

# **NIHONTO NEWSLETTER**

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## **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



**ALBERT YAMANAKA**  
**1973**

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers:

We wish to stress again some points which are very important in viewing Japanese Swords. The most important point is to get a very good look at the blade when first drawing it out from the saya.

We have noted that this point is very often neglected, however it is one of the most important points in viewing a katana, because this gives one a very good idea as to what period that particular blade is from. A careless look often gives one the impression that a Koto may be a Shinto or vice versa, and this sort of confusion naturally makes it quite difficult to arrive at a proper evaluation.

When a blade has been inspected carefully as to its shape, a differentiation between Koto and Shinto is readily determined, and the observer will be one step closer to determining the province which the blade comes from.

Of course, there are those blades made during the Shinto period which are copies of Koto blades, but these are exceptions and the correct answer is soon obtained by observing the other parts of the blade.

Observations of the steel and of the characteristics of the jitetsu and hada is one of the most important phases in looking at a katana, if not the most Important. We have said before, that a true understanding of the jitetsu is a very difficult a task and that it takes one a very long time to "get it".

Those that look casually at the jitetsu never "get it". Even though this may be difficult, one should not dismiss it saying that it is difficult, but rather try to understand it.

Of course, if a blade has not been properly finished or polished, then the true quality of the jitetsu will not be visible, and here we would like to stress the great importance of a high quality polish. A high quality polish may not be required for an average blade from the standpoint of economy, however on a good blade, this is another matter. One should try to have the best polish available for such a blade.

A quality blade always has a good Jitetsu, and for this reason, it should have a good polish to bring out the true quality of the jitetsu.

Only a first class polisher is able to do this. Bringing out the true quality of the jitetsu starts from the very first stage of polishing, however, the most important stages are the final stages, with the use of the kanahada nugui and jizuya. Both of these processes are very time consuming, and as a result, a cheap polish or polishers who do not charge too much for their work, tend to skimp on these final and most important steps.

Albert Yamanaka

# **SWORD SMITHS**

## **SAGAMI PROVINCE**

The military dictatorship established by Minamoto Yoritomo in Kamakura set the groundwork for the founding of Kamakura sword smith activity which was instigated by the Hojo who took over control from the Minamoto.

The earliest smiths who went to Kamakura were:

AWATAGUCHI KUNITSUNA  
BIZEN SABURO KUNIMUNE  
BIZEN FUKUOKA ICHIMONJI SUKEZANE

These smiths and their followers went to Kamakura and built the foundation for what eventually became the Soshu tradition.

Kunitsuna was the 6th son of Awataguchi Kuniie and had the title of Sakon Shogen. He is said to have been active during the Genkyu Era (1204-1206) and thereabouts, during the early 1200s. Kunitsuna was one of the sword smiths who attended The Emperor Gotoba, but it was after the emperor's death that he went to Kamakura.

Ichimonji Sukezane from Bizen province was also a very able sword smith, and so much so, that he is popularly called Kamakura Ichimonji.

Nothing very much is known about Sukezane going to Kamakura, however, a bit more is told about Bizen Saburo Kunimune, who supposedly went to Kamakura when he was 20 years old in the first Year of Shoji (1199), and returned to Bizen Province on Ryakunin 1 (1238), and then returned to Kamakura on Kocho 1 (1261).

Of these three founders of the Kamakura Soshu tradition, Kunimune has the greatest number of works still remaining today. Of these three, Shintogo Kunimitsu is the son of Awataguchi Kunitsuna, so Shintogo probably can be said to be the first true Soshu smith.

## **KUNITSUNA**

Worked in the Yamashiro tradition approximately during the Genkyu Era.

## **TACHI:**

### **Shape and Construction:**

Tachi style of the mid-Kamakura period as well as ikubi kissaki style tachi. In both instances, the shape of the tachi is very well made, if not extremely well made. There is abundant hiraniku. The shinogi ji is neither too high or too low. The shinogi itself is a little high. It is a bit thick and the mune is gyu no mune (ihorimune). He also made ko-tachi.

Hamon:

The width is koroai (just right), and not too wide or not too narrow. The pattern is suguha choji midare in nie, and with nie and nioi clusters forming ashi.

The nie compared, to other Awataguchi nie, are a little large and rough. At the same time, they are much livelier than other Awataguchi smiths' nie.

Inazuma and kinsuji are seen all along the hamon and the choji midare hamon has many hataraki due to the forging, and is especially enjoyable to examine.

On occasions, there are o-choji midare as well juka choji, and in both cases an abundance of nie will be seen.

Boshi:

Midarekomi with abundant hataraki. There are many variations in the color and size of the nie.

The tip is either yakizume, or with a slight kaeri. We also see kaen as well as nie kuzure.

In all instances, the nie in the boshi will be slightly larger than those in the lower part of the blade, that is the nie "pebbles" become larger.

Jitetsu and Hada:

Details in the steel will appear strong and very interesting.

The hada will be a very tightly forged ko-itame hada, and the color and appearance of the steel gives the steel a "depth" with visible details. O-hada will be present in places, and from the abundance of ji-nie, yubashiri as well as chikei will be present.

There will be nie utsuri which will appear like jifu utsuri. The color of the steel and its apparent depth and details result from the abundance of the ji-nie, and there is much to enjoy in the appearance of the steel.

Nakago:

If the blade is ubu, then the nakago is long with sori, and many will have a kiji momo shape.

File marks will be kiri or katte sagari. Inscriptions are made right below the machi in two characters.

TANTO:

Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri with takenoko sori in a small sunzumari (less than 8.5 sun) length. They are slightly narrow and thick.

The mune will be shin-no-mune (mitsumune).

HI and Carvings:

Suken, gomabashi, and koshi-hi are seen.

Hamon:

The yakiba is a little wide and in nie. The pattern will be chu-suguha hotsure with abundant nie. All other details are about the same as those mentioned for tachi.

Boshi:

Komaru with a somewhat long kaeri.

Jitetsu and Hada:

Same as the description in the tachi section, however the steel will be a little “weaker” (darker and with more hada visible) than what is seen in the tachi.

Nakago:

The nakago are long. A furisode style is sometimes seen. The signature is commonly signed in two characters, however on rare occasions, long inscriptions are found.

KUNIMITSU

Also known as Shintogo 新藤五. Worked in the Yamashiro tradition, and approximately during the Koan era (1361).

Tachi:

Tachi are extremely rare.

Shape and Construction:

Tachi style from the early Kamakura Period with abundant fumbari at the machi which tapers strongly towards the kissaki.

There will be hiraniku, the shinogi will be high, and the blade will be thick. The kissaki is small.

The mune will be either gyo-no-mune (ihorimune) or shin-no-mune (mitsumune).

The overall appearance is very elegant.

Hi and Carvings:

Suken, gomabashi, and bonji are carved in an exquisite manner.

Hamon:

The yakiba is narrow is narrow, and in nie. The pattern will be hoso suguha with hotsure and very small nie. There are abundant hataraki, although not as much as is seen in tanto.

There are abundant Inazuma and kinsuji, and also nijuba. The nijuba have a yubashiri style and they begin below the yokote and run into the boshi.

Boshi:

The boshi is komaru and yakizume, and sometimes there will be a slight kaeri.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel is extremely well forged which results in very fine ji-nie. The ko-mokume hada can form a nashi ji with the abundance of ji-nie, although o-hada can be seen in places.

Nakago:

The nakago is narrow and long, and will have sori. Some are kijimomo style. The file marks will be kiri.

Inscriptions are with two characters, although some works will have a date.

#### TANTO:

Regarded as the master of tanto and is counted at the very top of the sword smiths who were skilled in making tanto, such as Awataguchi Yoshimitsu, Yamashiro Rai Kunitoshi, Bizen Osafune Kagemitsu, Etchu NorishiChikuzen Sa, Soshu Masamune, and Soshu Sadamune.

#### Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri takenoko sori with a josun (8.5 sun) length, although most have a sunzumari (less than 8.5 sun) length.

The shape of the tanto is very well made. They very closely resemble the works of Awataguchi Yoshimitsu, however, the width of the blade is slightly narrower than Yoshimitsu's and the fukura will lack roundness.

Most will have a shin-no-mune (mitsu mune).

#### Hi and Carvings:

On occasion there are very intricate carvings, although in general those that are commonly seen have simple designs.

The carvings are placed at the center of the blade and are the same as Awataguchi type carvings: gomabashi on both sides, or a suken on the omote and koshi hi on the ura.

#### Hamon:

The hamon is narrow and in nie, and the nie particles are extremely fine and delicate, and their sheen and the color are very bright.

The pattern will be in hoso suguha hotsure, and there will be abundant hataraki within the hamon.

The hamon becomes very narrow in the fukura area, and there will be ashi in this area.

Some hamon are chu suguha hotsure, although hataraki in these cases will be less abundant than those with a hoso suguha hamon.

#### Boshi:

komaru with a very slight kaeri, and some will be yakizume.

The nie in the boshi will be small in the lower part of the hamon, and then become slowly larger proceeding towards the tip, and in those that have an abundance of nie, the nie will enter the ji around the fukura area where they form two or three strands. This is known as Shintogo's "okina no hige" or an "old man's beard".

#### Jitetsu and Hada:

The hada is delicate and finely made. The hada is mokume hada mixed with o-hada in places.

The ji-nie are very strong and prominent, and form a nashi ji with abundant uruoi. There are such abundant ji-nie, that in places it will seem like nie utsuri.

The color of Shintogo's steel is regarded as one of the best amongst all the tanto makers.

Tanto with a wide yakiba will have more o-hada than tanto with a narrow yakiba.

#### Nakago:

The nakago is narrow and long. Some will have a furisode shape.

The file marks will be kiri, and the inscriptions will be written with two characters and dated.

#### SHINTOGO KUNIHIRO 新藤五国廣

Worked in the Yamashiro tradition, and approximately during the Gentoku Era (1329-1331). He was the son of Shintogo Kunimitsu.

#### TACHI:

Tachi are extremely rare, and almost non-existent.

#### TANTO:

Seen in small numbers, and generally resemble Kunimitsu's work, although the workmanship is not as good.

The width of the yakiba becomes wider, the kaeri in the boshi is long, and the nie will be lacking when compared to Kunimitsu's work.

#### SUKEZANE 助真

Originally from Bizen province. Said to have worked in Yamanouchi in Kamakura and is known as Togenji in the Kamakura Ichimonji group. Worked approximately during the Shogen era (1259) and in the Bizen tradition.

#### TACHI:

##### Shape and Construction:

Tachi are in the style of the mid-Kamakura period, although some will be an ikubi kissaki tachi style.

The shape of the tachi is very well made, and the work can be regarded as representative of the period.

Hiraniku will be lacking, although there will be much ha niku.

The width of the shinogi ji is narrow and the shinogi is high.

#### HI and Carvings:

Mostly bo hi. The tip of the hi are carved well up into the koshinogi ji and will be along the angle defining the edge of the shinogi ji.

The hi are carved into the nakago and will be finished in kakinagashi. In many cases though they will be finished in kakudome.

#### Hamon:

O-choji midare hamon, the trademark hamon of Fukuoka Ichimonji, is the hamon which this smith took pride in making, and they are very well made, and there are abundant hataraki in the hamon.

There will be variations in the width of the hamon, and also there will be variations in the height of the choji midare elements, and these give the hamon much vigor. Also, there will be kawazuko choji in places.

Most of the kawazuko choji made by this smith will have the tail or bottom of the choji close to being cut-off or separated from the main body of the hamon, in contrast to other types of kawazuko choji made by later Osafune smiths.

The nioi in the choji are very dense and they become juka choji. In these places, the nie cluster together.

Inazuma with a violent or active appearance are found commonly from below the yokote entering the boshi, and the color of the inazuma is very bright and lively. Some blades will have a visible grain or hada in the steel within the hamon.

**Boshi:**

Midarekomi, or a continuation of the hamon into the boshi, and ending in either yakizume or in a slight kaeri.

**Jitetsu and Hada:**

The steel is very finely forged with o-mokume hada. There will be ji utsuri, and often chikei.

**Nakago:**

Long and with sori. There were also kiji momo style nakago, and the tip will be kurijiri. The file marks will be suji chigai. Inscriptions will be inscribed with two characters on the upper part of the nakago.

**KUNIHIRO 国弘**

Kunihiro was a student of Sukezane and worked in the Bizen tradition, approximately during the Einin Era (1293-1298).

**Tachi:**

**Shape and Construction:**

Tachi style of the mid-Kamakura period with a slightly shallow sori. The shinogi will be a little high.

**Hi and Carvings:**

Bo hi or futatsuji hi are sometimes seen.

**Hamon:**

The hamon is narrow and in nioi. The pattern is ko-choji midare and there will be some nie in places.

**Boshi:**

Midarekomi with a slight kaeri.

**Jittesu and Hada:**

The steel will seem a little 'weak' (dark and with visible hada). The hada will be o-mokume hada with masame hada in places.

**Nakago:**

The nakago will be a little short with a kurijiri tip. The file marks will be kiri or suji chigai and the inscription will be in two characters, although there are some long inscriptions.

#### SUKETSUNA 助綱

Son of Sukezane. Worked in the Bizen tradition, approximately during the Seiwa Era.

Tachi:

Shape and Construction:

Tachi style of the mid-Kamakura period, as well as the very sturdy and rugged type of tachi style known as the ikkubi kissaki tachi.

The length of the blade is a little short when compared to others from that time. This smith also made kodachi.

Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi are seen on rare occasions.

Hamon:

The width of the yakiba is a little narrow and it is in nioi. The pattern is suguha choji midare with little nie, and hada will be visible in the hamon.

Inazuma are seen along the hamon and from the dense nioi, will run towards the cutting edge.

Boshi:

Midarekomi with a small kaeri.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The jitetsu will have a mokume hada pattern , and the hada will be prominent. Chikei will present in places.

Nakago:

About the same as Sukezane. Inscriptions are on the hira of the nakago in two large bold characters.

#### KUNIMUNE 国宗

From Bizen province and worked in the Bizen tradition and Yamashiro tradition approximately during the Joei Era.

TACHI

He made two distinct tachi styles.

Shape and Construction:

The two styles of tachi are:

1. Tachi style of the mid-Kamakura Period as well the ikubi kissaki tachi of the same period.
2. The tachi style of the mid-Kamakura period with strong fumbari which tapered towards the kissaki. These had very little sori, and so little, that they will seem to have no sori at all. They will be thick and the overall appearance of the blade is very firm or robust.

Hi and Carvings:

The ikkubi kissaki tachi will have bo hi in most cases, and they are carved well up into the ko-shinogi.

Hamon:

1. The yakiba is wide and in nioi. The pattern will be o-choji midare, and there will be sections along the hamon where the nioi will be "loose" or scattered, and also there will be sections where the nioi line will be pointed or sharp.

The hada will be prominent in places inside of the hamon, and within the hamon there will be nioi-shimi (nioi stains or blotches).

This nioi shimi is unlike late Bizen nioi shimi which is seen in blades which are tired, but it will be very clear.

2. The steel will be "hard", that is it will be bright, and not much hada will be visible in it. The hada is mokume hada which is very well forged. Chikei will be present in places and jifu utsuri will be seen all along the blade.

Nakago:

The nakago will be long and narrow towards the tip.

Some are kiji momo with a kurijiri tip.

File marks will be suji chigai and the inscription will be made along the border of the shinogi in two characters.

KUNISADA 貞国

From Bizen Province and worked approximately during the Kempo Era.

Worked in the tachi style of the mid-Kamakura period with a shallow sori. The shape of the blade is very solid or robust.

The hamon is narrow and in nioi. The pattern will be formed with small choji.

There will be very little to see (hataraki) within the hamon.

The steel is very fine with a ko-mokume hada.

The forgoing smiths were the sword smiths working during the founding stages of the Soshu tradition, therefore, none of these smiths worked in the Soshu tradition, but in whatever tradition they brought with them from their native provinces.

The sword smiths covered in the following pages are the so-called early Soshu tradition sword smiths.

## YUKIMITSU 行光

Worked in the Yamashiro tradition and Soshu tradition approximately during the Bunei Era.

Yukimitsu was said to have been a student of Shintogo Kunimitsu and also is recorded to have been the son of Bungo Yukihiro.

Yukimitsu is not only famous as being the father of Masamune, but he is famous in his own right, for his skill is regarded very highly, and of course, he is also considered to be one of the sword smiths who founded the early Soshu tradition.

The smiths who fall into the classification of the so-called early Soshu tradition are Yukimitsu, Masamune and Sadamune. Thus, the works of the early Soshu tradition still maintained many traits left to them from the Yamashiro tradition from Awataguchi Kunitsuna to Shintogo.

## Tachi

### Shape and Construction:

Tachi shapes from the mid-Kamakura period and Yamashiro tradition with a torii sori. The blade begins wide at the machi, and then gradually tapers towards the kissaki. There will be much hiranniku, the shinogi will be high, and the overall appearance of the blade is very firm or robust and graceful.

Yukimitsu also made ikubi kissaki style tachi of the same period. Some of Yukimitsu's ikubi kissaki tachi blades will be very gentle and graceful, whereas others are made with a rather rugged shape. The tachi are wide and thin, and closely resemble the type of tachi being made during the late Kamakura period.

In all cases, these blades will be o-suriage mumei.

### Hi and Carvings:

Mostly bo hi or futatsuji hi. The grooves are hisaki or stop below the yokote.

### Hamon:

There are two types, wide and narrow.

The patterns will be suguha-choji, o-midare, ko-midare, or notare with combinations of the previously mentioned patterns.

In all cases, the hamon will be formed in fine nie, and within the hamon, the nie and nioi will cluster together forming ashi.

Although the nie are like those found in the works of the Awataguchi sword smiths, they will be much more vigorous.

Blades with narrow yakiba will have nie kuzuri, however the kuzuri itself will be lively.

In blades with wide hamon, there will be rough nie, but the nie will be lively (bright and sharp) whether they are large or small.

Commonly, when the size of the nie varies, the nie tend to be dull and lifeless appearing, but in the case of Yukimitsu's nie, they will be lively appearing (bright and sharp), whether they are nie kuzure or not, suggesting the skill this swordsmith shows in having attained control of the forging of his steel and in yaki ire.

From these nie, inazuma and kinsuji will be seen all along the hamon.

Boshi:

The boshi is midarekomi with a small pattern which ends in yakizume. Some boshi will be formed with nie kuzure, and others will be kaen. The nie in the boshi will be much livelier (brighter) than the nie going towards the machi. The color and the sheen of the nie will be very bright.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel surface is extremely fine and beautiful. There is an abundance of ji-nie which turn into yubashiri and chikei.

The hada is ko-mokume hada with o-hada in places.

Nakago:

Practically all of the blades we see today are o-suriage.

Tanto:

Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri with a chukan sori (mu-sori) with strong hiraniku.

Roundness at the fukura is lacking, and the point is shaped in the style of the late Kamakura period. The blade will be thick and the mune will be shin-no-mune (mitsumune).

Some blades will be in sunnobi (over 8.5 sun) hiratsukuri and wide. There will be a little saki sori, and not as much hiraniku as seen in the hiratsukuri chukan sori (mu sori) blades. The blades will be thin and the mune will be shin no mune (mitsumune) which suggests the style of the early Yoshino period.

Hi and Carvings:

Yukimitsu was very skilled at carving. The carvings he made within the hi are especially well made. Carvings made within hi or within a hitsu (frame) are regarded as being the best.

Yukimitsu also made katana hi as well as katana hi with soe hi.

Hamon:

Most of the tanto will have a wide hamon, and they will be very close to those on the tachi. However, the nie will be even better.

The patterns are commonly ko-midare and they become especially lively around the fukura area where there will be midare with nie kuzure, and the color of the nie will be exceptional. There will be yubashiri around this area, and some of will resemble tobiyaki.

Boshi:

The boshi are komaru, although they will have nie kuzure, and the kaeri will be a little long.

Jitetsu and Hada:

Very closely resemble those on the tachi, although the steel is better than that on the tachi with more ji nie which turns into yubashiri and chikei, which are found in abundance around the fukura.

Nakago:

The nakago will be short and in a furisode style, but some will be a tanagobara style. The tip will be in kurijiri, and the file marks will be kiri.

Inscriptions will be "YUKIMITSU" or "SAGAMI NO KUNI JUNIN YUKIMITSU".

On rare occasions, there will be dated works

Daishimbo Yukei

A number of different tales are told regarding this swordsmith: he was a priest from the Futaara Shrine of Nikko; that he was a priest from the Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine of Kamakura; that he was a brother of Yukimitsu. However, none of these can be verified today.

There are several works by Daishimbo (or Taishimbo) depicted in some of the old oshigata series, such as the Kozan Oshigata and a few others.

It is said that Daishimbo was a master carver and that he had carved most of the horimono seen on the work of Yukimitsu and Masamune.

Today, no one seems to take Daishimbo very seriously, nor do we.

Our thinking is that this sword smith is the result of someone's wild imagination, and he is completely legendary. All swords attributed to Daishimbo or Taishimbo, signed or otherwise, have something very unnatural about them.

Masamune正宗

Masamune worked in the Soshu Tradition from around the Shoo era to about the Kareki era. He was born in Kamakura, the son of Yukimitsu, and he became the founder of the Soshu tradition.

Masamune is regarded as the top sword smith among all sword smiths, and as such, his name is famous, even outside of the katana world.

Masamune has been the subject of many Kabuki dramas and Noh plays, his name is seen on the labels or a number of Japanese Sake bottles, such as Kiku Masamune, etc. A Masamune blade calls for the highest prices.

Of the many blades listed in the Kyoho Meibutsu Cho which we are covering in separate installments, the Wakasa Masamune had an orikami with a value of 1,000 mai, meaning 1,000 pieces of large gold o-ban. The next highest price is for the blade called Shikiibu Masamune which had a value of 700 mai. This was during a time when an average price for a good blade was about 10 mai or so. Even a first class blade at the time was only about 100 mai, so therefore, it is easy to realize how highly Masamune's work was treasured by the Daimyo and warlords.

The aforementioned Shikibu Masamune is recorded as having been purchased for 2,375 ryo during the Shotoku Era (1711-1716) by the Matsudaira Clan of Maebashi in Kozuke Province. A merchant with 1,000 ryo would have been regarded as a millionaire. A thief who stole only 10 Ryo was put to death.

Masamune's popularity is thought to be the result of Toyotomi Hideyoshi having glorified him as being one of the Nihon Sansaku, and this was carried over into the Tokugawa Period.

Swords were given in exchange as gifts, for weddings, birthdays, coming of age ceremonies, important visits, etc. However, originally, they were given to warriors after a battle for their deeds during the battle. Since there were only so many fine blades to go around, this resulted in the making of forgeries, either by a sword smith on the order of a Daimyo or by warlords, or by the issuing of orikami by the Honami. As a result, orikami by the Honami were not very highly regarded after the mid-Tokugawa Period, or from about the time of the 15th Honami Kojun.

It is said that Masamune in his later years went around the country visiting many sword smiths to learn about different forging methods. In this manner, he gained further knowledge of sword making, and wrote about what he had seen and learned. However, more important is the fact that Masamune was a great teacher which we know from the existence of the Masamune Jitetsu. These 10 students were:

Yamashiro Province.	RAI KUNITSUGU
Yamashiro Province	HASEBE KUNISHIGE
Mino Province	SHIZU KANEUJI
Mino Province	KANESHIGE
Etchu Province	GO YOSHIHIRO
Etchu Province	NORISHIGE
Iwami Province	NAOTSUNA
Bizen Province	OSAFUNE KANEMITSU
Bizen Province	OSAFUNE CHOGI
Chikuzen Province	SA

Aside from the above 10 smiths, he also had another student, who was later adopted by him: Sadamune.

All of the famous Masamune blades we see today are listed in the Kyoho Meibutsu Cho, and there are 41 blades by Masamune listed in that book, some good and some not (we have covered these 41 Masamune blades in the Meibutsu Cho in our series about that book).

Out of these, there are 8 designated as kokuho or national treasures.

#### TACHI:

##### Shape and Construction:

Made In the tachi style of the late Kamakura period. Wide blades with long kissaki in the early Yoshino period style were also made.

With both styles, the perception is of a very rugged blade, but at the same time, the blades are graceful in their overall appearance

##### Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi or futatsuji hi are seen in most cases, and the tip of the hi will stop below the koshinogi area.

##### Hamon:

There will be variations in the width of the hamon. The patterns will be o-midare, midare, gunome, nie kuzure, uma no ha (horse tooth) midare with nie kuzure, suguha-choji in nie kuzure, or o-notare with any combination of the afore-mentioned designs.

All hamon are formed in nie, and these nie are considered to be the ultimate in nie. Absolutely no one has been able to make nie equal to Masamune's nie, before him or since.

Within the hamon, nie will have nioi clustered around them forming ashi. The color of the nie will seem to make the nie appear to float in the ji. All the various hataraki that can form from the activity of nie and nioi will be found in Masamune's work.

Kinsuji and inazuma are seen in great numbers all along the hamon.

##### Boshi:

The boshi are a shallow midarekomi with a small pattern, and end in either yakizumi or with a slight kaeri or with a nie kuzure kaen. In some cases, there will be boshi formed in gunome which start right below the yokote, continue above the yokote, and the ashi from the gunome run down to the cutting edge in places.

##### Jitetsu and Hada:

The steel will seem strong and very finely forged. The hada will be o-mokume hada and there will be some with itame hada.

There will be a great amount of ji nie, chikei, and yubashiri all along the ji.

The yubashiri will be round.

The ji nie (providing that the blade has been properly polished) will be very abundant, and it will seem as though the nie are present in layers piled one upon another.

##### Nakago:

The nakago will be sunzumari (small) and in a tanagobara style with a kengyo tip.

The file marks will be kiri or suji chigai. According to old oshigata books, there are blades signed in two characters and with long signatures. However, there are no long swords known to exist today that are signed.

#### TANTO:

#### Shape and Construction:

Hiratsukuri chukan sori (musori). The shape will seem a little strong or pronounced, and roundness at the fukura will be lacking.

There will be hiraniku, and the blade is neither too thick or too thin.

The mune is shin-no-mune (mitsumune).

Sometimes one will see odd or unusually shaped blades such as the Hocho Masamune, so-called because they resemble a hocho or kitchen knife, and are extremely wide and have sori.

#### Hi and Carvings:

Sometimes there will be unusual carvings like those found on the Hocho Masamune with a of a suken and gomabashi. However, in most cases the carvings are suken, gomabashi, bonji, or combinations of these.

In the case of a blade like the Kurikara Masamune, the carving of a kurikara (a dragon winding around a sword) is made within a hitsu or frame. All of the Masamune carvings are exceptionally well made.

#### Hamon:

The hamon patterns are small, and well in proportion with the length of the blade, and they will have abundant "life" (hataraki) with abundant kinsuji and inazuma.

Hataraki are especially plentiful around the fukura area.

The valleys of the midare waves are deep, and in cases, come very close to the cutting edge.

#### Boshi:

The boshi are midarekomi with a slight kaeri, and the tips are komaru. Sometimes the tips are yakizume or kaen.

#### Jitetsu and Hada:

A description of this smith's steel can be summed up in one word: beautiful, the like of which is not seen in any other sword smith's work.

The hada will be ko-mokume hada mixed with o-hada in places.

On some blades, there is only o-hada. The word "uruoi" certainly applies to all of this smith's works.

Chikei are found all along the ji.

#### Nakago:

The nakago is narrow and rather long, and there will be a little niku on the hira. The tips are mostly kurijiri, and the file marks will be kiri.

Most blades are unsigned, although there are 3 blades that are signed, and these signatures are judged to be true inscriptions made by this smith.

Masamune's work varies a great deal from one blade to the next which is evidence of this sword smith's great skill. All the blades are made exceptionally well, no matter what style they are made in (we refer to blades which are considered to be genuine without any trace of doubt).

We have just finished covering Masamune in the installments of the Kyoho Meibutsu Cho as well as in the the Kokuho (National Treasure) section, and from these one can see the variations in this smith's work. However, since most of the blades that were covered in the above mentioned sections are tanto; we give here a description of his tachi. There are four styles described here.

A. There is a strong torii sori with the sori a little pronounced towards the tip. The blade is wide, and there is not too much difference in the widths at the machi and the yokote. There will be a strong hiraniku, the shinogi is high and the shingi ji is narrow. The kissaki is long and roundness at the fukura will be lacking. The thickness of the blade is koroai or just right, and the mune is shin-no-mune (mitsumune).

There are bo hi carved on both sides of the blade. The hi are flawless, with there being no irregularities within the hi. The tips of the hi are slightly low.

The width of the yakiba is a little narrow, although from about the mid-point of the blade towards the tip, it becomes wide. The hamon is notare with gunome midare which will be square-like, and also there will be nie kuzure, and ashi. This style is sometimes referred to as uma no ha (horse tooth) midare.

The nie are dense and rough, although they still retain many of their fine qualities, regardless of the fact that they are rough (the size of the nie grains or pebbles vary). The color of the nie is very strong, and kinsuji and inazuma are found all along the blade. There will be strong yubashiri at the hamon edge, and some will form tobiyaki.

The boshi is midarekomi with a small amplitude, which becomes a jizo style boshi at the tip, and here again there are abundant nie.

B. There is a shallow torii sori with not much difference in the widths at the moto and saki.

The shinogi is high and there is hiraniku. The shinogi ji is koroai. The kissaki is not too long but neither is it too short. The blade is thick, and the mune is shin-no-mune (mitsu mune). The hamon is o-gunome midare with nie kuzure and inazuma. There are large patterns formed by kinsuji.

The boshi is a small pattern midarekomi, and there is a slight kaeri. There are abundant nie in the boshi too.

C. The shape of the tachi very closely resembles that of the ikubi kissaki tachi.

There are bo hi on both sides of the blade.

There are great variations in the width of the hamon. In sections where the hamon is wide, it is gunome midare with nie kuzure. In sections where the hamon is narrow, it is ko-midare and there are sunagashi.

The nie are very hanayaka (gorgeous or spectacular) and result in kinsuji and inazuma. Nioi will be clustered around the nie forming ashi.

The boshi is midarekomi with a slight kaeri and is almost yakizume.

The jitetsu pattern is very small, and from the abundance of ji nie, yubashiri and chikei are formed. There is also o-hada in places.

D. There is a shallow torii sori and the width of the blade does not vary too much.

Hiraniku will be somewhat lacking.

The shinogi is high and the shinogi ji is narrow.

:

The kissaki is long and roundness at the fukura is lacking.

The blade is thin with a shin-no-mune (mitsumune). This is the description of the tachi style from the early Yoshino period.

The width of the yakiba is usually wide, although it can be narrow in places. It is narrow at the yakidashi and becomes wider going towards the boshi.

The hamon is in nie, and there is an uma-no-midare pattern with nie kuzure, and the nie are very hanayaka or active.

There are sunagashi at the hamon edge, and there are tobiyaki-like effects in areas near the edge of the hamon.

The hada in the hamon will stand out, the nioi will cluster around the nie forming ashi, and the nie will become nie sake (split) in places.

The boshi is a continuation of the hamon, and a shallow gunome ashi iri (gunome with irregular ashi).

The hada is itame, and has the feeling of being a little “flat” (dull or uninteresting).

From the abundance of ji nie, strong yubashiri as well as tobiyaki and chikei form all along the blade.

All of these details combine to make the ji very interesting and splendid.

There are also muneyaki.

## KYOHO MEIBUTSU CHO

### 18th Installment

#### **TOMITA GO** 富田江

Owner: Matsudaira Kaga no Kami

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 4 bu

Value: unknown

Owned by Tomita Sakon

Purchased by Hori Saemon Daiyu for 16 mai of gold and presented to Lord Hidayoshi, who gave it to Lord Hidetsugu.

It was again presented to Lord Hideyoshi. As his legacy, it was left to Lord Toshitsune. It was presented to Lord Hidetada and Lord Toshitsune received it again.

It is the best Go in the realm (“Tenka Ichi no Go”).

During the Kanei era (1624-1644) the blade went to Kosa for an appraisal and evaluation and he issued papers on it for 800 Mai and 20,000 Kan.

Koshitsu said at the time that to set a proper value for it was extremely difficult and so it was not evaluated.

Imamura Note: Saw it on three occasions from Meiji 12 (1880).

### **Yamanaka Note**

Tomita Sakon refers to Tomita Sakon Shogen Nobuhiro, one of the trusted retainers under Toyotomi Hideyoshi who ruled from Anozu Castle in Ise Province with 50,000 Koku. His son Shinano no Kami Tomonobu was also known as Sakon Shogen.

Hori Saemon Daiyu refers to Saemon no Suke Hidemasa Hisataro who also served Hideyoshi and had a 400,000 koku fief in Echigo province.

Hori was said to have been known as an intellectual and was well versed in many fields of letters.

This blade, after Toshitsune received it from Hidetada, has been in the Maeda family ever since, and it still is in that family's collection, which is presently called the Maeda Ikutoku Kai Foundation.

We have seen this blade a number of times and it certainly is a very impressive Yoshihiro, however, it is not the best Yoshihiro. The blade which is considered the best Yoshihiro is the next blade listed below.

### **INABA GO 因幡江**

Owner: Matsudaira Echigo no Kami

Zogan Mei

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Value: unknown

Hi are carved on the omote and ura.

On the omote the mei is: Inaba Kakuemon.

On the ura the mei is: Tensho 12 nen 12 gatsu hi

Go Honami Suriageru

The mei is a zogan mei.

Inaba Kanuemon owned it and it was purchased by Lord Ieyasu for 500 kan.

On the 5th year of Keicho (1600) Lord Ieyasu made an expedition to Shimozuke Province, and at a place called Koyama, he ordered Lord Hideyasu to hold off the Oshu province forces. Lord Hideyasu made suggestions during the war council, and for this Lord Ieyasu was very pleased and gave the above blade and another item he highly treasured to Lord Hideyasu.

### **Yamanaka Note:**

Inaba Kanuemon served Kobayakawa Hideaki and was husband of Kasuga no Tsubone who was the wet-nurse to the 3rd Tokugawa Shogun Iemitsu.

The campaign which Ieyasu made to Shimozuke province was the war he carried out against Uesugi Kagekatsu, and it refers to the incident where Ieyasu had Hideyasu establish his headquarters at Utsunomiya (near Nikko).

During the war council, Ieyasu gave Hideyasu, a suit of armour and this blade. What the text refers to as a "highly treasured item" refers to this suit of armor. Matsudaira Echigo no

Kami is one of Hideyasu's sons who set up one of the Matsudaira clans and ruled at Tsuyama in Echigo Province.

This blade would be considered THE Go of all the Go blades, at least in our eyes, and this view is held by most people.

Inaba Go and the Tomita Go are both Kokuho.

This blade is in a private collection.

## **KITANO GO 北野江**

Owner: Matsudaira Kaga no Kami

Zogan Mei

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1.5 bu Bu]

Value: 5,000 kan

It was purchased in Sakai in Settsu province by Kosa and Koeki.

Kotoku appraised it at 1500 Kan.

In the summer of Keicho 19 (1614) Lord Toshinaga passed away. For the purpose of reporting this and becoming the next Maeda lord, Toshitsune went to Suruga in Edo. At this time Kosa went to Nagoya in Owari province to pay his respects (to Maeda on the passing of Toshinaga), and at this time, the blade was purchased by the Maeda. Later, when Lord Toshitsune traveled to the capital, he stayed at an Inn called Kitano Shibai-In at Kamiyagawa where he performed a cutting test with this blade. It cut very well.

### **Yamanaka Note**

The part where it states "traveled to the capital" refers to the Osaka Winter Battle at which time the Maeda stationed themselves at Kitano.

On Meiji 43, July 9, when the Emperor Meiji made a visit to the Maeda mansion, this blade was given to the emperor. The blade presently is owned by the state and is in the keeping of the National Museum at Ueno in Tokyo.

## **NAKAGAWA GO 中川江**

Owner: Gyobutsu

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 2 bu

Value: 5,000 Kan

Lord Oda Jonosuke Taira no Nobutada owned this and gave it to Oda Suruga no Kami Tadamasa.

Suruga no Kami, for some reason changed his name to Nakagawa Hachiroemon and became a vassal of Kashu. The sword was handed down to his son Sohan Mago Hachiroemon.

At about this time, a man named Tsuda Nagato, a man of many interests, was asked to rework the blade and the sori on the blade was reshaped, and the koshirare was made into a Takano Ashi style.

The blade had been handed down as a Samonji, and all of the experts, whenever there was a meeting amongst experts, borrowed this blade to practice their appraisal skills.

After this, the blade was to be disposed of for which purpose it was sent to Koho, who appraised it as a Go, and revised the value.

The blade was reshaped and repolished, and Koshitsu appraised it at 100 mai. Hachiroemon was more than pleased.

Since Koho was known to be very fond of horses, a horse named Isuka with a crooked nose along with mai of gold was given to him.

At about this same time, another fine horse was given to him by Komatsu Chunagon and since he had others, the horse and 1 mai of gold was kept, and the other 9 mai was returned.

The blade was purchased by Lord Hidetada then given to Lod Echizen Omi Saisho Tadanao, and was handed down to Echigo no Kami.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> Year of Empo (1676), the value was set at 5,000 kan.

Upon his retirement, the blade was presented to Lord Ietsuna and as Ietsuna's legacy, it was left to Owari Chunagon who presented it to the Shogunate.

#### **Yamanaka Note**

Nakagawa Hachiroemon refers to Suruga no Kami Shigemasa and not Tadamasa.

He was the son of Oda Kyobu Shoyu Muneyoshi.

Shigemasa served Oda Nobunaga and performed many feats of battle.

His son was named Nakagawa Hanuemon and his grandson was named Nakagawa Hachiroemon.

The man mentioned as "having many interests" refers to Tsuda Nagato who also was known as Oda Hyobu Shoyu Tadatatsu, the younger brother of Nagato no Kami Tadaharu. Nakagawa and Tsuda were all related to the Oda.

The blade was in the Shogunate collection, however the Shogunate collection had been scattered ever since they lost their position, and the present whereabouts of this blade is not known to us, as is the case with the majority of the swords that were in that collection.

#### **SAMIDARE GO 五月雨江**

Owner: Gyobutsu

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun

Value: 250 mai

It was appraised during the rainy season in May, hence the name.

Formerly, it was discovered by Kosa, and it had been appraised as Utsu.

At first, it had a great deal of haniku, which was rounded, therefore it was very difficult to look at or observe carefully.

Kosa, had the niku polished off and repolished it, and then it was appraised as the above. It was purchased by Chikuzen no Kami Nagamasa who presented it to Lord Hidetada. It was then received by Lord Toshitsune and when Lady Seitai-In married, it was presented to the shogunate.

In the grand hall of the castle where the swords were being cared for, many of the “elders” present commented that, “this blade, alone, every time it was wiped down, looked as though it were misty,” and it was commented that the name Samidare Go was well chosen.

The reason for this was that, when the blade was with the Kaga, Koho had lined the inside of the saya with oil.

It was given to Owari Chunagon by Lord Iemitsu when the groom was married.

At that time, the value was set at 5,000 kan.

At the time of the marriage of Lord Chujo, it was given to him by Lord Chunagon.

As his legacy, it was presented to the shogunate which was on the 10th of Genroku (1697).

### **Yamanaka Note**

The part in the text where it mentions Utsu is an error for Uda 宇多.

The fact that the niku or haniku had been rounded or polished so much may have been the reason why the blade was so difficult to look at, which again reminds us of the very great importance of a good polish, especially on a fine blade.

Lady Seitai-In refers to Maeda Mitsutaka’s wife, who was the elder sister of Tokugawa Mitsukuni of Mito. She was adopted by the 3rd Shogun Iemitsu and brought up as his daughter and married into the Kaga Maeda family.

Lord Chujo refers to Tokugawa Tsunakoto who died in the 12th year of Genroku at the age of 48, therefore, what the text refers to as the 10th Year of Genroku in which it was presented to the shogunate as his legacy is an error.

In the Tokugawa Jikki for Kanei 6th, April 23rd, it states as follows:

“Maeda: Toshitsune Chikuzen no Kami changed his title to Higo no Kami.

His son Inuchiyo had his coming of age ceremony and took the name of Chikuzen no Kami Mitsutaka.

At this time, Iemitsu gave Toshimitsu a wakizashi by Rai Kunitsugu and Mitsutaka a wakizashi by Masamune. Hidetada gave Toshitsune a wakizashi by Norikuni and Mitsutaka a wakizashi, the Samidare Go.

Toshitsune gave Iemitsu a wakizashi by Yoshimitsu and Mitsutaka gave a tachi by Nobumitsu.

Toshitsune gave Hidetada a wakizashi by Sadamune and Mitsutaka gave Hidetada a tachi by Yoshitsugu.”

“Wakizashi” In these cases could mean a tanto or wakizashi, or even a katana; but mostly it refers to tanto.

When the blade left the Shogunate collection is not clear, however, it presently is in the Owari Tokugawa Reimeikai collection.

Owner: Gyobutsu  
Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 6.5 bu  
Value: 7,000 kan

Owned by Nagashima Kaga no Kami.  
Presented to Gongensama and left to the Owari.  
On the 21<sup>st</sup> of September in the 13<sup>th</sup> Year of Kanei (1636), When Daikei-In visited the Owari castle, it was given to Tokumatsu.  
The blade has a ko-kissaki but is large. The hira and shinogi ji both have tobiyaki.  
There is a crack just below the yokote.

### **Yamanaka Note**

Nabeshima Kaga no Kami Naoshige was originally called Saemon Daiyu Nobuo and was a minor retainer under Ryuzoji Takanobu. After the defeat of the Ryuzoji by Shimazu Iehisa, Naoshige helped the infant heir to the Ryuzoji, Masaie, and tried to restore the Ryuzoji family. However, Masaie died shortly thereafter and, therefore the Ryuzoji domain was taken over by Naoshige.

Naoshige helped Toyotomi Hideyoshi defeat Shimazu, and at the time of the Toyotomi campaign in Korea, he served as one of the magistrates.

During the battle of Sekigahara, he along with his son Shinano no Kami Katsushige sided with the Osaka Forces and were defeated, and after this, returned to Kyushu.

During, the battle of Sekigahara, even though he supported the Osaka forces, he did not partake in the battle, although his son Katsushige did. The Osaka forces suffered a complete defeat, and Katsushige returned to Saga in Kyushu. It is said that Naoshige did not know anything about his son's participation in the battle, and therefore he asked Tokugawa Ieyasu's forgiveness which was given, and the Nabeshima were allowed to keep their domain.

Daikenin refers to the name which the 3rd Tokugawa Shogun Iemitsu, took after his retirement.

Tokumatsu eventually became the 5th Shogun Tsunayoshi.

This blade is currently in the Imperial Collection.

### **MATSUI GO松井江**

Owner: Lord Kii  
Shumei  
Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu  
Value: 200 mai

Matsui Sado no Kami, a retainer of the Hosokawa owned it.  
It had long been in the castle. At the time of the marriage of Princess Tsuru, it was received by Hitachi no Suke.

About 1 sun of the original nakago is left and it has a shumei.

### **Yamanaka Note**

Matsui Sado was one of the old retainers to the Hosokawa of Higo province and had a fief of 3,500 Koku.

Princess Tsuru was the eldest daughter of the 5th Shogun Tsunayoshi.

Hitachi no Suke refers to Kii Chunagon Tsunanori

This blade currently is in a private collection, and although it is a Go, it is not regarded very highly.

### **YOKOSUKA GO**横須賀江

Owner: Abe Bungo no Kami

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 7bu

Value: 7,000 kan

This came from a place called Yokosuka and had been handed down as a Go.

During the time of Kojo, it came (for an appraisal) and became a Kaifu with a value of 10 mai.

On the 14th year of Genroku (1701), it came again and it was polished by Kojyu, and was reappraised as above.

#### **Yamanaka Note:**

Which Yokosuka location this text refers to is not known.

The blade currently is Juyo Bunkazai, and therefore it can be assumed to be one of the better Yoshihiro blades.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **KANZAN OSHIGATA**

This is a limited edition of 500, of which 300 will be released in July (1969), and the remaining 200 at the end of September.

A four (4) volume scroll series, it will have full size oshigata which will be full length and in the full original size.

This work will cover all the famous blades in the history of Japan, not only famous from the standpoint of history, but from the standpoint of quality too, and as such, it will give a very good account of what the so-called "good" swords are like, something quite difficult for the collectors and students of katana in the West to see as well as to comprehend.

Volume One:

Two blades from the historical period, and others from Yamashiro Province in the Kinai to Soshu Province.

Volume Two:

Covers all of Bizen Province throughout the Koto period.

Volume Three:

Covers Bizen Province to Bitchu, Mino and other provinces not covered in the first two volumes.

Volume Four: Covers Shinto blades.

The price is quoted at 120,000 Yen or about US\$ 340.00.

A little expensive for most of us, but certainly well worth every penny one invests in this giant work of Dr. Sato Kanzan who published this to commemorate his retirement from his many years at the Ueno Museum.

The publication is in the traditional Japanese scroll style, printed by hand on specially made washi paper, and with a backing in silk brocade.

This is the most impressive book ever to come out on Japanese Swords.

Those interested should add \$50.00 to cover shipping charges by air (this will include packing cost also). The scrolls are encased in a Kiri box and require extra packing to insure safe arrival at their destination.

## **THE ECLECTIC COLLECTOR**

R.B. CALDWELL  
Dallas, Texas, USA

During the past several years we have had the opportunity to observe many mutations of the unusual creature we call the Japanese sword collector. We have even gone through several metamorphoses in our own development.

We have been both, a quality and quantity collector, investor and student. But we have finally arrived at a method of procedure that is both, satisfying and rewarding.

It is this procedure that gives the collector a satisfying personal goal to which to devote his collective energies.

Some of the most effective ways to define something is to eliminate the thing it is not, so let us first take a quick look at the various types of collectors that we have observed in and out of their natural habitat over the last few years.

First, we have the accumulator. The accumulator, unfortunately, is rapidly becoming extinct. He operated ten to twenty years ago right after the war and bought a number of Japanese swords here at a ridiculously low price. Usually, he stripped the blade from the koshirae and often without a coat of oil, unceremoniously dumped the blade into a trunk in his attic: he never really developed a feel or love for what he was accumulating. He has one redeeming feature of grace, that is his widow. This delightful little grey haired old lady is somewhere trying to locate us and ask us to help her get rid of these horrid old things that Harold had so many of in the attic. We pray nightly for the strength to help her in her hour of need.

Second, we have the investor. The investor I do not quite trust because I was one myself at one time. He feels that somehow these Japanese things will be worth a lot of money to somebody, someday. He really never acquires a feel or a love for his investment media, and his one redeeming grace is that he will lose interest someday, and sell out for a small profit, or he will become fascinated and completely involved in his collection. We wish him a speedy demise.

Third, we have the student. The student has a decided love and feel for the swords and reads avidly about Japanese history and technical descriptions of the blades. Unfortunately, he does not have the financial resources to pursue his hobby, but someday, if his interest persists, he will have the funds and become a very fine, and what we shall call finally, a mature collector.

The mature collector someday is faced with a very major decision. Unfortunately, a great number of collectors at this stage suddenly decide they have gone as far as they can. The objects which they collect have become scarce, they grow weary of the small number of items that they have collected, and one of two things will happen: either they will suddenly decide to sell out and start some other line of endeavor, or they will take a new tack and go into their chosen hobby with a greater depth and with more appreciation. It is this last possibility that I wish to discuss with you.

Let me give you a few examples of what the eclectic collector does and how he operates. This is best done by telling you about some instances that brought me to this point in my own collecting.

Example: There was a gunto in somebody's scrap barrel in Illinois. We bought the blade and brought it to Dallas. It turned out to be a very respectful Bizen Kiyomitsu katana, badly in need of a polish and attention. It went to the west coast where it was given an excellent polish and shirasaya.

Element two: there was a beautiful shakudo tsuba in one of the famous English collections which came to an auction house in London, where it was bought, and then came to Dallas. This tsuba had excellent nanako with a wave pattern, and flowing among the waves was a golden dragon.

Element three: a friendly collector bought a wakizashi that had a magnificent fuchi kashira. It was a blueish black shakudo with nanako and with black dragons in gold trimmings.

Element four: another collector had a very fine kogai in bluish black shakudo with a gold dragon on a nanako wave pattern.

Element five: we found a perfect shakudo kozuka that matched the fuchi kashira from another English auction house.

The final step was a trip to Japan for the Kiyomitsu where Hattori had a black lacquer saya made for the Kiyomitsu, and a tsunagi to exactly fit its dimensions. During this same trip we also received green papers for the blade. With the purchase of a pair of gold menuki all

the elements were complete and assembled together. Now the Kiyomitsu rests in its shirasaya and a very handsome koshirae enjoys a prominent place in my den on a compatible katana kake.

It is home for good, rescued from the oblivion of the scrap heap and restored to a place of honor which it deserves.

Another example is from a collection in San Antonio and is one of the first blades I bought, a Nagamichi. Several weeks later a fellow collector sends another Nagamichi out of the blue from Washington, D.C. These are first generation Nagamichi and the signatures match exactly. Off the blades go to San Francisco where they receive a polish and shirasaya. A pair of Goto daisho tsuba are obtained from a fellow collector with gold autumn flowers as the motif. On the next trip to Japan the blades' shira saya and tsuba go along, and saya are constructed and tsuka made and wrapped. Several pair of fuchi kashira are tried, but they don't quite work. One has spring flowers, another has the wrong kind of nanako, and another costs too much. But finally, a pair is found in Japan and along with some menuki that I had in my collection, the daisho was completed.

The first kozuka-kogai pair was not right. Six months later another pair came in from Los Angeles that fitted the bill, exactly as if they were made for this daisho. The addition of a katana kake a few months later completed the picture.

Now you are beginning to see what the eclectic collector does.

There is an old saying in Japanese that says that swords call their own kind. For instance, the first good sword I obtained was a Yozosaemon Sukesada. This sword was absolutely perfect and required no additional care whatsoever on my part, except for a shirasaya, tsunagi and a good polish, but somehow when I obtained the Yososaemon, all of the next good blades that came my way happened to be Sukesada: Hikozaemon, Shichiroemon and Gembei. Some were early and there were quite a few generations up to the Yokoyama school. These began to literally pour in, and everything I touched seemed to become Bizen, and Sukesada was certainly calling his friends and relatives.

Later, when Bizen had run its course, things suddenly switched to Hizen. Tadayoshi, Tadahiro, Masahiro, and Yukihiro came flocking to Dallas. Lately, things seem to be going towards Settsu, possibly in preparation for the "Osaka 70" world's fair.

Strange things happen to the eclectic collector. Perhaps we should call it synchronicity. For example, I needed a matched kozuka – kogai, and a friend of mine in San Diego said he had one in copper. I bought it, sight unseen, and was very disappointed when it arrived. The two pieces, other than both being copper, had nothing in common. One had plum blossoms and the other had a fall flower motif. They definitely were not a matched pair. However, one month later on a business trip to Chicago I popped into an antique store, and lo and behold there was the exact matching kozuka I needed for a sale at a reasonable price. I later found both of these pieces in a catalog of the Tomkinson collection and there was no doubt about it. How one piece wound up in Chicago, and the other in San Diego and finally came home to roost in Dallas is one of the unexplainable things about collecting, but things somehow show up when you need them the most. Soon this pair will be on a fine wakizashi that has a plum blossom tsuba to match them.

Sometimes you tend to become impatient, for example the gold dragon menuki for the Kiyomitsu. I had searched hard for over several months, but nothing came up that was right. After I got the pair that is on the sword now, five different pair showed up within the next several months, all of which would have been better than the pair I finally chose. It pays to be patient.

My present and long-standing quest for a handsome old Ito-maki no tachi is still unanswered. Sometimes I almost give up hope, but someday it will come in, and it will have been worth waiting for.

Once you have become accustomed to thinking along these lines your entire approach to purchasing will be altered. You will be proceeding towards a series of well defined objectives, each of which is esthetically satisfying.

The blade, of course, is the cornerstone and foundation. It is the prime mover around which the whole project revolves. You analyze the needs and requirements of the blade and proceed from there. The first, and undoubtedly most important choice is that of a satisfactory tsuba. Just because you out-traded your worst rival and wound up with the most elegant Goto tsuba in Northeast Nevada doesn't guarantee a success on your pet katana. We have held poorly mounted katana that have a predominately forward center of gravity, such as Soshu blades, and with a relatively small, light tsuba and they felt awkward and clumsy in the hand. By the simple expedient of changing to a properly heavy tsuba, the center of gravity is brought closer to your hand, and the blade becomes a weapon with new feeling of being alive and responsive. A long medium to light weight blade demands a thin but large diameter tsuba for proportion as well as for a good weight and balance.

A Kamakura style blade with strong fumbari cries for a small light weight tsuba to be as unobtrusive as possible, for she is a prima donna and demands all of the attention for herself. A thin sukashi iron piece or lacquered horsehide is all that is needed here, for this style blade is alive in its nakedness.

The next important consideration is that of the overall theme. Here you need help again from your blade, some kind of clue as to what it wants. If it sports some sort of horimono you are set. A dragon loves company, and dragon tsuba and kodogu are easily come by. A ken horimono would complement weapon images of various kinds used in the other fittings. Plum blossoms equate with other spring themes.

If the blade already has a habaki you can get a clue from it, i.e., a silver one needs shibuichi and silver fittings. If the habaki is copper, look for yamagane in your quest. A gold habaki sets off gold highlights in other kodogu.

If your blade lacks any clue or hints, just use your own imagination and let it run wild. Is it a battle scarred samurai business-like type blade? Maybe it reminds you a bit of winter. Try a heavy Higo iron tsuba and dark brown lacquer and silk wrappings with iron fittings all around.

If it is a saucy blade and you think the smith made it with just a touch of whimsy, try a shoki and oni theme with light colors, and hope a Toshinaga tsuba will show up.

You like horses? It's an easy solution to come up with horses on all of the kodogu.

There are certain "no-no's" you should observe. Shi-shi go with peonies. Don't ask why, they do. Tigers go with bamboo, turtles with cranes, etc. Don't arbitrarily mix your animals, plants, kamon and themes without knowing what you are doing. You might accidentally offend some honorable Japanese tradition. Use bright color sparingly and only to accent, not to dominate. Remember the "reason for being" of the Japanese swords was to be an effective weapon for personal combat. From this it evolved as a work of art, but never lose sight of its original purpose.

Rules of thumb that may be of use to you are as follows: first, the choice of tsuba is the most important decision. It must balance the blade in weight, size, shape and proportion.

Second is the media: if the tsuba is shakudo nanako utilize that media throughout; if copper, use copper; if silver, shibuichi, etc. be consistent. If iron, use iron or whatever can accent or complement the highlights of the tsuba. Be cautious if you have to mix your metals and finishes. Third, a compatible theme should be used throughout, and no clashing themes, i.e., plants, animals, insects, historic themes, folklore, motifs, etc. Fourth is color. Use the same and not contrasting colors in the silk, lacquer, and fittings. Use color variations sparingly, and when in doubt, don't.

The overall effect should be "shibui", i.e. elegant and dignified, not "hade" or flashy. You are after the effect of a Japanese garden, not a Piccadilly circus or Times Square. You want to listen to a string quartet, not a brass band in the drawing room. But, above all, remember the koshirae is there because the blade painstakingly came into being centuries ago for a specific purpose, created by a very special artist. It is in our custody temporarily because numerous generations before us have honored and preserved it for what it is. We can ignore its beauty and potential, destroy it with neglect or restore it in the proper setting as the magnificent work of art that it really is. Whether it is forgotten or appreciated by future generations is up to us. If your collecting is beginning to pall, consider this eclectic approach. Look at your blades in a creative light and consider the possibilities inherent in them, and your interest and enthusiasm will grow with each accomplishment. It will be a rewarding experience.

Footnote: To save your looking it up, the definition of eclectic is as follows:  
Composed of material gathered from various sources, or choosing and selecting from various sources; to select and pick out from many sources.

R. B. C.