

# NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

## ISSUE NUMBER 831

### APRIL, 2026

## MEITO KANSHO

### APPRECIATION OF IMPORTANT SWORDS

#### Tokubetsu Juyo Token

#### Katana

Mumei: Denrai (accepted as) Kuniyuki  
Owner: NBTHK

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

Sori: 5 bu 8 rin (1.75 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 bu 9 rin (3.9 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 4 bu 4 rin (20.15 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

#### Commentary

This is a shinogi tsukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is wide, the difference in the widths at the moto and saki does not stand out, it is thick, there is a shallow wa-sori, and a chu-kissaki. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, and the entire ji has a small pattern hada and the ji is well forged. There are thick abundant ji-nie and frequent fine chikei. The hamon is a chu-suguha style mixed with ko-choji, angular shaped features and ko-gunome. The edge of the hamon has hotsure, uchinoke, and nijuba, there are frequent ashi and yo, fine even ha-nie, and kinsuji and sunagashi. The upper half of the ura has muneyaki, and there is a bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi on the omote is almost a suguha style with a komaru. The ura boshi is a shallow notare with a round point and return. The tips on both sides have hakikake. The horimono on the omote and the ura are a deep bo-hi carved into the nakago.

The nakago is largely suriage and the tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are kiri, there are three mekugi-ana and the blade is mumei.

Rai Kuniyuki is famous as the actual Rai school founder, and the school flourished in Yamashiro Province in the mid-Kamakura to the Nanbokucho period. Kunitoshi who is supposed to be his son has dated work from Koan 1 (1278), and it is thought that his active period was from around the Kogen to Buno periods (1256-61), and this seems to be reasonable. His confirmed signed works are relatively numerous, many of them are tachi, and he has two ko-tachi, and one of them is a Juyo Bijutsuhin called "Meibutsu Kuniyuki", but the owner is unknown. In addition, a tanto and an uchigatana which have signatures on the omote are Juyo token, and another work is a Kokuho, and there are ten Juyo Bunkazai works. His tachi shapes vary with narrow to wide widths, a majority of them are slightly wide, and usually with any style or width, the kissaki are inokubi kissaki. The sori follows the Rai school style with a moderate sori which is centered around middle of the blade, and is called a wasori (kasagi-sori). The jigane have a slightly visible hada ranging from ko-itame to itame, and many of them have abundant ji-nie and nie-utsuri. The hamon are not just suguha, and they are based on a slightly shallow notare, a wide suguha hamon mixed with kogunome, angular shaped features, and komidare. There are frequent ashi and yo, and the entire hamon is formed in ko-nie. Among these hamon there are mainly ko-choji and komidare hamon, with a classic appearance, The tops of the angular shaped ko-choji have a karimata style small hamon, and this is his one of his characteristic points, and is also seen in slightly earlier period smiths' work such as work by Awataguchi Kuniyasu and Ayanokoji Sadatoshi. This was one of the Yamashiro school's characteristic points until around the mid-Kamakura period. Also, on the omote hamon, ashi are diagonal and are angled away from the nakago direction, and are called "Kyo-saka-ashi", and this is an important characteristic point. In addition, besides suguha style hamon, many of his works have muneyaki and this is a unique characteristic point which should not be missed. Moreover, his wide blades have a relatively large number of deep bo-hi carved into the nakago, the same as seen in the work of the two kanji Kunitoshi.

This katana is largely suriage and does not have its original shape, but it is still wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki does not stand out. There is a chu-kissaki, which is reminiscent of the mid-Kamakura period's dynamic tachi shape. The jigane is small pattern itame and well forged. From the moto to the tip, there are almost no irregularities or rough areas, and it demonstrates the obviously high level forging skills of the smith. Also, the hamon is a chu-suguha style hamon mixed with ko-choji and angular shaped elements, there are frequent ashi and yo, abundant hataraki such as kinsuji and sunagashi, and one never get tired of examining it. Part of the top of the hamon is a small karimata style hamon, in addition on the ura, the upper half has pale muneyaki, and with the gentle wa-sori shape, we can recognize his style and the Rai school's characteristic points.

Besides the bo-hi, this blade is thick and wide, has a magnificent shape, and it has kept its healthy shape which feels heavy. Around the habaki moto, there is no togi-damari at all, from this, we can surmise that since the blade became suriage, very little polishing has been done. This is a relatively classic look, but because of its good

state of preservation, the wide hamon, and also as previously pointed out, the boshi yakiba is strong, this entire katana shows the smith's distinctive strengths and characteristics, and displays them fully. Among Kuniyuki's mumei work, this blade has a rank of considerable standing, and the original shape would have been a dignified long tachi.

This sword was a gift in July of Reiwa 3 (2021) from Mr. Nezu Akira along with several other blades including the Osafune Chikakage which was in the New Year's issue No.828. We would like to again express our sincere gratitude for this gift.

Commentary and oshigata by Ishii Akira.

## Shijo Kantei To No. 831

### Information

Tachi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu (70.9 cm)

Sori: 9.5 bu (2.85 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu (2.7 cm)

Sakihaba: slightly less than 5 bu (1.45 cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 2 bu (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Kissaki length: slightly less than 7 bu (2.05 cm)

Nakago length: slightly over 4 sun 7 bu (14.3 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi tsukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is slightly narrow, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a standard thickness, a large koshisori with funbari, the tip has sori, and there is a small kissaki. The jigane is itame hada, there are abundant ji-nie, fine chikei, and midare utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the oshigata. The hamon contains choji and gunome, there are frequent ashi, yo, and there is a soft appearing nioiguchi. The hamon has mainly a nioiguchi with some ko-nie, some sunagashi, and the nioiguchi is bright. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu (but the tip has been cut) and there is a ha-agari style kurijiri, and the yasurime are katte sagari. There are two mekugi ana, and on the omote slightly above the original mekugi ana there is a two kanji signature.

When there are no hi present, this smith's signatures are along the mune side of the nakago (when the ji is flat).

# Tokubetsu Tosogu

Oni no nenbutu zu (demon prayer design) kozuka

Mei: Bunka gan (1) Kinoene Akizuki Mitsuoki horisen

This is work from a prestigious Kyoto school gold smith from the Otsuki school. Mitsuoki is a representative smith from the Otsuki school, and this is one of his kozuka.

Mitsuoki was good at bold carving, and he took the world by storm. This kozuka has a simple copper ground, and he carved a demon wearing a monk's costume, using inlaid iroe which includes many types of colored metals. The demon is wearing gold prayer beads on his chest, his left hand has hoga-sho (a donation register) and his right hand has a wooden staff which he waves, and this means he asking for donations called a "demon's nenbutu" (prayer). The ura side is stunning and just a single gold color, and he signed in kanji with his signature as a sentence: "Demon style Buddhist prayer". His face is human but his heart is "like a ruthless and despicable beast".

This subject comes from an Otsu-e (picture) for Edo period travellers who loved souvenirs. This illustrates people who are hypocrites and who have no compassion, and this could be one of Mitsuoki's masterpieces.

Mitsuoki studied pictures from Ganku, and used subjects which were preferred in the period. He produced work with many subjects, such as Jigoku taiu, Ohara me, and Saigyo hoshi, and he is supposed to have preferred satirical subjects, and this kozuka is an example of one of those works.

Otsuki Mitsuoki produced many works until he passed away in Tenpo 5 (1834) at the age of 69 years His signature styles changed greatly from time to time. His dated works are rare, and there is a kozuka dated Bunka 1 (1804) which is very important. At that time, he was 39 years old, and in the middle of a successful career, and we can feel Mitsuoki's lively and vivid spirit. In addition, his work possesses a high level of documentary information.

Commentary by Koiwai Daiki

## Teirei Kansho kai

Date: March 14 (the second Saturday of the month)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan Auditorium

Lecturer: Takeda Kotaro

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

Mei: Muneyoshi

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 8 bu

Style: Shinogi tsukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume hada, there is some nagare hada; the entire ji is well forged; there are ji-nie, chikei, prominent dark areas over the shinogi ji, and large clear jifu utsuri.

Hamon: based on ko-midare; mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji; there are no vertical variations, frequent ashi and yo, ko-nie deki, and some sunagashi.

Boshi: straight; the tip on the omote is a yakizume style, and the ura tip is round with a return.

This is a Juyo Bijutsuhin Ko-Ichimonji Muneyoshi tachi. Although there is no funbari, you can recognize that the blade is suriage, has a koshizori, and effect of the sori becoming shallower going towards the tip is not too strong. But with the narrow width and small kissaki, you can judge this as work from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period. Looking at the jigane, there are clear utsuri, dark areas are present, and over the shinogi ji there are large dark areas, and this would be evidence for early period work. The hamon does not have prominent vertical variations, and is a classical komidare, and from the jiba (jigane and hamon) you can look at this as old Bizen work. It appears to be Ko-Bizen work, and many people voted for Ko-Bizen work. This is work from the same period, and from the classical elegant appearance, we treated that as a correct answer at this time. However, Ko-Bizen work has relatively little of this clear utsuri, and many Ko-Ichimonji have slightly less nie compared with Ko-Bizen work.

Also, Muneyoshi has four Juyo Bijutsuhin blades, his signatures are slightly different, and this is supposed to be his most classic appearing work.

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

Mei: Rai Kunimitsu

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 7.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 8 bu

Style: shinogi tsukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada mixed with a large pattern hada; there is a visible hada; there are ji-nie, abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei and nie utsuri.

Hamon: based on suguha mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji; there are ashi, yo, frequent ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi; the top of the hamon has intermittent yubashiri, and there is a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight; the omote is a komaru, and the ura is a togari style; on both sides the tip has hakikake.

This blade is wide, and there is a large sori although the blade is suriage. There is wa-sori shape, the jigane has nie utsuri, and the hamon is based on suguha mixed with ko-gunome. On the omote there are Kyo saka-ashi, and from these details, you can judge this as being Rai work. The top of the hamon has intermittent yubashiri, and some people looked at this as being a karamata shape hamon, and voted for Rai Kuniyuki. This is an understandable viewpoint, but the tachi has clear round top gunome, and in the Rai school, this does not become prominent until Kunimitsu's generation. If it were Kuniyuki's work, his hamon are more complex and classic looking. Also, some people voted for Kunitsugu. They are very similar works, but if it were Kunitsugu's work, the jiba would have more strong nie and appear to look more like Soshu Den work.

Also, this has a sayagaki saying "Rai Kunimitsu with dai 1000 kan origami, Genroku 12 (1699) u-toshi, 12 gatsu 3 nichi. Echizen no kami sama received the shihon rank from the lord". Looking at the same date in the "Tokugawa jikki"(diary), it says that "at the mansion, a noble person visited. The lord promoted him (name omitted) to the shihon rank and presented him an Ichimonji katana by himself, and changed his title to Echizen no kami. Also, the lord presented a Rai Kunimitsu katana to his father Yasuaki". This is the katana Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (at that time Yasuaki) received from the fifth Shogun Tsunayoshi, and historically, this is a valuable sword.

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

Mei: Kanemoto

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 2 bu

Sori: slightly less than 9 bu

Style: shinogi tsukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada and strong nagare hada. There is a slightly visible hada, frequent ji-nie, chikei, and a whitish ji.

Hamon: the entire hamon is narrow, and has togari style gunome mixed with togariba, ko-gunome, ko-notare; there are ashi and a nioideki.

Boshi: midarekomi; the round tip has some hakikake; there is a long return.

This is a Magoroku Kanemoto katana. It is wide, there is a sakizori and a long chu-kissaki, and from this, you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi period and as Seki work. The shinogi ji is shaved off slightly, forming a high shinogi, and there is a poor hiraniku. There is a strong nagare and itame hada

with a whitish ji, the shinogi ji has a masame hada, there are prominent togariba in the hamon, and these appear to be strong Sue Seki characteristic points.

Also, in looking at the hamon, you can see the sanbon-sugi style, and from this, it could be possible to arrive at the Kanemoto answer.

In talking about Magoroku, the sanbonsugi hamon is his trademark. In Tensho 19 nen (1591) a sword book was published, the "Shinkan Hiden Sho" which listed "kiba hamon" and this hamon example. In Genna 9 nen (1623) "Seki Moguroku Ikenyo Chusho" was published, and it listed "three continuous different hamon, where the middle is large, and both ends are smaller". They did not use the word sanbon-sugi, but explained and described the hamon, and since then, this is considered to be Kanemoto's characteristic point. This sanbonsugi is mixed irregularly with irregular togari style gunome and togariba, and different from later period work such as Kanemoto and utsushimono which are regular hamon with a tight nioiguchi and sanbonsugi, it clearly shows a strong respect for Magoroku's high level of skill.

The style is typical, and a majority of people voted for the correct answer in the first vote. Slightly fewer people voted for Kanesada. He was the same period's smith, but among the Sue Seki smiths, Kanesada's forging is refined, mainly togariba hamon are few, and many of his hamon are notare mixed with round gunome and slightly large midare.

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

Mei: Hiroyuki

Length: slightly over 9 sun 9 bu

Sori: 1 bu

Style: katakiriha tsukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; there is a visible hada; there are frequent ji-nie and chikei.

Hamon: it is low or narrow, and is a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome and some gunome; there are frequent nie; some places are mixed with rougher nie which form mura nie; the top of the hamon has yubashiri, sunagashi, some muneyaki, and a slightly worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight; on the omote the tip is yakikuzure; the ura is yakizume.

Horimono: on the omote there is a suken; on the ura there is a gomabashi; both sides are carved into the nakago.

The first thing that catches the eye is supposed to be the style. Katakiriha tsukuri become popular during the Keicho Shinto period, and were which modeled after work from the end of Kamakura Period to the Nanbokucho Period, or from later Nanbokucho period work. This is wide and long with a shallow sori. But the blade is not thin, and from this you can judge this as Keicho Shinto work. The itame hada mixed with mokume had and the visible hada is a unique hada called "zanguri hada"

which is a Horikawa school characteristic point, and this tanto jigane shows this very well. The hamon is low, and a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome, and there is a gentle composition. Also, the nioiguchi has dense areas, and slightly tightly forged areas, there are rough uneven nie, and this also shows the Horikawa school's characteristic points. Many people clearly observed these characteristics points, and voted for the Horikawa work, especially for Kunihiro. At this time, it is hard to find differences between individual smith's work, so any Horikawa smith's name was treated as a correct answer. If I had to comment on something, Hiroyuki has low or narrow suguha hamon, more than other Horikawa smiths, and he also he suguha hamon work. Some people voted for Hiroyuki, and it was impressive.

Among other votes, votes for Echizen Yasutsugu are relatively prominent. Definitely, from the style and with the horimono, it is understandable. But if it were Yasutsugu's work, the jigane would be darker, and with the North's characteristic dark jigane, and the inside of the hamon should have stripe-like sunagashi. There is a controlled low hamon width, and a gentle hamon. There are some strong nie in places, and sunagashi and yubashiri along the top of hamon, and they are supposed to be the Keicho Shinto period's preferred works. In voting, some people voted for Nambukucho smiths, and this tanto does resemble classic work.

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

Mei: Bizen Kuni ju Osafune Yosozaemonjo Sukesada

Owner mei: Aruji Matsuda Yabyoeijo Hidekatsu  
Taiei 2+2 (i.e. 4) nen (1524) 8 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 1 shaku 9 sun 4 bu

Sori: slightly less than 6 bu

Style: hiratsukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; there are frequent ji-nie, chikei, and clear utsuri along the mune side.

Hamon: chu-suguha; there is a shallow notare mixed with some ko-gunome; there are small ashi and yo, and ko-nie deki.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is komaru and there is a long return.

From the slightly long hiratsukuri wakizashi shape, it seems difficult to judge the period. This is less than 2 shaku in length overall, and there is a strong saki-zori shape, from this you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi period and a katateuchi blade. The jigane is a tight and refined ko-itame hada with clear utsuri. From the top to the bottom the suguha hamon it is flawless, and you can judge this as being highly skilled Sue Bizen work. This is Yosozaemonjo Sukesada's work. However, it difficult to narrow this work down to his name due to his wide range of work and his highly skilled Yoso work. It would be fine to recognize this being from among the Sue Bizen smiths, such as Tadamitsu who has an established reputation,

good forging, and was good at making suguha hamon. Also, as suguha hamon had an established reputation among Sue Bizen smiths, many people voted for Kiyomitsu. The voters should have noticed the lower half of the suguha has some yo, but generally Kiyomitsu hamon are itame and have a visible jigane, many of them are slightly less refined than this one, and his shapes are more robust compared to this one.

This is an unusual hiratsukuri work. In earlier periods, among the same style of famous works we can see Saemonjo Kuniyoshi's "naki kitsune" blade and one of Uesugi family's 35 excellent blades including the "Suishin-giri Kanemitsu". Likely, because of these famous swords, in voting, many people voted for Kuniyoshi and Kanemitsu. This is Matsuda Yabyoe Hidekatsu's special order. Hidekatsu was a member of the Matsuda clan who possessed power in west Bizen, and besides this wakizashi, there are several other confirmed special orders from the Matsuda family. This style could have been made to the client's order, but maybe he was hoping to acquire a famous meibutsu sword.

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 829 in the February, 2026 issue**

The answer for the February Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Izumi no Kami Kaneshige.

This katana has the smith's personal name in the signature, and this is unusual on a katana. The research book listed "Sukegoro", but the part of the nakago with the signature has decayed and lacks clarity, and so we can also read the mei as "Sukekuro". The condition makes it difficult to reach an accurate judgement, so we will have to wait for more material to be found to decide about this, and then we hope reach a sound judgement on the pronunciation as being either "go" or "ku".

This katana has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a short chu-kissaki and these are common Kanbun Shinto characteristic points. On the other hand, one of the school's major characteristic points, a shallow sori is not seen here. Rather, this katana has a slightly large sori with funbari, and this is an important point. This kind of Kanbun Shinto with some sori is seen from around the Kanei to Shoho period (1624-47), and you can judge this as being a Kanei Shinto characteristic shape. In this period's blades, the difference in the widths (fumbari) at the moto and saki are more prominent than in Kanbun Shinto work.

The shinogi is low and visible masame hada are seen often in Edo Shinto work, and this matches with the smith's characteristic points.

Kaneshige's jigane are mainly a ko-itame hada, there are frequent ji-nie, fine chikei, and there are two types of jigane. One is slightly rough, and the other is tight just like

this one. Sometimes the smith has a refined jigane which is equal to those of the best Osaka Shinto smiths.

Kaneshige's hamon are usually one of two types: one is based on notare mixed with frequent continuous gunome, and the other is a suguha with a shallow notare. Both have a dense nioiguchi with nie and ko-nie, and are bright and clear. The nioiguchi diffuses going down towards the hamon edge, and the hamon appears like is filled with smoke. From this, if you think about Hizento which have a clear nioiguchi, you can exclude those smiths.

This is the second style of suguha hamon, but some places are mixed with gunome, there are thick ashi, and we can say it seems to show some of the first notare hamon style's characteristic points.

The nakago has a narrow tip and a ha-agari kurijiri tip. The tip's mune side is a straight line, and only the bottom of the hamon side has niku. On the omote, under the mekugi ana and along the mune side there is a mei with a title, and these details are consistent with his nakago style. Moreover, most of Izumi no kami Kaneshige's nakago mune have an angular shape, his yasurime are a strong sujichigai or large sujichigai, either without kesho or with weak nascent kesho yasurime, and this matches his characteristic points.

For another proper answer, if it were Kazusa no suke Kaneshige's work dated in the Manji era (1658-60) and with gold inlay saidan mei work, or early Kanbun period work, we will see strong angular nakago mune, but he has many round mune. Throughout this period, his nakago mune are round and there clear kesho yasurime, and these are considered to be characteristic points. However, he has very few Shinkai style suguha works, and in these, there are prominent hamon edge hataraki, but there is a slightly worn down nioiguchi. In his frequent gunome hamon work, most of the hamon have long ashi, proper gunome shapes, clear gunome midare and juzuba midare. Also, his active period is mainly during the Kanbun period, and his work has a shallow sori Kanbun Shinto shape, and you can't miss this.

At this time, some people voted for just "Kaneshige", without an Izumi-no-kami or Kazusa-no-suke title. As you should know, at an appraisal, these two smiths are treated as different smiths. If either name is given without a title, it would not be treated as a proper answer.

For another proper answer, some people voted for Nakasone Okisato who is supposed to be his student. His nakago shapes change in diverse ways, and from Manji 3 to Kanbun 3 (1660-63) his nakago mune have an angular shape, a ha-agari kurijiri style tip, the tip's mune edge is a straight line like Kaneshige's, but the bottom of the nakago does not have niku. Also, Kotetsu's characteristic Kanbun Shinto shape with teko-gane style hada, hyotan-ba, and a Kotetsu boshi are not seen here. Also, many of his suguha hamon have a tight nioiguchi, and this is different from this sword.

Besides correct and proper answers, some people voted for Inoue Shinkai, Tsuda Echizen-no-kami Sukehiro, Yamato-no-kami Yasusada, and Hojoji Masahiro. These smiths were active around the Kanbun Shinto period, and their shapes are generally just like Kanbun Shinto shapes with a shallow sori.

Shinkai was good at suguha work and shallow notare hamon work, but his hamon have more chikei and kinsuji. Many of his boshi tips have a return extending past the ko-shinogi, and are called komaru sagari (sagging down), his nakago mune are round, and many of them have a carved kiku-mon and a date on the ura side.

Sukehiro made toran-ba, highly rated suguha, and shallow large notare hamon. The nioiguchi has fine hataraki lines which appear like a tear in a piece of torn Japanese paper going up into the ji, and this is supposed to be a major characteristic point. Many of his boshi are also just like an Osaka Shinto komaru sagari, his nakago mune are round with ko-tsutsumi kesho yasuri, and his nakago tips are iriyamagata.

Yasusada's characteristic work has a prominent large (and sharply angled) ihorimune, his nakago mune are large and round, and his yasurime are without kesho. His yasurime are a large sujichigai which become deeper going down under the habaki, and this is his one of his characteristic points. Also, in the case of suguha hamon many of his nioiguchi are tight and slightly worn down.

Masahiro's hamon have more prominent gunome and gunome-ashi, many are a slightly small size, and often the edge of the hamon has nijuba and yubashiri. Also, there are a few works with kesho yasurime, but those yasurime are shallow, and become katte sagari or sujichigai, and his nakago tips are iriyamagata.

Commentary by Ooi Gaku

**NOTE:** Once you vote for an answer and submit it, you cannot change it. Also, some people submit several answers, and in this case, even if one is the correct answer, all of their entries will become invalid. So please be careful and submit only one smith's name.