NIHONTO NEWSLETTER
November, 1968
Vol.1, NO.11

ALBERT YAMANAKA'S NIHONTO NEWSLETTER

Albert Yamanaka's Nihonto Newsletter was published monthly from January, 1968 to July of 1973. It was a mimeographed newsletter consisting of articles written on all aspects of Japanese swords: swords, schools, smiths, history, exhibits, appraisal, comments on collecting, etc.

Albert Yamanaka lived in Japan after the war and became a student of Honami Koson, the most prominent sword expert at the time and a descendant of the Honami appraisers and polishers.

Since this newsletter has been out of print since 1973, and there is a considerable amount of original and unique material presented in it, the Yamanaka family (which has the copyright to this material) supported this effort to make the Nihonto Newsletter available again in an online easily accessible version. We hope old and new collectors will enjoy reading it, and reading material that is often not available in English, even today.

Leon Kapp

COPYRIGHT 1968, Albert Yamanaka
All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or parts in
any manner, without written permission is prohibited.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
Sword History	Shinto Period, Part III	3
Swordsmiths	Rai Mitsugane	11
	Ryokai	12
	Nobukuni	12
Kyoho Meibutsu Cho	Doi Masamune	18
	Horio Masamune	19
	Sozui Masamune	19
Sword Terminology		20

SWORD HISTORY

THE SHINTO PERIOD
Part III

Yamashiro Tradition in the Shinto Period

There were three distinct patterns of hamon made in the Yamashiro tradition during the Shinto period. There were chu-suguha with plentiful nie and those with very little nie. Those with plentiful nie are all made very skillfully, whereas those with little or no nie are made very poorly. The third type has a very wide hamon, and this type will have very rough nie.

The swordsmiths who made the above types of hamon during the Shinto period are:

Umetada Myoju 埋忠明寿	Chu-suguha with plentiful nie and with fine horimono.
Horikawa Kunihiro 堀川国広	Chu-suguha with plentiful nie.
Echigo no Kami Kunitomo 越後守国街	The width of the yakiba becomes slightly wider and the nie are slightly rougher.
“Yamashiro no Kami Kunikiyo山城守国済	Chu-suguha
Heianjo Yoshitake'平安城吉武	Chu-suguha
Tsuda Sukehiro 津田助広	Chu-suguha with Nie
Inoue Shinkai 井上真政	The width of the yakiba is a little wider than that of his teacher Izumi no Kami Kunisada, and the nie are also a little larger. There are abundant ji-nie.
Nagasone Kotetsu 虎徹	Chu-suguha with plentiful very fine nie. There will be weak steel appearing at the bottom half of the blade.
Hojoji Smiths 法城寺一門	Chu-suguha lacking nie. There will be gunome with ashi in most works.
Jumyo	Chu-suguha and there will be sharp pointed peaks in the boshi.

Yukimitsu of Kaga Province	Chu-suguha. The jitetsu will be ko-mokume hada and will seem very hard with the hada showing clearly.
Kiyomitsu of Kaga Province	Same as Yukimitsu.
Nio Smiths二主一門	Chu-suguha. The Jitetsu will have a "bettori" effect.
Onizuka Yoshikuni 吉国	Will resemble Tadayoshi of Hizen Province, however somewhere along the blade there will be sharp pointed peaks in the suguha.
Tadayoshi and his school	The hamon as well as the boshi are made in a suguha pattern, and very gentle with nie. The later Tadayoshi, that is the Daisagari works, becomes poor.

The Yamato Tradition during the Shinto Period

The Yamato tradition during the Shinto period has a slightly wider hamon than those in the Koto Yamato tradition, and will have nijuba, hakikake and uchinoke as seen in Koto Yamato tradition blades, although there will not be as much activity. The hada will be ko-mokume hada, but masame hada is not as noticeable. Also, the boshi in the ShintoYamato tradition are mostly komaru and the boshi patterns such as hakikake and yakizume which were more or less hallmarks of the Koto Yamato tradition are not as commonly seen.

The swordsmiths who worked in the Shinto Yamato tradition are:

Monju Smiths 文珠一門
Dewia Daijo Kunimichii 出羽大拨国路
Etchu no Kami Masatoshi越中守正俊
Mutsu no Kami Kaneyasu 陸突守包保
Echigo no Kami Kanesada越後守包真
Echizen Yasutsugu越前康継
Ogasawara Nagamune 小笠原長旨
Miyoshi Nagamichi 三善長道
Sendai Kunikane 城大 国包
Yamato Daijo Masanori大和大掾正則
Nanki Shigekuni
Naminohira Smiths.

The Bizen Tradition during the Shinto Period

The choji midare seen in old Ichimonji school hamon is a commonly seen hamon, but in nie. Some works will have “blotchy” nie.

In Koto blades, all smiths had their respective characteristics, but in the Shinto period, such traits are not seen.

Types of hamon like “crab claws” are rarely seen during this time.

The most commonly seen hamon are o-choji midare, choji midare with uniform peaks, reverse (saka) choji with the peaks of the midare waves appearing like a head of flame, although the Japanese compare this with the head of a squid. Another style is kengyo choji midare.

The boshi will be komaru or midarekomi with a omaru in most cases.

The difference in the boshi between the Koto and the Shinto blades in the Bizen tradition is that in the Koto Bizen tradition, the boshi were almost always midarekomi.

The steel has mokume hada with masame hada, and some will have utsuri, although not too often. The steel itself will have an appearance of being soft and weak.

Swordsmiths who worked in the Bizen tradition during the Shinto period are:

The 2nd Kawachi no Kami Kunisuke	Mostly kengyo midare.
Soboro Sukehiro助広.	Choji midare with nie.
Omi no Kami Tadatsuna	The peaks of the choji are round and the ashi are very long.
Tatara Nagayuki 良袋	Choji midare with wide valleys.
Yamato no Kami Yoshimichi 大 和 守 吉 道	The peaks of the choji midare are orderly and in line.
Ishido Smiths of Osaka石堂一門	Similar to Yoshimichi.
Ishido Korekazu	Made Choji like those seen in Ko Ichimonji work.
Hioki Mitsuhira 日 置光 平	Same as Korekazu.
Tachibana Tsunemitsu常光	Same as Korekazu.
Ishido Smiths of Kii Province 石堂 一門	The peaks of the Cho ji will be in line.
Yokoyama Sukesada 横山祐定	Made midareba with wide valleys.
Chikuzen Nobukuni Koretsugu鋭前信国是次	Choji with peaks in reverse and appearing like flames.
Chikuzen Nobukuni Moritsugu発前信国学次	Same as Koretsugu.

Musashi Daijo Tadahiro武機大義忠広	Choji midare with nie and long ashi.
Musashi Daijo Masahiro	Same as Tadahiro
Musashi Daijo Yukihiro	Same as Tadahiro

The Soshu Tradition during the Shinto Period

Sword smiths who followed the Soshu tradition during the Shinto period worked in a slightly different manner than those following other traditions.

Most of the sword smiths made blades in a style resembling o-suriage o-tachi from the late Kamakura period into the Yoshino period.

The hamon are about the same as those from the earlier period, although they are usually slightly “rougher”.

The most commonly seen types of hamon are o-midare with nie kuzure, o-midare with nie and Kinsuji, notare with nie and sunagashi, o-midare with hitatsura, gunome with nie kuzure and with sunagashi inside of the hamon, and hako midare with strong sunagashi.

The boshi will be midarekomi and some will be a shallow midarekomi, while others will be wide. In either case, they will have nie kuzure.

In some cases the pattern will be komaru togari (with a sharp point), although very rarely.

The hada in the steel will be o-mokume with itame or ko-mokume hada. Those with ko-mokume hada will have o-hada in places.

The sword smiths who made swords in the Soshu tradition during the Shinto period are:

Horikawa Kunihiro 堀川園広	Made in the traditional Soshu style.
Dewa Daijo Kunimichi 出羽大掾園路	Omidare with togariba in most cases.
Tamba no Kami Yoshimichi 丹波守吉道	Sunagashi found at the edge of the hamon extend up into the ji and are commonly is called sudare-ba.
Soshu Tsunahiro 相州總広	O-midare and hitatsura.
Noda Hankei野田粲医	Sunagashi inside the hamon.
Tsujimura Kanewaka of Kaga	Hako midare with sunagashi.
Mizuta Kunishige 国重	Very strong and rough nie which are especially abundant around the monouchi area.

Izu no Kami Ujifusa伊豆守氏房	Togari in the hamon and will appear like imozuru (potato vines). The steel will have a bettori-like appearance.
Mondo no Sho Masakiyo	Same as Ujifusa.

The Mino Tradition in the Shinto Period

Swordsmiths who migrated from Mino Province were found in many sections of the country during the Shinto period, although these sword smiths also made swords in the Soshu style or in the Shinto style. However, if it is a Mino tradition work, somewhere along the blade, there will be a “hard hamon” which will be a giveaway and one of the clues to the identification of these smiths.

When these smiths made their swords in the true Mino Tradition, there is nothing to provide clues as to whether the blade was made in the Shinto period judging from the hamon or boshi which are exactly same as in the previous Sengoku or the Momoyama periods.

The clue to identifying Mino blades in the Shinto period is in the steel. That is the steel will have a “blackish” sheen, if it is the so-called Shinto steel. Also, and more important, the shape will have a Shinto style.

Sword smiths who made swords in the Mino Tradition during the Shinto period are:

Sagami no Kami Masatsune 相 糢 守 政 常
Shitahara Smiths in Musashi Province下原 一門
All Mino Smiths美没 刀匠
Aizu Kanesada 会津兼定
all Echizen smiths 越 前刀匠
Darani katsukuni 陀羅勝国
Tsujimura Kanewaka 逆村兼老and other Kaga Smiths
Inshu Kanesaki 因州兼先
Izu no Kami Ujifusa“観受守氏房

Tanto of the Shinto Period and how to differentiate them from Koto Tanto

Due to reasons which we have not been able to learn, the making of tanto during the Shinto period decreased considerably compared to the Koto period. The reason may be that requests for tanto were not as great as in the previous period, or it may have been due to the fact that there were enough made in the earlier period and those sustained the need in the Shinto period.

Whatever the reason may have been, the majority of tanto made were in the Sunnobi Hiratsukuri style in a wakizashi length, and these were carried with a katana as a pair or as a daisho.

When they were carried alone, tanto were called ippon zashi. We occasionally find exceptionally well made blades in these lengths, many of them having been made to order.

There is another type of tanto made, and these have a takenoko sori style, but with much longer lengths than those seen in the Koto period.

However, tanto in the shape of the earlier Koto period were also made, although the above two types are more common than the conventional Koto types.

HAMON

The hamon is wider, and the nie are larger, and for this reason the entire hamon is very hanayaka.
Most of the hamon are notare with gunome elements, and the peaks of the gunome will be slightly pointed (like those on Mino blades). The hamon is very hanayaka like those of Soshu style blades.
There will be sunagashi within the hamon or nie sake.

BOSHI

The boshi is komaru and the peak will be a togari shape (sharp or pointed) and there will also be nie. The kaeri will be long, although how long will depend on the sword smith.

JITETSU AND HADA

It seems as though the quality of the steel used in making tanto during the Shinto period was very fine. The grain of the steel is mostly ko-mokume hada which is very tightly forged, but there will also be o-hada in places.
There will be ji nie on some blades, although that is very rare.
Many blades will appear to have ji-nie, but often this is not true ji-nie.

Swordsmiths who made Tanto during the Shinto period in the Shinto Tradition are:

Horikawa Kunihiro堀 川国広
Echigo no Kami Kunitomo越後予国経
Dewa Daijo Kunimichi 出羽大線国路
Etchu no Kami Masatoshi 越中守正俊
Izumo no Kami Kunisada, popularly called Oya Kunisada 和泉守国貞
Ikkanshi Tadatsuna 一竿子忠綱
Nagasone Kotetsu 虎徹
Echizen Yasutsugu 越前 康 継
Higo Daijo Sadakuni 後大数貞国
Tsujimura Kanewaka 过村 兼若
Higo no Kami Teruhiro 記後守輝広
Hizen Tadayoshi 肥前忠吉

NOTE:
It should be noted that most of the tanto made during the Shinto period have exceptionally fine horimono.

Tanto made in the Yamashiro Tradition during the Shinto period

Most of the blades made in the Yamashiro tradition during the Shinto period have a takenoko sori.

The hamon are chu suguha with ko-nie like those of the Kamakura period, but very inferior, although they will be much better made than those of the Yoshino and Sengoku periods. As a whole, the hamon will have the 'feeling' of being tight or dense.

The boshi are komaru with a very gentle and not too long kaeri.

The jitetsu will have ko-mokume hada and be very well forged.

Sword smiths who made tanto in the Yamashiro tradition during the Shinto period are:

Umetada Myoju 埋忠明涛
Horikawa Kunihiro 堀川国広
Dewa Daijo Kunimichi 出羽大掾国 路
Sagami no kami Masatsune 相模守政常
Nagasone Kotetsu 長寧離虎徹
Higo no Kami Sadakuni 肥 後 守 貞 国 will have stronger Yamato tradition influence than Yamashiro tradition, but both influences are seen.
Hizen Tadayoshi 肥前忠吉

Tanto made in the Soshu Tradition during the Shinto Period

The width of the Yakiba will be koroai (well proportioned) and o-midare. There are abundant nie with nie kuzure and sunagashi and these will greatly resemble the blades from the late Kamakura period's Soshu tradition.

Another type is one that has a wide yakiba as it goes forward to the kissaki, but the width at the machi starts out very narrow with the pattern in o-midare with o-gunome mixed with large nie appearing as pebble-like grains. There will be nie kuzure within the hamon.

In either case there will there be abundant hitatsura or tobiyaki.

The boshi are mostly komaru and the kaeri will be long. There will be abundant nie.

The jitetsu will have ko-mokume hada and o-hada.

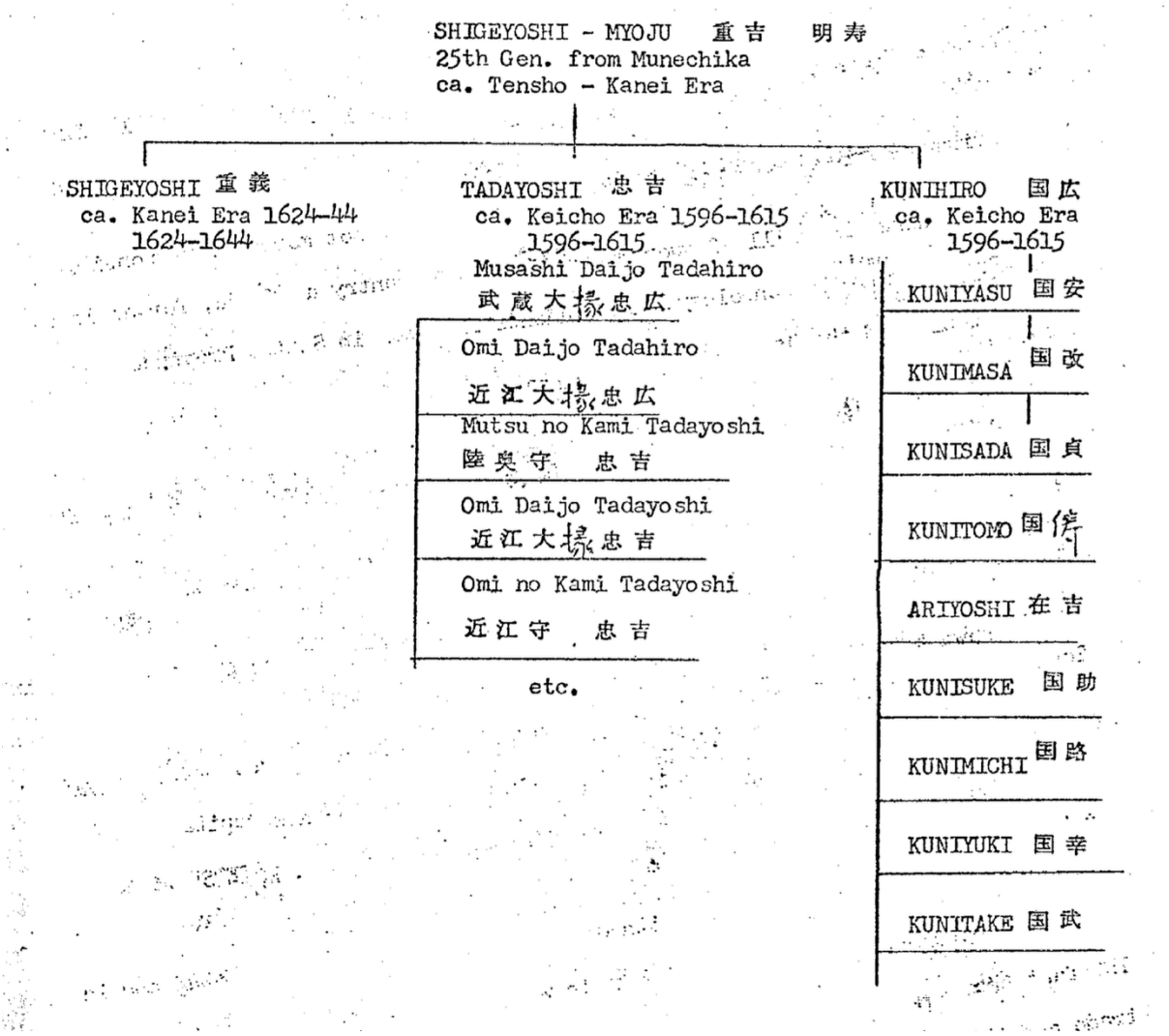
Swordsmiths who made tanto in the Soshu tradition during the Shinto period are:

Horikawa Kunihiro堀川国広
Dewa Daijo Kunimichi 出羽大掾 國路
Etchu no Kami Masatoshi 越中守正俊
Tamba no Kami Yoshimichi 丹波守吉道
Ise Daijo Tsunahiro
Echizen Yasutsugu 越前康継
Mizuta Kunishige 水田国重
Mondo no Sho Masakiyo

As mentioned previously, the number of tanto made during the Shinto Period was not as great as the number seen in the earlier periods, and for this reason we do not see work in all of the traditions, and tanto in some styles or traditions are rare. Tanto from the other Koto traditions such as Yamato, Mino and Bizen are exceptionally rare, therefore we will leave this for another time.

SWORDSMITHS

YAMASHIRO PROVINCE
RAI SCHOOL



RAI MITSUGANE来光包

Worked in the Yamashiro and Bizen tradition.

Worked approximately during the Showa (正和) era, 1312 - 1316

Mitsugane is known for his tanto and there are very few tachi or katana by this smith left to us, if any at all. It is recorded that Mitsugane studied under Nagamitsu in Osafune in Bizen Province, and later joined Rai Kunitoshi's forge to study sword making, and it is said that this was during the Showa Era.

Mitsugane then went to live and work in Chudo in Omi province, and therefore he is sometimes referred to as Chudo Rai.

He is also said to have worked in the Tozu area of Omi Province, and therefore on rare occasions, he is called Tozu Rai.

There is one meibutsu called Midare Mitsugane which is regarded as one of the outstanding works of this smith. Mitsugane's steel is outstanding, and so much so, that it is at times compared with Awataguchi steel.

Since there are so few long blades by this sword smith, tanto will be discussed.

Shape: Hiratsukuri takenoko style tanto. The shape is very gentle. Most blades are sunzumari.
There will be hiraniku and the mune is shin no mune.

Hamon: Hoso suguha with gentle hotsure and very dense ko-nie. The Chu-suguha blades will also have hotsure and will have some komidare. There are some works that are simple chu-suguha.
Those which are hiro-suguha are very 'dreary', there being very little to see in the hamon, but the color of the hamon should be appreciated. In either case, there will be small hataraki along the Hamon.
There are some examples with a hamon resembling Nagamitsu's or Kagemitsu's in Bizen Province, and have features such as kataochi gunome or are komidare with very little nie.

Boshi: The boshi are nie kuzure or komaru, and some will be yakizume.

Jitetsu
And hada: The steel will show uruoi that is seen in the work of better smiths. The hada will be ko-mokume hada, and there will be an abundance of ji nie which will produce an appearance like nashiji. There will also be small chikei. For this reason, his work is quite often mistaken for Awataguchi work.

Nakago: Long, there will be niku, and the tip will be kurijiri. Some works will have a furisode style nakago.
The file marks will be kiri.
The inscriptions are generally the two characters Mitsugane, and sometimes there is a date, but that is very rare.

The RYOKAI (子我) and NOBUKUNI (信国) SCHOOL

RYOKAI (了戒)

ca. the Einin Era,1293-1298

HISANOBU(久信)
ca. the Showa Era,1312-1316

NOBUKUNI (信国)
ca. the Kemmu Era, 1334-1336

SADAKUNI (貞国)
ca. the Joji Era, 1362-1368

NOBUMITSU (宣光)
ca. the Shitoku Era,1384-1387

NOBUKUNI (信国) (**)
Oei Era, 1394-1428

NOBUKUNI (信国) (*)
Oei Era, 1394-1428

NOBUSADA
Oei Era, 1394-1428

NOBUKUNI (信国)
Oei Era, 1394-1428

NOBUKUNI (信国)
Choroku Era, 1457-1460

(*) This NOBUKUNI is said to be the same man as NOBUMITSU and used the title of Genzaemon no Jo.

(**) This NOBUKUNI is said to be the same person as NOBUSADA and used the title Shikubu Jo.

Aside from the smith's listed in the school's geneology, there are a number of other sword smiths listed in historical texts who are associated with this school, and it can be surmised that these swordsmiths studied with either Ryokai or one of the early first or second Nobukuni smiths.

NOBUMITSU, 宣光
ca. Kemmu Era, 1334-1336

YOSHIYUKI, 吉行
ca. Eitoku Era, 1381-1384

YOSHITSUGU 能次
ca. Meio Era,1492-1501

NOBUYUKI, 信行
ca. Kemmu Era

IEMITSU, 家光
ca. Kyotoku Era, 1452-1455

YOSHIZANE, 能真
ca. Onin Era, 1467-1469

YOSHIHISA, 吉 久
ca. Eikyo Era 1429-1441

YOSHIMASA, 吉正
Ca. Kyotoku Era

YOSHISUKE, 吉助
ca. Entoku Era, 1489-1492

YOSHIKANE, 吉包
ca. Taiei Era, 1521-1528

YOSHIYASU, 吉保
ca. Tembun Era, 1532-1555

KAZUYOSHI
Ca. Eisho Era, 1504-1521

Ryokai is said to have been the son of Rai Kunitoshi and was active around the Einin Era.

Some historical texts list Ryokai as the son of Rai Kunitoshi, and some as his student whereas others have him listed as a student of Ayanokoji Sadatoshi, and still others show him as a student of Rai Mitsugane.

Among the blades left today, those with dates are mostly from the Einin Era and these seem to be the better works left by this smith.

There is hardly any evidence that this swordsmith studied under Ayanokoji Sadatoshi. In fact, one has the feeling that there is some Yamato influence in his work.

Ryokai (了戒) worked in the Yamashiro tradition and in the Bizen tradition approximately during the Einin Era, 1293-1298

TACHI

Shape and construction: Tachi style from the early Kamakura period, most of which are about 2 Shaku 3 - 4 Sun long. The sori will have a koshi sori tendency and the blade will be narrow but will have fumbari. The shinogi is high and the kissaki will be small.

Hamon: The width of the yakiba is narrow, and mostly chu-suguha with komidare. Although the hamon is made in nie, it will lack much nie. The border of the ha is very distinct and there will “shimi” inside the hamon and this will be seen around the monouchi area.

Boshi: The boshi are midarekomi with a small design. Some will be komaru, and others will be yakizume with very small kaeri.

Jitetsu and hada: The hada will be very fine with ko-mokume hada and masame hada. Most of the steel will look flat or uninteresting.

Nakago: Short with a kurijiri tip. The file marks will be kiri or suji chigai. The signature will be two characters and around the mekugi ana, and some works will be dated.

Tanto: Tanto are hiratsukuri and josun style. Some will have a sunzumari length with a slight sori and the width will be a little narrow. They will be thick and the mune will be shin no mune.
The hamon will be the same as on the tachi, although some will be a wide notare style mixed with midare and with ara-nie. Other characteristics are the same as those seen on tachi.

NOBUKUNI, first generation or the shodai, 信国 初代

Worked in the Yamashiro Tradition and Soshu Tradition
One of the Sadamune santetsu
Worked approximately from the Kemmu era (1334-1336)
to about the Embun Era (1356-1361).

The first Nobukuni was a student of Sadamune in Soshu Province and is regarded as one of the Sadamune Santetsu.

There is not much emphasis on the Sadamune Santetsu today, however the style in which Nobukuni made his blades definitely places his work in the Kemmu Era (sometimes this era is read Kembu, and either pronunciation is accepted) or thereabouts, and from the way the blade is made, the possibility is that he could have studied under Sadamune because there are no other Nobukuni smiths who can be clearly associated with this period.

Nobukuni is regarded as one of the master carvers of the Koto period,
And if one were to trace his work through his horimono, they can be related to Sadamune because some of the Nobukuni horimono very closely resemble those of Sadamune.

The so-called Sadamune santetsu comprises Hojoji Kunimitsu of Tajima province (国光), Bizen Motoshige (備前国元重) and Nobukuni. Of these three, the work of Nobukuni most closely resembles that of Sadamune.
A description of Nobukuni’s work follows:

TACHI:

Shape and construction: Mostly in the tachi style of the Yoshino Period, although there are some in the Mid-Kamakura period style, but these are rare.

Hi and horimono: Bo hi or bo hi with soe hi, futatsuji hi, some with ken maki ryu or with bonji or with combinations of these features. They are extremely well made.

Hamon: The Yakiba are wide and in nie. The pattern will be in o-midare and notare midare, and some are chu suguha with midare.

Boshi: Midarekomi with a small kaeri.

Jitetsu and hada: The texture of the steel is very fine with o-mokume hada mixed with itame hada. There will be ji nie which will form chikei in places.

Nakago: The nakago will be a little short, and end in kuri jiri or a shallow kengyo. The file marks will be katte sagari or suji chigai. The signature is written with the two characters Nobukuni.

TANTO and KO-WAKIZASHI:

Nobukuni worked in two styles, one resembling Saadamune, and the other resembling Rai Kunitoshi (来 国俊) of Yamashiro Province.

The Sadamune style:

Hiratsukuri ko-wakizashi and tanto.

Shape and construction: Hiratsukuri ko-wakizashi or sunnobi tanto have a saki sori. The blade is wide and thin. There are also katakiri ha style works. The mune are mostly shin no mune.

Hi and horimono: a typical Nobukuni horimono will be bonji at the top under which there will be a ken with tsume which will be on a renge. Also, yoraku will be seen on some blades. The tip of the ken will be deeply carved.

Hamon: The width of the yakiba is wide and o-midare with ara-nie and sunagashi. There will also be inazuma. Some of the works will be ko-midare with Ko-notare and with fine nie.

Boshi: Komaru with nie.

Jitetsu and Hada: The jitetsu will be very fine with o-mokume hada mixed with itame hada, and in places there will be masame hada. There will be ji-nie.

Nakago: short and a tanago bara style with a kuri jiri or kengyo jiri. The file

marks will be kiri, most blades are signed with the two characters Nobukuni, 信国.

Work made in Rai Kunitoshi's style:

Shape and Construction: Hiratsukuri and takenoko sori with a josun length. It will lack hiraniku. The mune will be shin no mune (mitsumune).

Hi and Horimono: Suken on the omote and gomabashi on the ura. On both sides There can be exceptionally well made bonji.
Nobukuni made many different types of carvings, but those made in this particular style, that is in a Rai Kunitoshi style have a Kamakura period Yamashiro style carving or horimono.

Hamon: In nie and hoso suguha hotsure, or chu-suguha hotsure, and in Comparison to Rai Kunitoshi, the hataraki within the hamon will be somewhat lacking.
(This would only be clear if one directly compared the skill of these two smiths).

Boshi: Komaru, however, the kaeri will be slight.

Jitetsu and Hada: The jitetsu will be a little rough and there will be prominent ko-mokume hada.

Nakago: The nakago will be short and stubby with a kurijiri tip. The file marks will be kiri or katte sagari. The signature will be the two characters Nobukuni.

Nobukuni, second generation or nidai (信国 二代).
Worked in the Soshu tradition and in the Bizen tradition
Ca. Oei Era, 1394-1428.

Nobukuni, third generation or san dai (信国三代).
Worked in the Soshu tradition and in the Bizen tradition
Ca. Eikyo Era, 1429-1441.

Shape and Construction: The shape will be in the Muromachi period style of katana or wakizashi with a koshizori, and with a saki sori tendency. The shinogi will be high and the blade will be a little thick. The kissaki will be long.

Hi and Horimono: Bo hi, soe hi or tsure hi, and futasuji hi, and the end of the hi will be finished above the Machi. Various very intricately carved designs will be found on most blades in combination with hi, and some will have fine, intricate carvings carved in a hitsu in an uki bori style (relief inside of a frame or groove).

Hamon: Although the hamon is in nie, there will be a lack of uniformity in the nie. There will be a wide (open) valley choji midare in the style of the Oei Era's Bizen Province, and there will be yaki kuzure as well as sunagashi, and mune yaki.

Boshi: The boshi is midarekomi with a long kaeri, and the pattern of the boshi will differ from one side to the other.
Jitetsu and Hada: The jitetsu will be "weak" and the hada will be o-mokume hada with masame hada in places.

Nakago: The nakago will be short and stubby. The tip will be kurijiri or a shallow kengyo. The file marks will be kiri or suji chigai with the signature written with the two characters Nobukuni, or with a title such as Gen Saemon no jo Nobukuni 源左衛門尉信国 and with dates.

The blades which are hiratsukuri ko-wakizashi or tanto will be in the style of the first Nobukuni, however, they will not approach his level of workmanship. Most of the blades by Nobukuni we see today will have been polished down so much that there will be weak or tired steel showing and so-called tsukare (tired) utsuri will be seen. Also, there will be ha shimi, that is a stain around the edge of the hamon from nie due to over-polishing.

Note: some of the works of the second and the third Nobukuni will resemble those of Yasumitsu or Morimitsu of Osafune in Bizen Province, but Nobukuni's work is in nie and there will be sunagashi which will be a difference.

Kyoho Meibutsu Cho
11th Installment

DOI MASAMUNE, 道心 正宗

Owner: Gyobutsu

unsigned
length: 8 Sun 2 bu
Value: 200 Mai value
Owned by Okamoto Doi, 阿本道意

Carving of hi on both sides, and the ends are round and above the Machi.
On the omote, there is a carving of a ken with a sanko. On the ura, there are three bonji with a renge underneath.
It was presented by the Mito on a joyous occasion.

It was requested of Kojun and Kotsu to have the renge removed and the blade polished, and upon completion of this, it was appraised as above which was on the 10th year of Genroku (1697).

Yamanaka Note:
We have not been able to learn who Okamoto Doi was.
As to the identity of the festive occasion on which the blade was given by the Mito Tokugawa to the shogunate, this is not known since the dates are not very clear, however since the blade was appraised on the l0th Year of Genroku (1697), it could have been any time before that date, and due to the many exchanges of presents by the various Daimyo all year round, this is a little difficult to trace.
Also, we have not been able to learn who Kojun is, however
Kotsu refers to the 6th of the Koji lineage which stems from the 7th Honami, Koshin.
Kojun is probably one of the Honami, whose name is recorded under his given name as Ichirobei, Ichisaburo, Shobei, etc.
The reason why the renge (lotus) was removed can be well understood, for a carving by Masamune with this design is not well thought of, and in fact it would not do to consider this as a Masamune with such a carving.
By the description of the carving given in the text, the blade certainly is not a Masamune, but sounds more like a Nobukuni.
We, not ever having seen the blade, are not qualified to make any comment, but this blade certainly does not sound like a Masamune.
We also have not been able to trace its present whereabouts or its present Gyobutsu owner.

HORIO MASAMUNE堀尾 正宗

Owner: Matsudaira Satsuma no Kami

unsigned
length: 9 Sun 3 Bu
Value: unknown
Owned by Horio Izumi no Kami 堀尾 出雲守

There is a sori on the blade.
There are katana hi on both sides. There is a shimi on the kissaki, and the tip of the nakago has been cut off.

Yamanaka Note:
Horio Izumo no Kami was the son of Horio Tatewaki Yoshiharu and was first known by the name of Shinano no Kami Tadauji. On the 8th of Keicho (1603), after the death of his father, he took the title of Izumo no Kami and ruled over 240,000 Koku in Izumo Province and Iki Island. He is said to have died the very next year at the age of 30, but how the blade went to the Shimazu from the Horio is not known.
This is another blade which is a dubious work of Masamune.

SOZUI MASAMUNE 宗瑞 正宗

Owner: Gyobutsu

Unsigned
Length: 8 sun 6 bu
Value: 3,000 Kan

There is a ken on the omote, and bo hi with soe hi on the ura.
There is another name for this tanto, Otai, and the origin of the two names is not known.
Koho has said that when the blade was in Osaka it was a Yukimitsu, and had a sayagaki as Otai Yukimitsu which was written by Kotoku 光徳.
At the time a question was raised as to its origin, and all that was known was that a relative of Mori called Echigo no Kami 越後守 had received it previously from Nagato no Kami.
It was once owned by Aki Chunagon Sozui, and also was once owned by a page of Lord Hideyoshi named Otai Daigaku.
On the 18th of March of the 11th Year of Genroku (1698), the Year of the Tiger, the lord Tsunayoshi visited the Owari Mansion. It was presented by the Owari Chunagon.

Yamanaka Note:
The text is pretty much self-explanatory, although it contradicts itself a few times. However, to further clarify: what is referred to as the relative of Echigo no Kami to the Mori means that Matsudaira Echigo no Kami became the Lord of Tsuyama in Mimasaka Province on Genroku 10 (1697), and his mother was the daughter of Matsudaira Nagato no Kami Hidenori a Mori of Aki Province.
Aki Chunagon Sozui refers to Mori Terumoto, who upon his retirement from active life took the name of Sozui.
How the blade went from the Mori to the Owari Tokugawa is not known.
The blade presently is in the Imperial Collection.

SWORD TERMINOLOGY

SHOBUMIZUKIRI
A type of blade filed to resemble the leaf of an iris. Found in katana, wakizashi, tanto naginata and nagamaki.

SUJI CHIGAI
Refers to the file marks on the nakago made at about a 30° angle.

SUNOBE
A long piece of steel with a square cross section serving as the blank for a sword before the actual or the final shaping of the sword's edge and back is done. The

kissaki is shaped going in the opposite direction from the forging the sword from the sunobe.

SHINOGI
The dividing line running lengthwise along the central area of the blade, but slightly closer to the ridge or top of the blade. It usually is made at about the 2/3rd of the width from the cutting edge to the mune, although depending on the swordsmith and school, the exact location can vary.

SHINTETSU
The core steel. Referred to sometimes as shingane or anko.

SUN
A measure of length. 1/10th of 1 shaku or 1.193 inches.

SHINOGI JI
The area of the blade which is bordered by the shinogi line and the mune. Sometimes referred to as the migaki ji because it is burnished.

SORI
Refers to the curvature of the Japanese sword.
There are five types of sori:
koshi sori or Bizen sori; torii sori or Kyo sori;
saki sori; chukan (no) sori; and takenoko sori.
The latter three are in almost all cases, found on tanto.

TACHI
A tachi is a form of a blade which is usually over 2 shaku 5 sun long, and with a strong sori. It is carried at the waist suspended by two cords from the saya with the cutting edge facing the ground.
It was used was from the very early period until about the Muromachi period, and after the Muromachi period, was worn only on ceremonial occasions.
Ko-tachi are exactly the same as a tachi except that the length is about 2 shaku.

TATSUTA
Refers to the design of hamon made during the Shinto Period by Tamba no Kami Yoshimichi of Settsu Province. The design resembles a maple leaf floating in a running stream.

TORAN
Large surging waves. Between the peaks, in the valleys between the midare peaks, there will sometimes be small circles formed of nie in the works of smiths during the Shinto Period in Settsu Province, such as:
Tsuda Echizen no Kami Sukehiro
Omi no Kami Sukenao
Sakakura Gon no Shin Terukane
Tsutsui Kiju
Echigo no Kami Kanesada
Ozaki Suketaka
Suishinshi Masahide

Kato Tsunahide

TANTO or Dagger
In the shin shinto period, this refers to blade whose length is under 1 shaku.
A tanto whose length is about 8 Sun 5 bu is called josun meaning
a prescribed length. Tanto with a length over 8 sun 5 bu are called sunnobi. Tanto with a length under 8.5 sun are sunzumari.

SHINGANE
Shintetsu or core or interior steel.

SAKITE
An assistant to the swordsmith during the forging of a blade at the anvil.

SHITA KITAE
First 6 folds or first part of the process of forging steel from tama hagane.

SHUMEI
Red lacquer attribution of a sword smith by an appraiser written on the nakago. Shumei are given only to a blade which is signed, indicating that the appraiser has judged the signature is authentic.

SURIAGE
A blade has been shortened from the end of the nakago.

TSUCHI DORI
The process of coating the blade with clay before tempering or yaki ire.
A watery clay mixture composed of clay, pine ash, and finely ground stone
(arato) is coated over the blade. Diffferent designs ar made over the area where the hamon will form, such as suguha, midare, etc. The clay is allowed to dry, and then heated and quenched to form the hamon (yaki ire).

TORII SORI
Tis also called Kyo-sori or kasago sori. The deepest part of the curvature is in the center of the blade. This type of sori was made by smiths associated with various schools in Yamashiro, Yamato, and Soshu. Torii sori or Kyo sori are the most commonly used terms today. Kasagi sori is no longer used today.

TANREN
Forging.

TAKANOKO SORI
Takanoko means bamboo shoot. The blade has a shape like a bamboo shoot and the sori leads to the tip from both, the mune and ha edges. Seen on tanto.

TAMAHAGANE
Steel produced in a tatara from processing iron sand or satetsu into steel.

TANAGO BARA

A nakago shape which resembles the belly of a fish.

TSUCHIME
A type of surface finish on the nakago which was made with a hammer.

TSUBO BOTSU
Method of producing steel by repeatedly folding over iron to remove impurities.

TAKANOHA
Type of file marks on the nakago which resemble a bird's feather. Taka means a hawk, and ha means feather).

TOBIYAKI and YUBASHIRI
A hardened or tempered region which is outside of the hamon and found in the ji.
It can be seen in all kinds of shapes and sizes.
The nie foundin better blades or made by skilled smiths is very lively appearing and bright. That is the nie are bright and brilliant. In contrast, nie made by poor smiths is lifeless appearing or dull and drab.
If a great many tobiyaki are found all over the blade, then the blade is called hitatsura.
  Yubashiri (literally "running hot water") are ji-nie and basically the same as tobiyaki. However, there are no clear borders defining it in the ji.

UMA NO HA MIDARE
Uma means a horse, and ha means a tooth.
Refers to a hamon design which is found on the works of such smiths as Masamune or Chogi of Bizen Province and a few others.
The Midare peaks are box-like, however the midare peaks more or less closely resemble a horses's tooth.

UCHIMAKURI
Method of producing steel by repeatedly folding over and drawing out the metal to remove impurities.

UCHINOKE
A small line of nie in the form of a half-moon or quarter-moon at the edge of the hamon.

UTSURI
Utsuri means reflection. This is found mostly on blades which have been tempered to produce nioi, although it may also be seen on blades with nie. Between the edge of the yakiba and the shinogi line there will be a second yakiba-like effect, although much weaker than the hamon, and this can appear like a reflection in the ji of the yakiba. Utsuri can be seen by holding up and pointing the blade to a light source. On some works, the utsuri is strong enough so that it is not necessary to hold the blade up and point it to a light source in order to see it. However, using a point light source to visualize utsuri is the best way to examine utsuri and its details. Old blades from the late Heian Period to the Kamakura Period, and especially those of Bizen Province smiths have exceptionally dense nioi and utsuri.

Blades from the later periods such as from the Muromachi and Sengoku (Momoyama) periods declined in quality, and this is especially true of blades from the late Sengoku Period.
The best examples of nioi and utsuri were made by Fukuoka Ichimonji Norimune and Sukemune of Bizen Province during the Kamakura Period.

WAKIZASHI
A blade whose length is between 1 shaku and 2 shaku.
Those that are about 1 shaku 8-9 sun are called o-wakizashi.
Those that are about 1 shaku 5-6 sun are called chu-wakizashi, and those about 1 shaku 2-3 sun are called ko-wakizashi
Wakizashi were carried together as a part of a pair with a katana.

WAKUDO
Sometimes called nutado. A watery clay mixture mentioned in during tsuchi-dori or preparing clay for yaki ire.

WARIKOMI TSUKURI
A method where soft steel is cut open with a chisel and hard steel is forced into the gap. This construct is then hammered out and shaped so that the hard steel insert becomes the cutting edge of the resulting blade.

WARA BAI
Straw ashes.

YOKOTE.
The line separating the kissaki from the body of the blade.