

# NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

## ISSUE NUMBER 795

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## Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords

### Kokuho

Type: Katana

Kinzogan mei: Mitsutada Mitsutoku with kao

Go (sword's name): Ikoma Mitsutada

Owner Eisei Bunko

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 6 bu 4 rin (68.6 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 5 bu 8 rin (16.9 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

### Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is not prominent. It is thick, there is a slightly large sori and a short chu-kissaki which resembles an inokubi kissaki. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada which is mixed with some itame hada. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, and pale midare utsuri. The hamon is mainly choji mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, togariba, and square shaped features. From the center into the upper half, the hamon has a straight shape. From the center into the lower half of the blade, there is a gorgeous midare hamon, and around the monouchi area the hamon becomes narrower. There are frequent ashi and yo, a nioiguchi, and on the omote there are small kinsuji. The entire hamon has a gentle nioiguchi and is bright and clear. The boshi is a slightly narrow midarekomi, and the tip is almost yakizume. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through to the nakago. The nakago is largely suriage, the tip is kiri, and the yasurime are katte sagari.

There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote, on the flat ji, in the center, there is the owner's name in a Mitsutada and Mitsutoku kinzogan mei with a kao.

According to token history, Osafune Mitsutada is the founder of the largest school in Osafune. His skills were excellent, and the school produced many master smiths such as Nagamitsu, Sanenaga, and Kagemitsu, and since historical times, work from the school was highly valued. Mitsutada's active period is supposed to have been during the Hoji to Kencho periods (1247-56), and his son Nagamitsu has dated swords from Bunei 11 (1274) and Koan 8 (1285), so Nagamitsu's active period is confirmed. Most of Mitsutada's signatures are two kanji signatures, except for the imperial treasure blade signed "Bizen Koku Osafune Mitsutada". His has twenty signed works, and many of them are suriage. Their original lengths seem to have been 2 shaku 5 to 2 Shaku 7 sun long. Mitsutada has two styles, one with a standard width, and one which is wide with a grand shape. The difference in the widths at the moto and saki are small, and the kissaki resemble an inokubi kissaki. His well forged jigane is tightly forged with a small pattern itame hada. There are clear midare utsuri, and the blades are refined. Also, his characteristic hamon are primarily choji mixed with "bag like" choji and kawazuko choji, and at the top of the hamon they are plump looking. At the koshimoto area, the choji are small, and around the monouchi area, the hamon is narrower, and there are prominent gunome. Usually Mitsutada's hamon have rounded or plump appearing gentle ko-nie, and the entire hamon is bright and clear. It is pointed out, that compared to the Ichimonji school hamon, his midare hamon's vertical variations are smaller, and around the center of the blade, the hamon is low.

However, this large suriage mumei work is judged as Mitsutada's work and has a majestic shape, a well forged beautiful jigane, dense ji-nie, and is without utsuri. It reminds us of Kyoto work, and many of his mumei works have a gorgeous choji midare hamon. On the other hand, his signed tachi have a relatively standard width, the hamon are not so active, and are relatively gentle when compared with mumei work judged as being Mitsutada's. From this, some people question whether his mumei work is really Mitsutada's work. But the No.17 Tokubetsu Juyo Token classified work which belongs to the Akita Satake family is signed Mitsutada, and is an important reference material, and fills the gap between the mumei work judged as Mitsutada's and his signed work. This opinion was provided by appraisers such Honnami Kotoku.

Recently, a study by Mr. Tanobe Michihiro, working from historical sword book descriptions, examined Mitsutada's style and signatures. Up to now they were supposed to be Ko-Bizen work with the two kanji signature, but are now considered to be work by Osafune Mitsutada

himself, and his early work. This study is well worth reading (in the NBTHK Journal, issue no. 528).

This is a wide blade with a short chu-kissaki which appears like an inokubi kissaki. Although it is largely suriage, it has a strong dignified shape, and its impressive shape has been preserved. The jigane has abundant ji-nie, midare utsuri, and the ko-itame hada is fine and tight. At a glance, it appears like Kyoto's Awataguchi school's nashiji hada, and is a really beautiful delicate hada. In addition, the hamon is mixed with kawazuko choji, and displays a rich variety of choji, and has a very dense and wide nioiguchi. There are fine kinsuji, and a bright and clear nioiguchi, and we can see the skills of the smith and admire his outstanding workmanship. This was judged as being Mitsutada's work by Honnami Kotoku, and is a beautiful masterpiece, and we can appreciate its majestic tachi shape. As the kinzogan mei shows, this was owned by Ikoma no kami Kazumasa.

Ikoma Kazumasa was an Azuchi Momoyama period daimyo, and worked for Nobunaga. In Tensho 5 nen (1577) he participated in the Kishu Saiga attack (against the Ishiyama Honganji temple monks, and Honganji's army), and in Tensho 19, he was appointed to the Sanuki no kami rank. Also twice during the Korean campaigns, he was dispatched to Korea, and in Keicho 2 (1597) he participated in the Urusan battle and received recognition for his efforts. Furthermore, in Keicho 5 (1600) he joined the Eastern forces, and attacked Gifu castle and participated in the Sekigahara battle. The following year he inherited a fief worth about 17 million koku from his father Ogi.

Since sir Hosokawa Moritatsu saw the Hosokawa main family's Mitsutada around Meiji 33-34 (1900-01) at a kantei kai, he became obsessed with it. In later years, he recognized the Hosokawa family's estate staff (i.e. the employees who maintained the estate), and one of these people, Kiyota Chokuo received the Mitsutada. Later, Moritatsu could not forget about this sword. After this, he thought about the unforgettable Mitsutada, and consulted with Nishigaki Shisaku, who received guidance from the token kansho kai at that time and from the Higo kinko Nishigaki family's 8th generation. Nishigaki told him, that the Hosokawa family's chief retainer for generations, the Ogasawa family, owned a Mitsutada (this sword) which Mr. Nishigaki recommended that Moritatsu obtain, and Moritatsu purchased this sword.

This katana is currently being exhibited at the "Hosokawa Family Meito" in the Eisei Bunko Kokuho Exhibit " at the Eisei Bunko Hall until May 7th, 2023.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

## Shijo Kantei To No. 795

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 794 Shijo Kantei To is May 5, 2023. 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, 2023 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: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu (70.95 cm)

Sori: slightly less than 4 bu (1.2 cm)

Motohaba: slightly less than 1 sun (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: slightly over 6 bu (1.95 cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 2 bu (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly over 1 bu (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2.5 bu (3.8 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 1 bu (21.5 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. There is a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a wide shinogi ji for the sword's width, and a low shinogi. There is a standard thickness, a shallow sori, and a short chu-kissaki. The jigane has a ko-itame hada, and the hada is slightly visible. There are frequent ji-nie, chikei, and the the shinogi ji has a visible masame hada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The midare hamon in some places has a constant rhythm and repetition. There are abundant ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, the tip is slightly narrow, and there is a ha-agari style kurijiri. The yasurime are o-sujichigai with kesho. The nakago mune is high and round. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, under the mekugi-ana and along the mune side there is a seven kanji signature with the smith's title, and the mei shows thick chisel marks.

# Tosogu Kansho

## Juyo Tosogu

### **Musashi abumi (stirrup) sukashi tuba** **Mumei: Owari**

Owari sukashi tsuba are considered to be one of the two great sukashi tsuba styles along with Kyoto sukashi tsuba. Their production began during the mid-Muromachi period and into the Edo period, and continued for a long time. This tsuba has an iron ground, and one can see through the reeds and see an abumi. The beautiful rust-like color was accumulated over a period of time, and the iron frame along the rim (mimi) is impressive, and we can recognize that it is an Owari tsuba.

The subject of the tsuba is abumi or stirrups viewed through Musashino reeds or grass. The choice of the subject comes from an old story told in the "Ise Monogatari's" number 12 issue. At one time, a man who lived in Musashi sent a letter to a woman who lived in Kyoto. The letter said that "I feel bad if I do not say anything, but it will hurt if I say something", and on the envelope, he only wrote "Musashi abumi". The woman understood everything, and she sent a song to the man: "Musashi abumi is not asking for something difficult, but asking for something that will be troublesome". The man received this response, and he felt that he didn't understand, and returned a song. It said "I'm asking a question, but if I do not ask, I would feel bad". Musashi abumi said that in this frame of mind, it feels like a man will be die."

The man left his woman in Kyoto, and in Musashi he joined with another woman. The man compared this story with abumi which he needed to support his two feet while riding horseback, and this meant that he wanted two women. The woman responded that "just like abumi are worn on the left and right sides, even though you are a man who has another woman, I will still count on you. Without your letter this would be uncomfortable, but if you inform me about another woman, it will be troublesome." The woman quickly responded with a witty song as a reply. The man became uncomfortable, and said sending a letter or not sending a letter would both generate bitterness, and in this state of mind, a person could die.

From this tsuba, we can easily imagine this Heian period love story, and this could be one of this tsuba's attractive points.

Explanation by Takeda Kotaro

## March Token Teirei Kansho kai

Date: March 11th (second Saturday of March)

Location: The Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ooi Gaku

### Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Mei: Bishu (Osafune) Masamitsu  
Koei 2 nen (1343) ? gatsu hi

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 1 sun 8 bu

Sori: slightly over 9 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; the hada is slightly visible; there are abundant ji-nie mixed with chikei and jifu, and there is a dark colored jigane; the bottom half has bo-utsuri, and from the center to the upper half, there is clear midare utsuri.

Hamon: mainly ko-notare and mixed with gunome and square shaped gunome; there are ashi, yo, and a nioiguchi with ko-nie; there are some tobiyaki, kinsuji, sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight; the tip is komaru.

Masamitsu's works are confirmed to have been made from Enbun 2 (1357) to Oei 6 (1399), and so his active period is about 40 years long. He has a shape called a large size Enbun-Joji style. But his active period was primarily during the latter half of the Nanbokucho period, and many of them are standard shapes and narrow tachi shapes, which is the same as the same period's Osafune Kosori style. The widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a large koshizori, and the tip has sori, which reminds us of a Kamakura Period tachi shape. But the tip's sori is strong, and appears pronounced. Moreover, his blades are thick for their width, and this is one of the period's characteristics.

The forging is itame mixed with mokume, the hada is visible, there are chikei and jifu in the jigane, and there are bo-utsuri. The hamon has a nioiguchi, there is a midare hamon with many irregular shapes, the entire hamon is narrow, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) resembles the Kosori style, and so at this time, we treated Kosori smiths' names as correct answers.

In addition, in this period, the signature was inscribed inside of the shinogi ji and the entire signature was small, and these are Kosori characteristic points.

However, if you look at this carefully, the jigane only shows itame and mokume, the blade is comparatively well forged, there are clear utsuri and a bright hamon, and this is better than Kosori work, and in a direct line in the Osafune school, and you can appreciate the good quality of the work. Some people recognized these differences and not a few people voted for Masamitsu.

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

Mei: Ishido Unju Korekazu seitani kore o tsukuru

Ansei 5 nen (1858) tsuchinoe uma chushun hatsu muika

Katana Mei: kono tachi ni tameshi kokoro wa mi hitotsu. Mamoru tamaka wa waga kimi notame Sanada Yukishige haito

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada; there are abundant ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: choji midare; some areas have gunome and gunome-choji; the hamon is ko-notare and there are togariba at the koshimoto.

There are abundant slightly long ashi, a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi and the tip is komaru.

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

This is wide, long blade, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki are not prominent. The shinogi-ji's width is very narrow for the width of the blade, the blade is thick for the size, but there is a poor hiraniku, a shallow sori, a poor fukura, and a sharp appearing large kissaki. It feels heavy in hand, and really has a shinshinto characteristic shape, and few people mistook the period.

Unju Korekazu made many standard shapes with a slightly long chu-kissaki. But from the around Ansei period (1854-59), his work become gradually larger, like this example, and the jiba was always well finished, and from this we can recognize his high level of skill.

His characteristic hamon is a choji midare hamon with nie. In addition, his jiba (jigane and hamon) are bright with a dense nioiguchi, the nie are evenly distributed, there are prominent groups

of round top choji, and sometimes these are mixed with gunome and togari, and the hamon has irregular vertical variations. There are thick long abundant ashi, and sunagashi and these are Korekazu's characteristic points. This katana shows these characteristic points, and many people voted for the correct answer.

Also, from the katana mei, we can see that this was made in the Bakumatsu to Meiji period, and that the Sendai Date family's vassal, Sanada Nobushige's (Yukimura) second son's descendant Yukishige ordered this katana. Also, part of the mei is written "I put my heart into this tachi, and I will be loyal to my lord" using the Manyo kana style, and this is a valuable inscription indicating Yukishige's feelings.

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

Kinzogan mei: Norishige

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: large itame hada mixed with large mokume hada, nagare hada, and some ayasugi hada; the hada is visible. There are strong ji-nie on the upper half, frequent abundant ji-nie, and the jigane is dark.

Hamon: at the bottom there is a chu-suguha style; there are ko-nie and some hotsure. From the middle to the upper part there is a shallow notare style hamon mixed with a ko-midare hamon, and there are gunome; there is a dense nioiguchi, strong nie, and abundant hotsure, uchinoke, yubashiri, nie-suji, kinsuji, and sunagashi intertwined with the hamon and hada; the upper half of the blade has pale muneyaki.

Boshi: midareba with hakikake, kinsuji, and niesuji; the tip is komaru and there is a return.

We have two confirmed signed Norishige tachi. One is classified Juyo Bunkazai, and the other is classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token. Both tachi are about 2 shaku 3 sun in length and the signature is at the tip of the nakago. The ubu mekugi ana is supposed to be below the signature, so these blades appear to be suriage by about 3-4 sun, and the original length is thought to have been 2 shaku 6 - 7 sun.

This katana has a koshizori even though it is suriage, and there is a chu-kissaki. The shape appears to be from the end of the Kamakura Period, and there is some funbari left, so there is not a large degree



of suriage. The signature is barely damaged, and from this, we can estimate the original length was around 2 shaku 7sun.

Talking about Norishige's hamon, you can imagine it made a strong impression with a the complex midare hamon involved or interacting with the jigane. There are rich hataraki such as yubashiri, kinsuji, and nie-suji, and between the ji and hamon, the boundary is a chaotic style. Besides this work, Norishige has classic komidare hamon modeled after Ko-Bizen and Ko-Hoki work. He has a number of works based on suguha hamon work, just like the tanto dated Showa 3 (1314).

If you keep in mind, that Norishige made suguha style hamon, you can understand that the lower half suguha style hamon is part of Norishige's style. The middle to upper part of the hamon really reminds us of Norishige with rich bold hataraki frequently involving both, the ji and hamon, the strong nie, and the boshi which has hakikake and kinsuji. The entire nioiguchi is slightly worn down, and most notable is the dark jigane and large visible hada with spiral-like shapes formed by large itame and large mokume hada. There are strong ji-nie, prominent frequent thick chikei, and a conspicuous characteristic called Matsukawa hada, and from these details, the answer of Norishige was easy to reach.

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

Mei: Dewa Nyudo Hokyo Minamoto Mitsuhiro

Length: 1 shaku 7.5 sun

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: choji midare; there are frequent ashi, yo, a nioiguchi with ko-nie; the upper half has frequent kinsuji and sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: gentle midare with small hakikake; the tip is komaru.

Hioki Mitsuhiro has blades with confirmed dates from Kanei 21 (1644) August to Tenna 3 (1683) August. He also has a tanto signed Shoho 5 (1648) at the age of 29 years. From this, he was born in Genna 6 (1620), and he was active from the age of 25 to 64 for a 40 year career.

Because his sword making career started around the Kanei to Shoho periods, they have a relatively deep sori and Kanbun Shinto shapes. He has many blades with large sori and relatively good shapes. His choji midare hamon have vertical variations, and are modelled after Ichimonji work, and he is the number 1 smith in the Ishido school. Usually, we see suguha hamon with a komaru and return, and rarely, the boshi has small midare pattern. In voting, people often voted for smiths who produced classic style work.

This wakizashi has a large sori, the hamon is a nioiguchi type with vertical variations and is a gorgeous choji midare, there is midare utsuri, the boshi has a slight midare pattern, and from this, some people also voted for Fukuoka Ichimonji work. But for its length, the width at the moto is slightly less than 1 sun (2.94cm), and the widths at the moto are saki are conspicuously different.

If you look at this as a large suriage tachi and a revival of an older style, the moto's width would be become abnormally wide and unreasonable. In addition, shinogi ji's width is wide for the blade, there is not much hiraniku, there is a flat shape, and this kind of shape is seen in many in the Edo Period Shinto swords. In addition, the shinogi ji's hada is visible and is a prominent masame.

Among the Ishido school smiths, some people voted for Musashi Daijo Korekazu and his student Fukuoka Ishido Koretsugu. If it were the school's work, there would be a flat ji containing numerous places with masame hada, and the midare hamon's saka-ashi would be clear. Among these smiths, Korekazu's hamon are usually small, and in the case of a large midare hamon, the bottom half would have many small details. Koretsugu's hamon are wide, and sometimes extend over the shinogi ji. They are midare hamon, and his boshi's midare pattern is pronounced. The boshi's return is large, and in addition many of the blades have a mitsumune.

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

Mei: Hizen Kuni Tadayoshi

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 4.5 bu

Sori: 2 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; there are abundant fine ji-nie, and mizukage below the machi.

Hamon: based on a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome and gunome. There are frequent ashi, small yo, a gentle nioiguchi, ko-nie and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: on the omote the boshi is straight and the tip is round. On the ura, the boshi is a shallow notare or somewhat small midare, and the tip is komaru. Both sides have a slightly long return.

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

From the signature, this supposed to be work by the Shodai Tadayoshi from Keicho 18-19 nen (1613-14). He passed away in Kanei 5 (1632) on August 15th, at the age of 61years. Judging from this, this katana was forged when he was about 42-43 years old. This period was when the Osaka winter battle occurred, and there was a growing demand for swords. Around the Genna 10 to Kanei 1 (1624) period, Tadayoshi received the Musashi Daijo title and changed his name to Tadahiro. He established the general Hizen To characteristic style which included a belt-like sugaha hamon and boshi and straight fukura along with a komaru and return. Before that, during the Tadayoshi signature period, he often copied classic work. In the Keicho period, the Shoshu Den style was often copied all over Japan. The Shodai Tadayoshi worked not only the Soshu Den style, but also in all kinds of styles such as Rai, Yamato, Kagemitsu, Aoe, and Muramasa. Even the Soshu Den work he emulated varied and was modeled after work by smiths such as Hiromitsu, Shizu, Naoe Shizu, Chogi and Dai Sa.

This katana's hamon is based on a gentle notare and midare hamon mixed with ko-gunome and gunome. There are ashi and also a tendency to produce Naoe Shizu utsushi details, but this sword is thought to have followed Nobukuni's style. Also, the boshi is not formal and executed like his later work, and in this period we sometimes see relaxed shapes. During the Keicho period (1596-1614), the length of many swords was less than 2 shaku 3 sun. Going into the Genna period (1615-23), we sometimes see blades with longer lengths and also longer nakago.

This katana is slightly wide, and the difference in widths at the moto and saki are not prominent. There is a shallow sori, a long chu-kissaki, and the shape at the koshimoto is wide. Both sides have hi finished above the machi, so from this, you can imagine that this is the original length. The forging shows a komenuka hada, and there are no utsuri or whitish areas. Because of this this, many people did not look at this sword as classic work, and a majority of people voted for the correct answer. Furthermore, there is mizukage at the machi, and we see that in the work of the Shodai Tadayoshi, and as well as

in the work of the eighth and ninth generations, so please remember this.

## **Shijo Kantei To No.793 in February 2023 issue**

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Echigo no kami Kunitomo.

This sword is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a standard thickness, a shallow sori and a long chu-kissaki. From this, you can judge this as being a Keicho Shinto katana. The hamon has a slightly tight nioiguchi which is worn down. The moto has a yakidashi which can be described as a suguha style small midare yakidashi. Kunitomo's midare hamon are usually wide, and are usually based on a gentle notare pattern. Many of his hamon do not have many ashi and yo. His styles fall mainly into two groups. One style has a notare hamon mixed with gunome. It reminds us of a formal and simplified Horikawa Kunihiro Keicho period hamon. Kunitomo's other style is just like we see on this katana, with round top gunome with a ko-notare hamon. There are sharp shaped features in the hamon. There are some spaces between the main elements and prominent vertical variations in a Sue Seki style. From the tightly forged jigane, this is said to be modelled after Kanetsada's work. The boshi is a sometimes shallow notare, and the tip is a komaru with a return. Sometimes, the boshi tip is sharp and resembles a Sanpin boshi style. The nakago tip is a shallow kurijiri, the yasurime are o-suji chigai, and there is a seven kanji signature with a title. Among the characteristic points in the signature, it is slightly wavy or curvy, and this is a often Horikawa school characteristic habit. Among the school's smiths, Kunitomo's characteristic signature is a large size from the top to the bottom, and in particular, the last two kanji for Kunitomo are a large size, and the chisel marks in the last kanji's left side are emphatically long.

Among Kunihiro's students, Kunitomo's styles are distinctive. His hamon are different from the other students' hamon which are modeled after Soshu master smiths' work with rich hataraki variations. He preferred a distinctive hamon, modelled after Kanetsada's work, and he shows some of the Seki school's characteristic rough forging, although many of Kunitomo's swords show tight forging work. Many of Kunitomo's shapes are Keicho Shinto shapes. Beside this, he has blades with standard widths, and the widths at the moto and saki are slightly different, there is a large sori, funbari, and a slightly long chu-kissaki. This kind of shape, if the

kissaki is shorter, resembles a Kanei Shinto shape, and this is supposed to be the transition period going from the Keicho Shinto shape to the Kanei Shinto shape. Kunitomo has no dated blades, and we can say that the shapes are one of the keys to learning the details of Kunitomo's active period. Also, belonging to the Kishu Toshogu (a temple), Kunitomo has a gassaku work with Kunihiro which is classified as Juyo Bunkazai. Kunitomo's student, Shin Kunisada, has dated Genna period work. This information provides support for the idea that Kunitomo's active period was from Keicho to the early Kanei period.

Many sword books list Shin Kunisada as being Kunihiro's student. However, in his hometown, many museums accept the idea that Shin Kunisada was a student of Kunitomo ("Swords and Tsuba in Hyuga" by Fukunaga Suiken). Judging from the actual swords, the early work of Shin Kunisada shows styles and signatures which appear to be strongly influenced by Kunitomo's work. In the Bakumatsu period, according to a book by the chief retainer Hirabe Kyonan of the Obi clan's Ito family "Hyuga ji shi", the Inoue Shinkai page mentions that Shinkai's father was Shin Kunisada. When he was young, Kunisada went to Kyoto and studied sword making under Kunitomo. However, the "Shinto Bengi" lists Kunisada and Kunitomo as having studied under Kunihiro according to Inoue family records. From this information, in recent years, the theory developed that Shin Kunisada was Kunihiro's student when Kunisada was young and when Kunihiro was already older, and so Kunitomo was actually his teacher.

For an almost correct answer, people voted for Kunihiro, Kunimichi, the Shodai Kunisuke, and Shin Kunisada.

Kunihiro has tight forging in his tanto and suguha hamon work, but many of his jigane show zanguri (rough) hada. His hamon are Tensho period Sue Bizen styles with a gorgeous midare hamon, and a Keicho period suguha style with ko-notare and gunome hamon, and in both styles, at the border of the hamon, the hataraki become prominent. Many of his nakago tips are ha-agari kurijiri, and from the Tensho period, his nakago tips are kurijiri, and the yasurime become either katte sagari or suji chigai.

Kunimichi's signature's characteristics are prominent, his chisel marks are thick, and the left side kanji stroke is not emphasized. Also, his forging shows nagare hada, the hamon is a wide saka-ashi style, and there are prominent hataraki.

The Shodai Kunisuke and Shin Kunisada's early work both show similarities to Kunitomo's work, but there are small numbers of these

early works existing. Many of their styles appear to follow Kunihiro's Keicho period work, and there are few examples of Kanesada style (utsushi) work. Usually, many of these swords have a dense nioiguchi, gunome mixed with choji, and a bright nioiguchi. Also, the Shodai Kunisuke has very rare examples of work in Kunitomo's style, and fewer than Shin Kunisada. His nakago tips are ha-agari kurijiri. If we see Shin Kunisada's work, even in Kunitomo's style, many of them have muneyaki, the width of his chisel strokes in the mei are either standard or slightly thick, and the left side stroke is not prominent or emphasized when compared to Kunitomo. In any case, he signed "Izumi no kami Kunisada", and instead of the last two kanji for "Kunisada" becoming large, the two kanji in "Fujiwara" become vertically long and extended.

Explanation by Ooi Gaku