their styles are not necessarily the same.

Also, in this period, most Japanese swords do not have a date, and this makes it difficult to judge exactly or precisely when the ko-midare style hamon was made. Also a major reason it is difficult to study Tomonari and Masatsune is that we do not know how many generations might have used these names, so we cannot be sure that we know who made these swords or when these swords were made. But



at this time, this discussion represents a very small attempt to study the evolution of the hamon. As I mentioned before in these meetings, we can put dated works in a chronological order, and continuously examine their workmanship, individual smith's work, and traditions. I think this kind of examination and study could lead to some progress in learning about the history and in understanding old swords.

The last No.5 tachi is by Ko-Hoki Yasutsuna.

Among Ko-Bizen work, Tomonari's jigane and hada is barely visible, there is a dark steel color, and his hamon nioiguchi are worn down.

These kind of characteristic points are common elements shared with Yasutsuna and Tomonari. But by putting actual blades side by side and studying those which are representative of the Japanese sword's early stage master smiths we can learn something. Tomonari has a delicate charm in the classic sense, and Yasutuna is dynamic in his classic simplicity. It is possible to see by looking at their workmanship, that they are quite different.

I would be happy if you take advantage of this opportunity to compare these works.

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 735 in the April, 2018 issue)**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To in the April issue is katana by Sengo Muramasa.

This katana has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are a little different. The upper half has saki-zori and there is a chu-kissaki, and from this you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi period.

Muramasa is supposed to have had a teacher and student relationship with Heianjo Nagayoshi. Heianjo Nagayoshi's jigane is tight itame with a bright steel color, and a Kyoto style refined forging. In contrast to this, Muramasa's jigane is itame, the hada is visible, there is a dark steel color, and the utsuri is not completely white utsuri, but we see a whitish type utsuri.

The hamon's lower half is midareba, and the upper half is suguha. Sometimes the upper half is midareba and the lower half is suguha, so we see two different types of hamon (suguha and midareba) often in Sue-Koto work.

Looking at the lower half midareba hamon, we see box shaped midare mixed with notare, and prominent undulations. The kantei to hint explained that the omote and the ura are same, and from this, it is possible to think this could be Muramasa work.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Muramasa.

This is an uchigatana where the upper half has saki-zori, and this is seen in the latter half of the Muromachi period. However, I will talk little bit about sword shapes. When you look at a sword, many beginning students are taught to first hold a

sword vertically upright, look at the shape, and then next, bring a sword closer to look at the jitetsu and hamon.

On the other hand, many people seem to feel that it is not interesting to look at the shape apart from seeing if there is funbari at the habaki-moto, and guessing that the blade is either ubu nakago or suriage. From the width and the difference of the widths at the moto and saki, the sori, and the type of sori, one can judge the period, and so that is enough of an examination of the shape, so one's attention can now focus on the jigane and hamon.

I could understand the opinion that looking at the shape is not as interesting as looking at the jigane and hamon. When I started looking at swords, I think I was the same way.

On the other hand we hear that "the shape is important when looking at a Japanese sword", or "first look at the shape", and it is not rare for teachers to strongly emphasize the importance of the shape.

Why is it important to look at the shape? Why hold a sword upright each time when we look at a sword and want to observe a sword carefully?

My own answer is that looking at a vertically upright sword provides a lot of information, and helps us to see a sword's characteristic points: good points, bad points, and important points. However, even with all of this information, we cannot understand many of the things we see without an accumulation of experiences obtained from looking at many swords. If a beginning student looks at a sword, he would not understand very much.

The jitetsu and hamon have many types of characteristic points. I have heard that Japanese sword terms are difficult to learn and understand. We hope that the appreciation and study of Japanese swords will become more popular in the future, but this language and terminology problem makes this difficult.

I do understand that some aspects of specialty sword terms are difficult to learn. The main reasons are:

- 1) To understand a Japanese sword, you must actually pick up and hold the sword in hand and look at it under good lighting conditions. Then for the first time you can begin to understand and appreciate the beauty and the fine hataraki. This is a big difference from examining kakejiku (scrolls) and other types of art. In a museum when looking at a sword inside of a case, you can not see many fine details such as chikei, utsuri, nie, ashi, yo and kinsuji.

- 2) Since historical times, people have tried to explain and describe swords by using special terms to help describe the kinds of unique details and characteristics we see in swords. However, it is difficult to understand or visualize these details without examining an actual sword in hand. Just describing a sword verbally or in writing is a difficult way to provide a correct and accurate picture or understanding of a sword. In addition, many of the commentaries we study are pre-modern and language changes make them difficult to understand.

3. In looking at characteristic and individual points in a sword, studying the hataraki under good lighting conditions, and also having a knowledgeable person point out

many important details is very important. I think that today there are few beginners who can gain this kind of experience at kansho-kai meetings.

In looking at ji-nie for example, the Higo Enju school's narrow nijuba are very close to the ha-buchi, but that style is not seen in Yamato Den work, and Soshu Den master works have abundant notare and fine hotsure, and these jiba (jihada and hamon) hataraki details are difficult to notice and appreciate without experience and good teachers.

But basic elements such as chikei, utsuri, ashi, yo, and kinsuji are readily seen in a sword, and so many of these details are readily seen and understood.

But considering the shape, without acquiring experience, is difficult. One should wonder why, and I will write more about this the next time I have an opportunity.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai