

**NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL**  
**ISSUE NUMBER 747**  
**April, 2019**

**Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords**

**Classification: Tokubetsu Juyo Token**

Type: Tachi

Mei: Bitchu no kuni ju Tsugunao saku  
Enbun 6 nen (1361) 6 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu (69.4 cm)  
Sori: 5 bu 8 rin (1.75 cm)  
Moto-haba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)  
Saki-haba: 7 bu 1 rin (2.15 cm)  
Moto-kasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)  
Saki-kasane: 1 bu 1 rin (0.35 cm)  
Kissaki length: 2 sun 5 rin (6.2 cm)  
Nakago length: 5 sun 8 bu 1 rin (17.6 cm)  
Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

**Commentary**

This is a wide shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. It is slightly thin, there is funbari, and a shallow sori and a large kissaki. The jigane shows a tight ko-itame hada. There are abundant dense ji-nie and chikei. On the ura at the koshimoto, there are jifu, and below the machi, there is mizukage utsuri. Along the shinogi there are prominent midare utsuri. Along the hamon, there are suji shaped utsuri, and both sides have clear dan-utsuri. The hamon is a wide suguha mixed with ko-gunome and a shallow notare. There are frequent ashi and yo. Around the mono-uchi, mixed with saka-ashi, there is a tight nioiguchi. In the center of this area we can see some nioi-guchi-like ko-nie. There are some sunagashi and kinsuji, and the hamon is bright and clear. The boshi is almost straight and shows a small midare. On the omote, the tip is yakizume, and on the ura there are togari and a komaru and return. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bo-hi with kaku-dome. The tips of the hi stop before reaching the point area. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is ha-agari kuri-jiri. The yasurime are a pronounced (slanted) suji-chigai.

There are three mekugi-ana, and on the omote, on the shinogi-ji, a small sized fine tagane (chisel) was used to inscribe a long kanji signature. The ura has a date.

Today, the NBTHK defines the Bitchu Aoe school which was active before or around the mid-Kamakura period as “Ko-Aoe”. After this period the school’s work is called “Aoe”. After the latter half of the Kamakura period, Aoe styles were not uniform, and it is difficult to judge the school’s distinctive characteristics in a uniform manner. In general, the characteristic jigane is finer and tighter, we often see sumi-hada, and the utsuri are different from the previous period’s irregular jifu utsuri, and around this period dan-utsuri is seen more often. The suguha hamon do not change much, but the hamon contain saka-ashi, and even tight suguha hamon have saka-ashi. As we are aware, in the Nanbokucho period the hamon becomes more exaggerated or active, and we can see a nioiguchi with gorgeous saka-choji. Along with the refined jigane, most nioiguchi are brighter than in the Ko-Aoe period, and along with the refined ji, the jiba (jigane and hamon) is clear. Also, in this period, in the neighboring province Bizen, the gorgeous active choji hamon are seen less often, and the hamon have a more prominent nie type notare or gunome pattern, and this is interesting. The Aoe mei gradually moved from the ura side to the omote side, and in the end of Kamakura period, in the Showa period (1312-17), the mei often included a location such as Masu, Koi, and Aoe, and official names or titles such as Saemon-no-jo, Uemo-no-jo, and Gyobu are seen along with a date, and these details were never seen before this period. A large kanji signature along the center of the nakago is a remnant of the Ko-Aoe period’s style.

On tachi, after the early Nanbokucho’s Ryakuo period (1338-41), the Aoe school signatures are written in small kanji along the mune edge of the shinogi-ji; after the Jowa (1345-1349) period, this characteristic becomes more obvious. Until the Enbun period (1356-60), dated works show the date under or below a mei, which is the usual pattern seen before this period.

Tsugunao is one of the school’s representative master smiths in the Nanbokucho period, along with Tsuguyoshi and Moritsugu. Today his confirmed dated works are from Jowa 3 (1347) and Enbun 6 (1361). He produced tachi, hira-zukuri wakizashi, tanto, and naginata. Tsuguyoshi’s hamon are mostly suguha, and he was good at making saka-ashi choji, but this style hamon was never seen on tachi, but only on tanto and wakizashi.

This tachi is thin for its width, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki do not stand out. There is a shallow sori with a large kissaki, and in addition, the tips of the hi are low, and this is a precise characteristic of the Enbun-Joji shape. The jigane shows the period’s characteristic tight ko-itame hada and very fine visible “chirimen-hada”, and on the ura at the koshimoto, there is a mu-ji type “sumi-hada”. There are Aoe’s characteristic “dan-utsuri”, located towards the hamon which shows intermittent fine straight lines, and above this, there is a midare style utsuri.

There is a wide and clear hamon, abundant ashi and yo hataraki, a clear nioiguchi, and the jiba (ji and ha) are bright and clear. The healthy and well preserved dynamic shape, the controlled suguha hamon, and the refined jigane are all well integrated, and generate a magnificent feeling when viewing this tachi.

The Enbun 6 date in the mei represents Tsugunao’s last known dated tachi, and before this period, his tachi dates are written as “kaki-kudashi mei” (the mei is written in one

single continuous line) as I described above. The tachi mei is on the omote and ura sides, and this is a valuable reference for studies of the signature's transition in styles.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

## **No.747 Tosogu Kanshou**

### **Juyo tosogu**

#### **Cha-tsubo (image of a tea container) sukashi tsuba Mumei: Kanayama**

Kanayama tsuba show most of iron's attractive points in a tsuba's small universe. The same period's Owari sukashi tsuba show a dignified feeling along with a simple sturdiness, and people have valued these tsuba for a long time.

Kanayama iron tsuba which generate the same kind of feeling are simple and dynamic. The mimi (rim) has a fine granular appearance on the iron rim, and has a comfortable feeling in hand, which contributes to the iron's tasteful and warm feeling, it emphasizes iron's natural and rustic feeling. Because of this, many of these tsuba's themes are simple but have a depth of meaning, and they are supposed to express philosophy of Zen.

This tsuba fully exhibits the iron Kanayama tsuba's charming feeling. From the tsuba, we can feel that the iron material is derived from nature and is a common metal. There is a warmth and smoothness, but at the same time, the tsuba does not lose the reassuring feeling of iron. The mimi or iron rim has a graceful feeling and exhibits the feeling of its time.

The theme is a cha-tsubo or a tea container, a theme which is often seen in Kanayama tsuba. We can note that it has an elegant simplicity, but at the same time, it is a dynamic work. Again, this is an excellent work where we can recognize iron's characteristic depth of feeling, and we can understand the reason why Kanayama tsuba have been valued for ages.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 747**

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 747 Shijo Kantei To is May 5, 2019. Each person may submit one vote. Submissions should contain your name and address and be sent to the NBTHK Shijo Kantei. You can use the Shijo Kantei card which is attached in this magazine. Votes postmarked on or before May 5, 2019 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: Katana

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu (71.2 cm)

Sori: slightly over 7 bu (2.2 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1cm)

Saki haba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Moto-kasane: 2 bu 3 rin ( 0.7 cm)

Saki-kasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 5 rin (21.36 cm)

Nakago sori: None

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a slightly large sori, and a short chu-kissaki. The jigane is itame hada and there is also a strong nagare hada which becomes a masame type hada. There are ji-nie, chikei, and midare-utsuri. The shinogi-ji shows a masame hada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are some tobiyaki, and ashi and yo in the hamon. The entire hamon is a small size with saka-ashi, nioi-guchi type ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is kuri-jiri, and the yasurime are katte-sagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote under mekugi-ana, towards the mune side, and centered along the shinogi suji (shinogi line), there is a long kanji signature.

This smith made many nakago tips which were a shallow iriyamagata.

## **Teirei Kanshou Kai Meeting March, 2019**

Date: March 9, 2019 (2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of March)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kurotaki Tetsuya

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

Mei: Kanemoto

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 3 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihori-mune

Jigane: itame hada; some places have a strong nagare hada; the hada is visible. There are ji-nie and slightly whitish utsuri.

Hamon: the entire hamon has a narrow width; it has togari and gunome mixed with ko-gunome, and ko-notare. There are nie and fine sunagashi.

Boshi: shallow midarekomi: the tip is a togari style and there is a slightly long return.

This is a Nidai Kanemoto (Magoroku) katana. Among the Kanemoto successive generations, this work is the Nidai's who was the most skilled generation and shows his characteristic points very well.

The later generation Kanemotos' sanbon-sugi hamon show a standard pattern in the hamon: there are sets or groups of three togariba in a regularly continuous midare hamon. This work is a little different from the later generations' sanbon-sugi shapes, with togari shaped gunome, ko-gunome, and notareba, and the elements are irregularly arranged. In addition, the hamon is narrow. This is different from the later generation Kanemoto smiths, and is Magoroku's characteristic point. The sanbon-sugi style is still incompletely developed, but this produces a unique character, and we can recognize Magoroku's high level of skill.

This is a slightly wide blade, and the difference in the widths at between moto and saki are not prominent. There is a long kissaki, and because of this, some people voted for Nambokucho work. But the katana's hiraniku is poor, there is a sharp angle at the shinogi-ji, there is a high shinogi, and it is also sakizori, so when looking at the shape, we see that this is a Sue-Koto shape.

Some people voted for Nosada. Usually he does not make a sanbon-sugi style hamon. His hamon are composed mainly of round top gunome and choji mixed with togari-ba, and yahazu style choji. Sometimes there is a notare type hamon.

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

Mei: □shu Osafune ju Motoshige

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame-hada mixed with nagare-hada, and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, jifu, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: gunome style midare hamon with prominent square shaped gunome mixed with ko-choj and ko-midare style hamon. The entire hamon has saka-ashi. There is a dense nioiguchi, abundant ji-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: above the yokote the boshi is straight and becomes a notare-komi; the tip is sharp and there is a return.

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

This is an Osafune Motoshige tachi. The funbari is not prominent at the moto, and from this you can recognize this as a suriage shape. This has a standard width, and originally had a large koshizori. The tip has sori, and with the chu-kissaki this you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Kamakura period. Also, from the distinctive midare-utsuri, you can judge this as Bizen work.

Looking at the hamon, the edge of the hamon to the center of the hamon shows abundant hataraki with abundant nie, frequent ashi and yo, prominent sunagashi, and kinsuji. Motoshige, besides producing standard clearly Bizen Den work, also has work with a strong emphasis on the Soshu Den style, and this is one of them. There are some differences from his usual work, and if you carefully examine the hamon, you can recognize his unique hamon characteristics: in some places, the tops of the kaku-gunome are long, and the valleys in the hamon contain togariba. Also, the tip of the boshi is sharp, and from these details, it does not seem difficult to vote for Motoshige.

From the shape and other elements, some people voted for Ko-Bizen work. From the frequent nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi in the hamon, you might be led to vote for older work. But the hamon is based on kaku-gunome and gunome, and different from Ko-Bizen's komidare style hamon, so please note this.

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

Mei: Sanekage

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 1.5 bu

Sori: 9 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with large itame and mokume; the entire hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie and chikei mixed with jifu and jifu utsuri; the steel is dark colored.

Hamon: above the machi there is a yaki-otoshi; above this the hamon is mainly ko-midare mixed with frequent ko-gunome and ko-choji. There are ashi, yo, a soft nioiguchi, abundant nie, and in places, the ha-buchi has hotsure, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: there is a weak yakiba which is unclear.

This is a Ko-Hoki Sanekage tachi. It is narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori with funbari, a small kissaki, and a classic elegant shape.

From these details, you can judge this as work from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period.

The jigane is itame and mokume, the large pattern hada is visible, there is a dark steel color, and there are jifu. From this kind of forging, you can already guess that this is not Bizen or Yamashiro work.

The hamon has a prominent yaki-otoshi above the machi, and is a ko-midare style hamon. The nioiguchi is soft, and inside of the hamon the hada is visible; the entire

hamon has the feeling of country-style or non-mainstream work. Judging from these characteristics, you can vote for Ko-Hoki work. Among Ko-Bizen work, there are some with relatively large patterned hada, but you usually never see this much visible hada, or prominent hada inside of the hamon.

This is a Juyo Bijutsuhin classified Sanekage tachi. His work only includes three signed tachi, including this tachi. If you identify this as a Ko-Hoki work, that is sufficient.

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

Mei: Nagasone Okisato Kotetsu nyudo  
Manji 4 nen (1661) U-zuki 19 nichi  
Kinzogan mei: Yamano Kanjuro Narihisa with kao  
Mitsu-do saidan

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame mixed with a large pattern hada at the koshimoto. There are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a clear hada.

Hamon: there is a straight long yakidashi; above this there is a ko-notare hamon with gunome which are frequently mixed with larger gunome and togariba. There are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, some prominent rough nie, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: under the yokote the boshi begins with a yakikomi (there is a gunome wave on the yokote area); there is a shallow notare, the tip is komaru and there is a long return.

This is a Kotetsu katana. There is a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is not much sori and a chu-kissaki, and from this you can judge this as Kanbun period work. Also, the shinogi-ji is rough with a masame hada, and from this, it is possible to look at this katana as Edo area work. In addition, the forging is refined, and you can see a characteristic called teko-gane (the jigane is rough and some shingane appears).

The yakiba has a straight long ko-notare yakidashi with gunome and togariba, and we see Kotetsu's characteristic hyotan-ba (a double gunome shape which appears like the half of a gourd), and there are uneven nie. More than anything, notable special characteristic points are that his jiba (the jigane and hamon) is clear.

Next, we can look at the boshi. This is a jizo style boshi and appears as a Mino characteristic. From this viewpoint, if you review the hamon, the entire hamon is a Mino style. In other words, the jigane has teko-tetsu, there is a long yakidashi mixed with hyotan-ba, a Mino style hamon, and this is not a Kotetsu boshi, but a Mino style boshi. If you can recognize these characteristics, it is possible to judge this as a typical Kotetsu Hanetora period work.

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

Mei: Rai Kunitoshi

Genko gan-nen (1321) 12 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5.5 bu

Sori: 8.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; there are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, jifu, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: suguha style midareba. There are frequent choji, ko-choji, ko-gunome, and ko-notare. There are frequent ashi and yo mixed with saka-ashi, nie, fine kinsuji and sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, with a komaru and return.

This is a Rai Kunitoshi tachi. It has a narrow width and a small kissaki. The original strong graceful wazori shape is preserved, and we do not see the tip falling down. From this, you can judge this as work from the end of Heian period to the early Kamakura period.

The jigane is well forged and tight, there is an appearance of moisture in the ji, and there are jifu. The hamon is based on a wide suguha mixed with ko-choji, ko-gunome and some "kyo-saka-ashi" (ashi slanting from the kissaki towards the nakago). In addition, there are frequent nie in the jiba (jitetsu and hamon), and the boshi has a komaru and return. Considering these characteristics, naturally Rai work would come to mind.

This is a little different from the usual Rai Kunitoshi work, and many people seemed to be puzzled. Usually, Rai Kunitoshi's midareba hamon are very rare, from this a variety of viewpoints were expressed. Actually, some people voted for Rai Kuniyuki. His active period was in the mid-Kamakura period. From this consideration, if this were Kuniyuki's work, there would be a short kissaki with an inokubi style. Furthermore, some places in the top of his hamon have small yakiba, and there are inomata style hamon, which shows a classic feeling.

This is an unusual midareba style work for Rai Kunitoshi, but it is a masterpiece.

This is the Uesugi family's heirloom tachi and is classified as Juyo-Bijutsuhin.

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 745 in the February, 2019 issue**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a wakizashi by Nakasone Kotetsu.



In voting, a majority of people voted for Kotetsu, and for an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Kazusa-no-suke Kaneshige.

A Kotetsu wakizashi, besides having a general Kanbun-Shinto shape, is sometimes wide, and there are almost no differences in the widths at the moto and the saki with large kissaki like this one. This wakizashi has a striking dynamic shape for a wakizashi from the Kanbun-Shinto period.

The jigane is a tight ko-itame, there are abundant ji-nie, the ji is bright and clear, and sometimes we see a large hada pattern or kawari-tetsu (strange iron) which is called teko-tetsu.

This work is from Kotetsu's early period Hane-tora work, and in this period his yakidashi are long when compared to later period Hako-tora work. Above the yakidashi, we might see two styles of hamon: on one, the entire hamon from moto to tip has hyotan-ba (two fused or associated gunome resembling the half of a gourd) just like this example. The other style is a notare mixed with gunome and togariba which is a Mino style hamon, and some places have hyotan-ba.

The boshi is a typical Kotetsu boshi. On the omote horimono, inside of the hitsu (frame) there is a characteristic daikokuten which is seen often in his work.

Kazusa-no-suke Kaneshige has katakiriba-zukuri work too, but made fewer blades in this style than Kotetsu. His hamon are not hyotan-ba like we see on this wakizashi. It is more likely that his hamon would have a continuous gunome pattern like a juzuba hamon.

I would now like to talk about another subject: nyusatsu (voting) kantei.

People who are interested in katana join token-kai organizations in many places, most of these groups will hold nyusatsu kantei meetings.

Generally, people who do not like this kind of meeting do not say anything, but some people do dislike this kind of kantei teaching method.

There are some associations which do not have nyusatsu kantei meetings, but most associations do focus on nyusatsu kantei as a teaching method. Without this type of activity, people will not be actively involved or feel that they belong to an association. However, not a few people do seem to quit an association after they make an effort to join.

For people who are not good at nyusatsu kantei, the choice of the sword books they study can be very important.

Nowadays there is an explosion in interest in swords, and there are many books available. Among these books, some will list individual smiths and the characteristics of their work. For example, they might say something like: "in the Shinto period, a suguha style with dense nie is seen in the work of ----", and the book will list the appropriate smiths' names and their characteristic points, and provide a summary of styles in a form which is convenient to use for nyusatsu.

In the beginning, it appears impossible for the majority of people to make nyusatsu judgements by just looking at each kantei-to's jiba. One way to make a judgement for a nyusatsu kantei is to first look at the shape, think about the period, review the references from articles in a book, and then vote.

Instead of having no nyusatsu kantei at all, or a boring meeting without seeing any correct answers for long periods, one can review and study articles in books, and then

participate in nyusatsu kantei, and gradually begin getting correct or almost correct answers. This approach can be more enjoyable, and also become a routine method for an association to use to encourage sword studies.

On this occasion, the important thing is that after a kanshou meeting, if it is at all possible within a day afterwards, study the sword styles which were shown in the meeting, and review each smith's styles in sword reference books.

In this way, if you look at a sword and then review information in your books the same day, you will be more easily able to recognize and readily remember a smith's characteristic styles. By repeating this process, you eventually learn to recognize all kind of smiths and their styles.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai