NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 838
November, 2026

MEITO KANSHO
APPRECIATION OF IMPORTANT SWORDS

Juyo Bijutsuhin

Katana

Owner: Nagoya Token Museum

Mei: oite Bushu Edo Echizen Yasutsugu with Aoe mon
motte Nanban-tetsu Rai-se ho (for the coming generations)
nido (cutting test) Honda Gorouemon shoji (owner)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu 9 rin (72.6 cm)
Sori: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.95 cm)
Sakihaba: 7 bu 3 rin (2.2 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)
Sakikasane:1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)
Kissaki length: 1 sun 4 bu 2 rin (4.3 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 6 bu 3 rin (20.1 cm)
Nakago sori: slight

Commentary

This is a shinogi tsukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is not prominent. It is slightly thick, there is a shallow sori and a long chu-kissaki. The jigane has a ko-itame hada mixed in places with itame. There are abundant ji-nie and fine chikei. The hamon is gunome mixed with konotare, kogunome and togariba. There are ashi, uneven nie, and on the omote around the center of the blade, there are yubashiri. The boshi on the omote is almost straight and there is a sharp tip. The ura boshi is a gentle notare with a round return.On both sides the tip has hakikake, and there is a long return. The nakago is ubu, the tip is

iriyamagata, and the yasurime a are slightly steep katte sagari. There is one mekugi ana, and on the omote, below the habaki, there is an Aoe mon, and under this, there is a long kanji mei with a location. The ura has two lines of kanji with a long signature, and which states that namban tetsu was used. Under this is a soe mei “Raiseho nido” (tameshigiri test), and the owner’s name.

In the Shinto period, the Shodai Yasutsugu was famous as being a founder who established a major school. Before the second world War, from previous research efforts, there were several theories concerning him, and this is what is currently thought to be correct.

His birthplace was Omi Koku Sakata-gun Shimosaka-go (today’s Shiga Prefecture’s Nagahama City), and he was called Shimosaka Ichisaemon. His grandfather worked in the Mino school tradition, his name was Kanemasa, and according to the Shimosaka family’s “Daidai Tsutomegaki” (a work book for the generations) he was a descendent of one of the retired Emperor Gotoba’s Goban kaji (master smiths), Omiya Chunagon Toshimasa. For some reason, he moved from Mino to Kyoto and changed his name to Shimosaka. Later the school which was based in the Omi Shimosaka beach area suffered catastrophic damage in Tensho 13 (1586) from a major earthquake, and consequently, around the Bunroku to Keicho period, they moved to Echizen’s Ichijo valley, and to Kita no Sho. In addition, there are two schools of thought about the period in which he received the Higo Daijo title. One is that it was in Kyoto, and the other is that it was after he moved to Kita no Sho. Around Keicho 5 (1600), Ieyasu’s second son Yuki Hideyasu was transferred to Kita-no-Sho and he prepared to build Fukui castle (i.e. Kita-no-Sho castle) and the castle town. Around Keicho 10 (1605) there was supposed to be a large sword making group, the “Shimosaka School”, and around that time Yasutsugu is supposed to have entered into service to Hideyasu. Possibly due to Hideyasu’s efforts, from Keicho 10, for 11 years (another theory says from around Keicho 18) he was invited to Edo, and demonstrated forging in front of Hideyasu and the Shogun Hidetada. As a reward, he received permission to use the Aoe mon and the “Yasu” kanji, and changed his name to Yasutsugu. He then became the Shogun family’s official sword smith in both name and reality. Work which supports this history is a Juyo Bunkazai hiratsukuri wakizashi owned by Atsuta shrine which is signed “Aoe mon/ hono O-shu Atsuta daimyojin, ryo gosho sama makari-kudasare (two shoguns came), oite Bushu Edo go-mon yasu no ji meshiidasaru (in Edo he received permission to use the yasu kanji) jo koku no ryu (dragon horimono) ‘’. After this he signed his work with “Echizen Yasutsugu”. Also, he could have been a valuable resource in helping supply the Tokugawa family’s demand for a large number of swords. In Keicho 19 (1614) and in the following year at the Osaka Castle battle, he is supposed to have been working for the shogunate forces. In 1615, Osaka Castle fell in the Osaka Castle summer battle, and Ieyasu regretted that many famous swords (the Osaka gyobutsu) were damaged in the Osaka Castle fire, and in Genna 1 (1615) he ordered Yasutsugu to perform yaki-naoshi (re-

temper) and repair these swords. Later, Yasutsugu made use of the knowledge and skills he acquired at this time and he produced not a few utsushi mono works. Moreover, there are confirmed multiple examples of Honda Narishige's name on blades, and he was Echizen Koku's Maruoka Domain's first lord. Also, the Nidai Fukui domain's lord Matsudaira Tadanao (Yuki Hideyasu's son) was a senior Tokugawa retainer, and we can infer that Narishige strongly supported him.

Many of Yasutsugu's signatures include "motte nanban tetsu oite Bushu Edo Echizen Yasutsugu", and beside these, there are several styles of mei such as "Higo Daijo Fujiwara Shimosaka","oite Bushu Edo Echizen Shimosaka"," Higo Daijo Fujiwara Echizen Yasutsugu", "motte nanban-tetsu oite Sunshu Echizen Yasutsugu", and "Echizen Koku ju Yasutsugu". We are not sure about the reason, but most of his dated works are concentrated from "Keicho 19 nen (1614) 8 gatsu hi", and all of them are signed "motte nanban-tetsu oite Bushu Edo Echizen Yasutsugu".

He passed away in Genna 7 (1621) on September 9th, and is buried in Fukui city in Katsuragi temple which is abandoned today. The one theory concludes that he was 68 years old at that time.

This katana is wide, and there is not much difference in the widths at the moto and saki. There is a slightly shallow sori with a long chu-kissaki. This is a copy of a Nanbokucho period large tachi with a suriage shape which were seen in the Keicho Shinto period. The jigane is mainly ko-itame hada, and shows a more refined forging than usual. Also, this is different from Yasutsugu's often seen notare hamon. The hamon composition has variations, gunome mixed with ko-gunome and togariba, and the rough nioiguchi does not stand out. There is a refined jigane, and this is one of his best works.

The owner of the sword, Honda Goro Uemon (Masatsugu) was supposed to be Honda Narishige's nephew, and as a senior retainer, he worked for Echizen Mastudaira's shodai Hideyasu up to the fourth generation Mitsumichi, and he worked to assist the Edo sandai (third generation) Yasutsugu's succession to become the head of the family. From this katana, there is evidence of a close relationship between the Shimosaka family and Masatsugu, and this work is valuable as a source of historical material.

In Showa 14 (1939), this katana became a Juyo Bijutsuhin, and the owner at that time was Mr. Kishimoto Kannosuke. He was the second generation Kyoto-Fu (Kyoto City) NBTHK branch chairman, and also since Taisho 7 (1918) he operated a sword shop called "Kusanagi no Ya", and in Showa 23 (1948) when the NBTHK was established, he worked as a judge or appraiser for swords. In Showa 48 (1973) the NBTHK national convention was held in Kyoto, and his enormous oshigata collection spanning several decades of work was published in a commemorative issue.

Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei To No. 838

Information

Katana

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 3 bu (73.6 cm)
Sori: slightly over 2 bu (0.65 cm)
Motohaba: slightly over 1 sun (3.0 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu (1.85 cm)
Motokasane: slightly over 2 bu (0.65 cm)
Sakikasane: slightly over 1 bu (0.4 cm)
Kissaki length: slightly over 9 bu (2.8 cm)
Nakago length: 7 sun 1 bu (21.5 cm)
Nakago sori: none

This is a shinogi tsukuri katana with a high ihorimune. There is a slightly long length, it is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is prominent. There is a standard thickness, a slightly wide shinogi ji, a low shinogi, a very shallow sori, and this resembles a stick-like shape. There is a short chu-kissaki. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and at the koshimoto there is a slightly coarse and muddy appearance. There are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and masame hada present in the shinogi ji. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the oshigata. The hamon's notare waves have angular shapes, and are mixed with large gunome. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, sunagashi and a worn down nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, the nakago mune is high and round, there is narrow tip on the ha-agari shaped kurijiri. The yasurime are a large sujichigai and from the migaki-dashi (border) to the nakago tip, they gradually become deeper. There is one mekugi ana, and on the omote, under the mekugi ana, along the mune side there is a five kanji signature. The ura has a saidan-kiritsuke mei.

Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira

Tokubetsu Juyo Tosogu

Mukai shishi zu (design with confronting shishi) kozuka

Mei: Somin deshi Yanagawa Naomasa with kao

Yanagawa Naomasa was born in Genroku 5 (1692) in Edo and was Masatsugu's son. In his childhood, he was supposed to have learned his craft from the Yoshioka Inbanosuke family, but his styles were strongly influenced by Yokoya Somin. Because of this, many of his works have a shakudo nanako ground with takbabori-iroe, and we often see kenzu (balanced composions) like that of his teacher. Naomasa made a significant contribution to the training of his disciples, and was highly regarded by later generations. The reknowned machi-bori master smiths such as Kikuoka, Inagawa, Sano, Ishiguro, and Kono were Naomasa's students. He is considered to be a great master, and not only the founder of the Yokoya school, but also served as a driving force behind the popularity of Machi-bori work.

This is a kozuka. On the shakudo nanako ground, formed with takabori-iroe, the shishi are seen from the front and there is a balanced composion. Because of the bo-kozuka (stick-like) shape which does not have sharp corners, the sides are round when you face the carved or engraved side, and it has an intensity and feels as if the shishi are lunging right at you. Also, the main highlight is supposed to be the skilfully balanced shishi's volume. His chest muscles are like rising mountains ready to burst. The center of his face between the eyebrows is deeply carved and resembles a deep valley, and his back has a volume but is gentle. In addition to these contrasts, the colors are limited to two, black and gold, and on the gold ground there is a faint shadow produced by the high and the low carving strokes.

Naomasa copied the mukai shishi kozuka exactly from his teacher Somin's work. The shishi's expressive face reminds us of a Daruma, with the carefully carved tips in the shishi's curly hair, and this a piece of work that rivals the master's own. It may be a work that Naomasa himself was truly satisfied with. The ura side signature, besides the usual "Yanagawa Naomasa with kao", is signed above that with the additional "Somin deshi" and this is interesting. This is a good shishi carving and an example of Yanagawa Naomasa's outstanding kozuka work.

Commentary by Takeda Kotaro

Teirei Kansho Kai

Date: October 10th (the second Saturday of the month)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan Auditorium

Lecturer: Takeda Kotaro

Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Mei: Masatsune

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 7.5 bu
Sori: 5 bu
Jigane: there is a tight ko-itame hada; some places have a slightly large hada pattern; there are ji-nie and jifu utsuri.
Hamon: suguha mixed with ko-choji, ko-midare, and kogunome; there are angular shaped features. There are frequent ashi and yo, and a bright nioiguchi with ko-nie.
Boshi: suguha style, and the tip is yakizume.

This is a Juyo Bijutsuhin Ko-Bizen Masatsune tachi. The overall shape has a shallow sori, there is a koshisori, and the tip does not have much sori, and the sori becomes more shallow going towards the tip, and this is a “falling down going forward” sori. From this, you can judge this as being work from no later than the early half of the Kamakura period. Also, the dark jifu utsuri rises up to the shinogi, and some places on the mune have jifu utsuri. These are characteristic points for work that was made no later than the early half of the Kamakura period. On the ura side, the hamon has large bunches of choji, and in some places they are mixed with slightly elongated angular shaped features, which reflect a later period’s hamon. However, the entire hamon is a suguha style mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome with ko-nie, which is usually a Ko-Bizen style.

In voting, many people voted for Ko-Ichimonji work as well as Ko-Bizen work including Masatsune. Ko-Ichimonji work is a transitional period between Ko-Bizen and Fukuoka-Ichimonji and sometimes is similar to Ko-Bizen. In the hamon, the ura side has large bunches of choji, and some slightly elongated angular shaped features, which is a modern hamon from that period. From this, we treated the answer as a correct answer.

Some people voted for Fukuoka-Ichimonji and Motoshige. Either answer is supposed to have come from the fact that some areas have a prominent midare hamon. But as I mentioned above, looking at the shape and the utsuri, this is not work from the latter half of the Kamakura period. Moreover, if it were

Ichimonji work, the high wide hamon would be a spectacular midare. If it were Motoshige's work, some areas of the jigane would have a masame hada.

Kantei To No. 2: Wakizashi

Mei: Kunimasa (Horikawa)
Kinzogan mei: 2 tsu do kiri-otoshi, Yamano Kanjuro Yasuhisa with kao

length: 1 shaku 7 sun 5 bu
Sori: 3 bu
Style: shinogi tsukuri
Mune: ihorimune
Jigane: slightly tight ko-itame hada; there are ji-nie.
Hamon: notare mixed with ko-gunome; some places in the hamon have box-like shapes; there are ashi, yo, a nioideki, some uneven nie, small hotsure, and kuichigaiba; there are some tobiyaki, frequent niesuji, sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi.
Boshi: notarekomi; the omote has hakikake; the tip is komaru and there is a long return.

Kunimasa is listed in the token book "Honcho Shinto" as: "has a two kanji signature, and belongs to the Horikawa Kunihiro school". This was written by Imamura Yukimasa in the Bakumatsu period and there are not many details. There is a blade signed "Kuniyasu shosaku Kunimasa" (Kunimasa signed for Kuniyasu), and in view of this, you can imagine that the two smiths had a close relationship, and in the Horikawa school Kunimasa was a junior smith to Kuniyasu.

The jigane is different from the Horikawa school's unique rough forging, and he is known for his tanto and wakizashi which have refined forging. The hamon is based on notare mixed with gunome and ko-gunome. There are nie which form mura-nie, the nioiguchi's width shows and wide narrow variations, and there is a worn down nioiguchi which shows the Horikawa school's characteristic points. Notably, there are prominent strong nie and sunagashi, and a bold appearance. Some of Kuniyasu's work has wide or high box-like features in the hamon, some tobiyaki, and forms a slightly large midare pattern. Inside of the hamon, from the moto to the saki, there are frequent sunagashi and kinsuji which shows a rustic charm. From these details, including his close relationship to Kunimasa, Kuniyasu was also treated as a correct answer.

In voting, among the Horikawa school smiths, many people voted for Kuniyasu. This likely came from the large midare hamon, with prominent sugashi, and a bold appearance. If it were his work, in many of his blades, the ji along the hamon has some nagare areas. Also, his boshi can form a sanpin

boshi. Besides being accepted as a correct answer due to the strong nie, many people voted for Satsuma Shinto and Shinshinto smiths such as Mondo-no-sho Masakiyo and Oku Motohira. If it were Masakiyo's work, the edge of the hamon has intermittent yubashiri, the top of the hamon has niju-ba and san-juba, and his boshi frequently have hakikake which can form a flame-like shape. If it were Motohira's work, his characteristic sticky-appearing jigane are mixed with dark colored steel areas, and the hamon from the moto to the saki has the same midare pattern, and the inside of the hamon has thick kinsuji.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Mei: Tsuda Echizen no kami Sukehiro
Enpo 9 nen (1681) 8 gatsu hi

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 5 sun 2 bu
Sori: 6 bu
Style: shinogi tsukuri
Mune: ihorimune
Jigane: tight ko-itame hada, there are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a bright and clear jigane.
Hamon: straight; there is a short yakidashi at the moto; the hamon is gunome-choji, mixed with choji and gunome and forms a toranba midare; there is a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, some tobiyaki, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.
Boshi: there is a wide yakiba which is straight; the tip is komaru and there is a return.
Horimono: on the omote and the ura there are bo-hi finished with marudome.

This is over 2 shaku 5 sun long, and this is a large, wide blade with a long chu-kissaki, and at first glance it could be hard to judge the period. However, there is a shallow sori and the widths at the moto and saki are different, and Osaka Shinto work includes many works with a long kissaki. From these characteristic points, you can judge this as a Kanbun Shinto period Osaka Shinto work.

The hamon at the moto has a short and straight yakidashi, and is composed of gunome-choji mixed with choji, gunome, and some tobiyaki. There is a toran-midare hamon with a refined jigane, abundant dense ji-nie, and a bright and clear hamon. These details clearly show Sukehiro's characteristic points.

In voting, people based their votes on these points, and many voted for Sukehiro in the first vote. A few people voted for Omi-no-kami Sukenao and Itakura Gennoshin Terukane. If it were Sukenao's work, there would be large notare mixed with gunome and a toran style hamon, and that is a different shape from what we see on this hamon. If it were Terukane's work, his hiraniku is poor, the jihada is nagare, there would be sunagashi at the top of the hamon and down into the valleys over the entire hamon.

This sword will be exhibited in the exhibit “Shinto Swords, East and West Master Smiths: Kotetsu and Sukehiro” at the NBTHK museum from October 24 to December 20. The exhibit will show 20 blades from Kotetsu and from Sukehiro, and this is a special exhibit to show the work of master smiths in detail. People who could not come to the Teirei Kansho Kai at this time can study and enjoy some of the numerous Sukehiro’s masterpieces at the exhibit.

The nakago is shown at 96%of the actual size.

Kantei To No. 4: Tanto

Mei: Bizen Osafune Kanemitsu
Enbun 5 nen (1360) 3 gatsu hi

Length: 8 sun 2.5 bu
Sori: slightly less than 4 bu
Style: hiratsukuri
Jigane: tight itame hada; there are abundant fine ji-nie, chikei and pale straight utsuri.
Hamon: kaku-gunome mixed with kataochi gunome, ko-gunome, and some saka-ashi; there are frequent ashi, ko-nie-deki, some kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.
Boshi: on the omote the boshi is midarekomi; on the ura the boshi is notarekomi; on both sides, the tip has hakikake, a togari shape, and a return.
Horimono: the ura has koshi-hi carved into the nakago.

Kanemitsu’s confirmed dated works are from the end of the Kamakura Period to the mid-Nanbokucho Period, and span about 45 years. The early Nanbokucho work from around the Koei period (1342-44), and all of his work followed his father Kagemitsu’s styles. There are many kataochi gunome hamon and hamon which are suguha mixed with gunome. Around the Bunwa, and Enbun (1352-60) periods, he made mainly notare hamon which are not seen before that. However, even in his Enbun period work like this example, his work reminds us of Kagemitsu’s style.

At first glance, since the width and length are standard, it could be hard to judge this as Nanbokucho period work. But it is thin and there is a shallow sori which is often seen in that period.

The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, there are abundant fine ji-nie with pale utsuri, and in voting for Bizen work, these are characteristic points, and many people voted for Kanemitsu. Besides Kanemitsu, and as good as the correct answer, many people voted for his father Kagemitsu and the Kanemitsu’s school Masamitsu and Motomitsu.

If it were Kagemitsu's work, from his active period at the end of the Kamakura period, we do not see a sori like this, and there would be a slightly uchizori shape. If it were Masamitsu's work, the entire hamon would be smaller, his hamon composition would contain ko-gunome and togariba, and many of the hamon have an uneven appearance. If it were Motomitsu's work, his hamon are mainly based on angular shaped gunome and togari shaped gunome, and his jihada has some places with itame and nagare hada.

Also, as good as the correct answer, some people voted for the Bizen smith Motoshige. If it were his work, his jihada is mixed in places with masame hada, and there are low wide angular shaped gunome with an elongated side.

Kantei To No. 5: Katana

Mei: Bushu 61 ou Bizen no suke Munetsugu saku
Bunkyu 3 nen (1863) Yamazaki Kenshin shoji (owner)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu
Sori: 5 bu
Jigane: tight ko-itame hada in a muji style; there are frequent ji-nie.
Hamon: choji mixed with gunome and ko-gunome; there are frequent ashi, a nioiguchi with ko-nie, and a tight nioiguchi which is bright and clear.
Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is sharp and there is a return.

This katana has a standard width, is thick, and has a very tightly forged jigane which is muji. From the moto to the saki the nie are even and there are no mura nie, and the fresh looking hamon has long ashi, from this, you can judge this as Shinshinto period work.

In the Shinshinto period, sword smiths were influenced by the idea of a revival in sword making started by Suishinshi Masahide and Nankai Taro Tomotaka, and many of them worked in a Bizen Den style like this one.

Looking carefully at this katana's details, you can see that the hamon shape repeats about every 3 sun. People noticed these characteristic points, and many of them voted for Koyama Munetsugu, the correct answer. For another answer, as good as the correct answer, a few people voted for Chounsai Tsunatoshi and Tairyusai Munehiro. Some people also voted for Unju Korekazu.

If it were Tsunatoshi's work, his hamon contains small choji bunches, a densely featured midare hamon, and many of them have a yakidashi. If it were Munehiro's work, high and low hamon width variations are not as prominent as often as in Munetsugu's work, and many of them have a mitsumune. If it were Unju Korekazu's work, there is a mainly choji hamon, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi, and these are the type of details we would see in Soshu Den work.

The nakago is shown at 96%of its actual size.

Shijo Kantei To

The answer to the Shijo Kantei To No. 836 in

the September, 2026 issue is a wakizashi by Dewa Daijo **Kunimichi**

Dewa Daijo Kunimichi was Hosokawa Kunihiro's student relatively late in Kunihiro's career. His latest existing work is a tanto dated Keicho 13 nen (1608) which is Juyo Token and signed Heianjo Kunihiro. At that time, Kunihiro was 78 years old and Kunimichi was 33 years old. Kunimichi's dated Keian 5 (1651) work has a soe-mei stating that he was 77 years old, and a later work dated Kanbun 4 (1664) which is saiha was made when he was 89 years old, so his sword making career spanned more than 50 years. In that later period, he was very old, but the first Hizen Tadayoshi worked to the age of 89 years, and several other smiths lived into their 80s. Among the Koto smiths, Rai Kunitoshi has a tachi signed when he was 75 years old which is a Juyo Bunkazai blade owned by the Tokugawa museum. Consequently, we cannot predict exactly how long a sword smith's career can last. However, there is a theory noting that after Kunimichi's dated Shoo 2 (1652) blade, his signature style changed, and after that, the work was by the Nidai or second generation. There is a possibility that these swords are daisaku or daimei work, however, to learn more details about this, we must wait for more historical material to be found.

Because this is a shobu-zukuri blade, it is thin, there is a high shinogi, and a long length. It is wide, and there is a sori and a characteristic shape that is common on wakizashi from the Nanbokucho period to the end of the Muromachi period, and in Keicho Shinto period work. The saki-zori shape would suggest it is Muromachi period work, but this kind of sori often seen in Keicho Shinto period blades in long wakizashi and tanto. It is important when seeing this kind of shape, to thoroughly examine other characteristic points to arrive at the maker's name.

Some of Kunimitsu's jigane are a refined tight ko-itame hada, but many of them have a visible hada and slightly dry appearance called "zanguri" which is what the hint referred to when mentioning the unique hada. The hada are either itame or itame mixed with mokume with some nagare hada, there are chikei, and the jihada pattern is easy to remember.

His hamon are notare mixed with gunome, and is a Horikawa characteristic midare hamon with a slightly worn down nioiguchi. In particular, the wakizashi's bottom half shows Kunimichi's characteristic points. The highlights are a wide hamon for the width of the blade, high and low variations, a large midare pattern, nie-deki, some mura-nie, and good hataraki such as yubashiri and sunagashi. The entire blade clearly shows these strong characteristic points. Moreover, other points to note are the midare hamon mixed with some saka-ashi, the boshi is notare, the tip is sharp and pointed, and there is a return, and this is a Sanpin boshi and these details are characteristic points which are hard to overlook.

The nakago mune is round, the nakago tip kurijiri, and a notable characteristic is the prominent pronounced round kurijiri which stands out strongly and is called a "kururi to marui". If this were Koto period work, Oei Nobukuni has the same kind of nakago tip.

Also, the strong sujichigai yasurime beginning at the migaki-dashi area has some slight kiri or katte-sagari yasurime which are interspersed or overlapping, and this is a characteristic point. Among other smiths, this kind of yasurime is generally seen only in the work of Seki smiths. This is a matter of conjecture, but the Sue Seki nakago were first to show shitaji (ground or foundation) kiri yasuri, and often above it, there is takanoha yasuri or higaki yasuri. At that time, the migaki-dashi area over or above the shitaji yasuri could gradually evolve into a kesho yasuri style.

The mei is written in large kanji and made with a thick chisel. The title is not carved in a disciplined or orderly style. The characters begin with their center on the shinogi line (they slope towards the mune side and become centered towards the mune). However, going down, the characters move towards the center of the nakago, and because of this, the mei can look distorted (and many of the kanji gradually become bigger), and these are Kunimichi's characteristic points.

For another proper answer, people voted for Horikawa school smiths such as Kunihiro, Osumijo Masahiro, Echizen no kami Kunitoshi, and Shin Kunisada.

If it were Horikawa school work, from details of the shape and jigane, chikei and ha-nie which are supposed to be modeled after Soshu Den master work is understandable. But smith's good at making characteristic yasurime migaki-dashi which are supposed to be signs of kesho yasuri, saka-ashi with large midare hamon, and boshi resembling a Sanpin style not seen in Horikawa school work except in Kunimichi's work.

Many of Kunihiro and Masahiro's hamon are low for the width of the blade, and their nakago tips are ha-agari kurijiri. Kunitoshi and Kunisada sometimes have yakidashi, and many of Kunitoshi's hamon are a Nosada (Kanesada) style, and his nakago tips were a shallow kurijiri. Shin Kunisada's early period work was in a Kunitoshi style, in his later period his work had gunome mixed

with choji, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) were bright, and his nakago tips were ha-agari kurijiri and a standard kurijiri.

In addition, Kunimichi was supposed to have had a strong relationship with the Seki Sanpin school, and sometimes he used a “Kunimichi” kanji signature with a different “michi” kanji, and “Rai” kanji. Many of his boshi are a Sanpin boshi which is notare and has a sharp tip. He has a naginata with takanoha yasurime, which was used above the Kunimichi kanji. Etchu no kami Masatoshi has work very similar to Kunimichi’s, so because of this, at meetings with a single or one-time vote and appraisal, he is often treated as a proper answer, and his work conforms with a description of the proper answer.

Included in his yasurime migaki-dashi work are some kiri yasurime, and Masatoshi has several characteristics in common with Kunimichi. But Masatoshi is likely a Sanpin school smith, his entire jigane shows nagare forging, usually many of his hamon are a Sue Seki style midare and a rough midare, and often, inside of the hamon there are shimaba. In his Kunimichi style midare hamon, most are mixed with Sue Seki style hamon features such as togariba and round top gunome. In addition, his nakago tips are a shallow kurijri, and Kunimichi’s characteristic distorted signature style is not seen.

Besides the correct and proper answer, a relatively large number of people voted for Hizen no kami Ujifusa and Yasutsugu.

Notably, Ujifusa’s jigane shows some nagare hada, and sometimes we see a zanguri (rough) hada. His hamon are a large midare, there are strong rough nie, and a worn down nioiguchi, and his yasurime migaki-dashi has kiri strokes. He has many similar points, and that answer makes some sense.

However, Ujifusa’s midare hamon is not a very common style and in the midare valleys there may be a suguha, or a suguha style section someplace in the hamon. Also, many of his midare hamon are a continuous style (along the entire hamon). In addition, often he has either ko-notare or one gunome in front of the boshi. In the Hosokawa school, in the hamon of smiths such as Kunimichi, there are some areas between the midare valleys which are suguha, or there several low or narrow hamon sections, after which the hamon becomes more active. Looking at this, it appears that their hamon have a pace or rhythm in their pattern.

Ujifusa’s nakago mune are kaku-mune (square), the yasurime are katte-sagari and sujichigai, and the nakago tips are a standard kurijiri. His kanji signatures have a prominent style, but his signature style does not have large kanji shapes which can change or give the signature a distorted appearance.

The Yasutsugu answer is supposed to be derived from his large midare hamon with ha-nie and mura-nie, and his boshi are notare, with a sharp tip and return. If it were his work, the jigane would be mixed with more mokume hada and a dark color called Echizen-gane. His nakago mune are a

kakumune, the yasurime are either katte-sagari or suji-chigai, and the nakago tips are kengyo and iriyamagata (a pointed peak-like tip).

Commentary by Ooi Gaku