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ALBERT YAMANAKA'S NIHONTO NEWSLETTER

Albert Yamanaka's Nihonto Newsletter was published monthly from January, 1968 to July, 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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SWORD SMITHS

SHINTO PERIOD

TOKAIDO HIGHWAY

Iga and Shima provinces did not produce any sword smith worth mentioning. In Ise province however, there are a few, and they are the descendants of the Muramasa School, Masashige, descendants of Mino Daido, Mutsu no Kami Daido, and Mutsu no Kami Toshinaga. Also, the younger brother of Kawachi no Kami Kunisuke of Osaka, Iwami no Kami Kunisuke came to this province around the Kambun Era, however, he is more-or-less included in the Osaka Shinto group.

In Mikawa, Totomi and Kai Provinces, no sword smith of note was working.

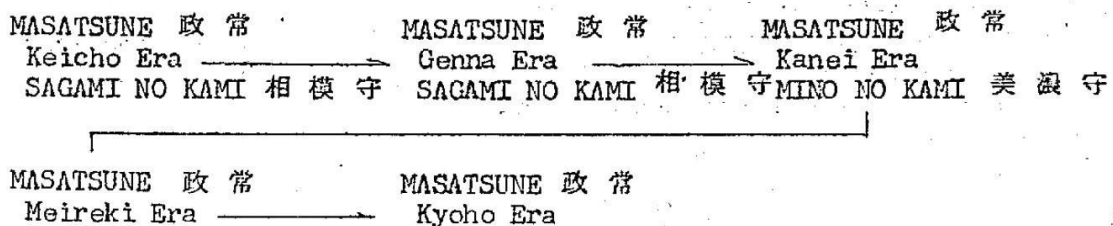
In Suruga Province, Yoshisuke and Hirosuke, the descendants of Shimada Yoshisuke were active.

Izu, Kozuke and Shimofusa Province did not have sword smiths of note. Hitachi Province had very little activity, and a few smiths from Mino Province, but Bando Taro Nyudo Bokuden is the only one of note.

OWARI PROVINCE

The fact that one of the Gosanke (Tokugawa) families established their stronghold here and with the building of Nagoya Castle, sword smiths were active here, although not greatly active. These smiths are the descendants of Mino Kanetsune who changed his name to Masatsune. Another smith is Nobutaka, also from Seki in Mino Province and a few others.

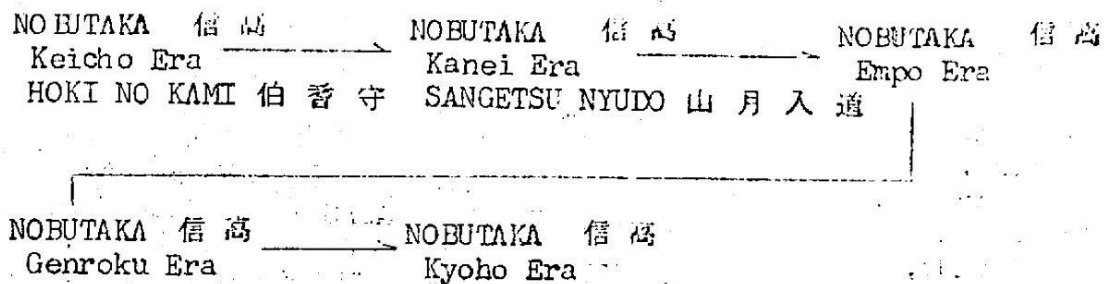
MASATSUNE SCHOOL 政常系



The first Sagami no Kami Masatsune is a descendant of Nara Taro of Mino Province and originally signed Seki Kanetsune.

NOBUTAKE SCHOOL

NOBUTAKA SCHOOL 信高系



Other than the above two lineages, there are:

UJIFUSA 氏房, Kambun Era

KANEUJI 兼氏, Kambun Era

MASANOBU 正全

HATA MITSUYO 泰光代, Genroku Era

Masatsune (originally Kanetsune) was active from about the Tensho Era of the Koto Period and received the title of Sagami no Kami. He was employed by Fukushima Masanori, one of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's retainers, and this was during the Keicho Era. He is known for his many excellent tanto as well as yari and naginata. He was also quite skilled at carvings.

Masatsune and his descendants made many excellent kogatana, that is, the small knives which fit into the kozuka.

Hoki no Kami Nobutaka is a descendant of Kanenori of Mino Province, and he took the title of Hoki no Kami in Tensho 19, and then went to Owari in the early Keicho Era.

MASATSUNE 政 常

Worked in the Yamashiro tradition, Mino tradition, and the Shinto tradition, approximately during the Keicho era

Had the title Sagami no Kami 相模守.

KATANA AND WAKIZASHI

Shape and Construction:

Shape and style of the Shinto Period and wide with a shallow sori. The kissaki is long.

The overall impression of the shape of the blade is that it is very 'firm' or robust.

Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi which end in marudome above the machi are seen in many works. In rare instances, there are carvings which are very intricate.

Hamon:

The hamon is narrow and the pattern is a small midare which will have many togariba. There will be abundant nie as well.

The habuchi is very clear and well defined.

Sambon sugi are seen at times.

Chu suguha with a very clear or well defined habuchi are also seen.

In addition, there are o-notare, notare midare, and hako midare.

Boshi:

The boshi are komaru, but can have a togari at the tip.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The hada is ko-mokume hada, and the hada stands out clearly.

Nakago:

The nakago are a little short and have niku on the hira.

The tips are kurijiri or kengyo.

The file marks are suji chigai.

Inscriptions are: Sagami no Kami Masatsune 相模守政常

Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune 相模守原政常

Sagami no Kami Masatsune Nyudo 相模守政常入道

All mei will be katana mei.

TANTO

Shape and Construction:

Tanto are hiratsukuri takenoko sori, and about 9 sun in length. They are wide and thick, and the mune is either shin no mune (mitsumune) or gyo no mune (ihorimune).

Hi and Carvings:

There are very intricate carvings which are a little small and very excellently executed, however they are not seen often.

Hamon:

The hamon are formed in nie and are narrow. They are chu-suguha with rough nie, and the habuchi is very hanayaka (flashy or showy).

From about the fukura to the tip of the boshi, the yakiba becomes a little wide.

There are some works that are extremely well made, and so much so, that they will be mistaken for Koto work from Rai of Yamashiro Province

Also, there are ko-midare hamon made with fine nie which can be mistaken for work by Sa of Chikuzen Province.

NAGINATA AND YARI

These blades are very well made, and they are a little large and the hamon are o-notare or notare midare in most cases. Excellently made kogatana and o-kogatana are also seen.

Work of the dai sagari (successor) Masatsune smiths will be a poorer version of the first Masatsune.

NOBUTAKA信 高

Worked in the Mino Tradition and in the Shinto Tradition

KATANA AND WAKIZASHI

Shape and Construction:

Worked in the shape and style of the Shinto period. The sori can be very shallow, so that sometimes there appear to be no sori at all.

The blade is thick, and the blade will taper strongly towards the kissaki. There is a gyo no mune (ihorimune).

Hamon:

The hamon is formed in nioi with some nie.

The hamon pattern will be o-midare with togariba, and the hamon border will be sharp or well defined in places.

Boshi:

The boshi is komaru or notare, and the kaeri is very long.

Jitetsu and Hada:

There is a ko-mokume hada mixed with masame hada, but there is not much to be seen in the ji.

Nakago:

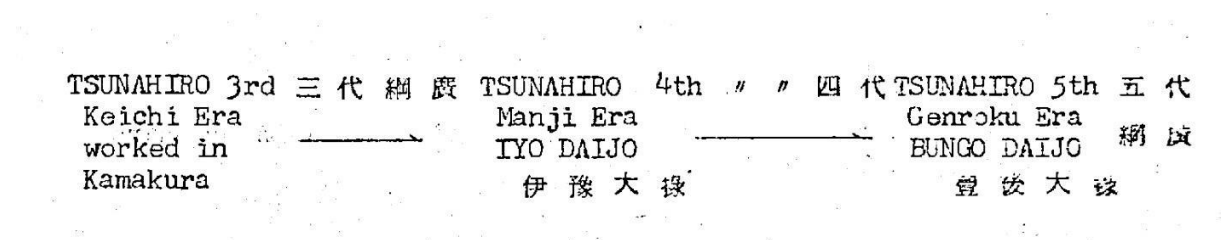
The nakago is a little short with a high shinogi. The tip is kurijiri. The file marks are katte sagari. Inscriptions are long.

Works by the dai sagari Nobutaka (successor smiths) will be poorly made compared to the first Nobutaka.

SAGAMI PROVINCE

after the decline of the Kamakura Bakufu started by Minamoto Yoritomo in the Kamakura Period, sword making in Kamakura more or less came to a complete stop, however, with the Hojo clan establishing themselves in nearby Odawara, the Soshu smiths were revived somewhat, and then with the fall of the Hojo Clan, it ceased with a descendant of Masamune, Tsunahiro, being the only active smith.

TSUNAHIRO SCHOOL



The Tsunahiro lineage continues on through the Shinto and Shinhinto periods and into the modern Gendaito era.

Other smiths in the Tsunahiro group were

NARIMUNE, Genna Era

KIYOHIRA, Manji Era

TSUNASHIGE, Kambun Era

The 4th Tsunahiro was active around the Manji Era and had the title of Iyo Daijo. He also had permission to use the kiku mon.

Kiyohira of Kaga Province worked in Odawara for a short time.

TSUNAHIRO 綱廣

The fourth generation Tsunahiro worked in the Soshu tradition approximately during the Manji Era. He had the title Iyo Daijo伊予大掾.

KATANA AND WAKIZASHI

Shape and Construction:

Shape and style of the Shinto period, with saki sori, lacking hira niku, and wide. Overall, the shape is very strong.

He also made sunzumari (slightly small) katana and wakizashi. The mune is shin no mune (mitsu mune) or so no mune (marumune).

Hamon:

Formed in nie. The pattern is o-midare with rough nie and very hanayaka (flashy or flamboyant).

The hada within the hamon stands out very clearly.

Boshi:

The boshi is a small pattern midarekomi and the tip is togari (pointed). There is a strong kaeri.

Jitetsu and Hada:

There is mokume hada mixed with o-hada. The o-hada has a strong black color.

Nakago:

The nakago is a little short with a tanagobara style. There is no niku on the hira. The tip is kengyo and the file marks are kiri.

Inscriptions are:

SOSHU JU IYO DAIJO TSUNAHIRO 相州住伊予大掾綱廣

TSUNAHIRO 綱廣

SOSHU JU TSUNAHIRO 相州住綱廣

HIRATSUKURI KO-WAKIZASHI AND TANTO

Hiratsukuri ko-wakizashi are seen in a length of about 1 shaku 2 sun. They are wide, have a sakisori, and are thick. They have shin no mune (mitsumune).

Tanto with a length of about 9 sun are seen. They have a with slight sori, are thick, and mostly have shin no mune (mitsumune).

The blades are very firmly made or robust in both cases.

Other details are about the same as those given for katana and wakizashi.

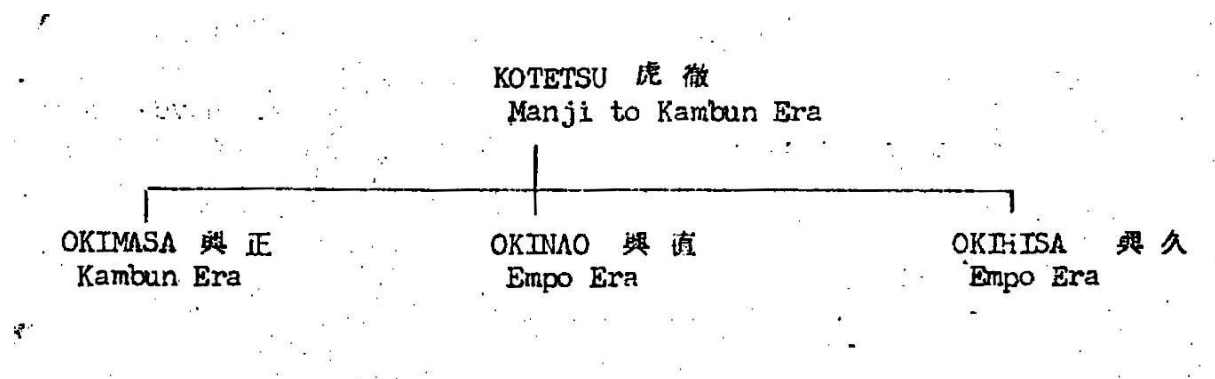
Work of the third Tsunahiro and other dai sagari (successors) are about the same, therefore we have listed here the description of work of the 4th Tsunahiro, as his works are found to be representative of work of the period.

MUSASHI PROVINCE

The Tokugawa established their capital here during the time of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, since Hideyoshi gave Musashi Province to Tokugawa Ieyasu, and since then it became the capital.

On Keicho 18, Echiizen Yatsugu, who Ieyasu was very fond of, established his smithy here, and shortly thereafter, we see Nagasone Kotetsu followed by Noda Hankei, two giants of the Shinto Period.

NAGASONE KOTETSU SCHOOL 長曾虎徹系



The name of Kotetsu is well known to any student of the sword, and his name is known even among those outside sword circles. Kotetsu came from Nagasone Village in Omi Province, although he was first active in Fukui in Echizen Province as an armor maker, a maker of fittings for horses, as well as tsuba making, and it is said that he made a few swords and yari at this time.

About the time he was 50, he changed his trade by going to Edo to become a full time sword smith.

There are many stories concerning who Kottesu studied sword making with. It is said that he studied carving under Higo Daijo Sadakuni in Echizen Province and sword making under Soshu Tsunahiro and Kazusa no Suke Kaneshige of Edo.

When he first moved to Edo he was employed by Matsudaira Yorimoto and lived within the premises of the Matsudaira estate in Otsuka. He later moved to Ueno which presently is a part of Ueno Park.

After his tenure with Matsudaira, he was employed by Inabe Iwami no Kami Masayasu.

Throughout Kotetsu's sword making career in Edo, there occurred a number of changes, and this is seen by the way he signed his name on the nakago of his blades.

The so-called Okusato mei 興里 are from about the Meireki and Manji Era, the character "oki" of Nagasone Okisato is inscribed as the character oku, and this was later changed to the character oki. Also, it was about this time that the last radical of the tora character it was made in a long and curved upward stroke, so this is called Hane Tora.

His ability had already reached great heights at about this time and the Hane Tora period lasted for some time, and then he changed the tora character again, and this is commonly called Kaku Tora.

At this time, his skills became even better, and probably reached their zenith in the Kaku Tora period.

In his later years, he again inscribed with the Hane Tora style, however the way in which it was inscribed is very different from the inscriptions that he made earlier, and he inscribed with Ko Nyudo. He passed away on June 24 in Empo 6 (1678) at the age of 79 or 80.

The ability of Kotetsu blades to cut well is attested by the testing of the Yamano clan and many others, for there are a great number of Kotetsu blades with gold cutting test attributions. There are such descriptions as Ishitoro Kiri which supposedly the blade cut the top of a stone lantern in half. Giboshi Kiri means the blade cut the top of a bronze ornament on a bridge, and there are many others with similar names attesting to the cutting quality of a blade.

Also, many of Kotetsu's blades have very fine and intricately made carvings.

Kotetsu had already become famous during his lifetime, so therefore it is only natural that there are many "fakes" of his works, as they were already being made

during his lifetime, and they were made continuously after he passed away and throughout the Shinto, Shinshinto, and early Gendaito period and the present.

There is a saying that eleven out of ten Kotetsu blades are fake, and this well describes the number of fake Kotetsu blades in existence.

Hosoda Naomitsu, popularly known as Kaji Hei in the late Shinshinto period, probably made the largest number of fake Kotetsu works, and Naomitsu rarely made blades that he signed his own name to.

Of the three students of Kotetsu, Okimasa is the best known, and quite a number of Okimasa works are seen. Okinao and Okihisa's works are not often encountered.

KOTETSU 虎徹

Worked in the Yamashiro tradition and the Shinto tradition, approximately during the Manji-Kambun eras. Used the names Nagasone Okusato 長根 根 與 里 and Nagasone Okisato Nyudo 長食根興里入道.

Early Period Katana and Wakizashi

Shape and Construction:

Style and shape of the Shinto period with a shallow sori, wide, and overall, the shape of the blade is very firm or robust. In comparison to those he made in his later years, they are made a little awkwardly, however, they are still graceful compared to other smiths of the time.

Wakizashi were made in lengths of about 1 shaku 5 sun, and like the katana, are very well made.

Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi, and bo hi with soe hi or carvings are seen.

Hamon:

The hamon are formed in nie and are wide. The pattern is gunome with a hako (square) design.

There are some blades that have a suguha yakidashi. There are o-notare suguha as well.

Boshi:

The boshi are a small pattern midarekomi which have a komaru at the tip. There is a long kaeri.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The hada are mokume hada mixed with o-hada. The shinogi ji will have masame hada.

There are distinct characteristics in the jitetsu which will be described below.

Nakago:

The nakago are an appropriate length with a little niku. The tip is ha agari kurijiri. The file marks are katte sagari.

Inscriptions are: Nagasone Okisato

Nagasone Kotetsu Nyudo

The center of the characters will be at the shinogi line.

Later Year katana and wakizashi: the so-called Okisato period 興里銘時代

Shape and Construction:

Made in the style and shape of the Shinto period, however, the sori is very shallow, and so shallow that there will seem to be no sori at all.

The width of the blade will taper strongly towards the kissaki. The shinogi is high, and the shinogi ji is wide.

Katakiriha shaped blades are seen in katana sizes at times. Wakizashi are about 1 shaku 5-6 sun long.

Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi are seen, but rarely. Carvings with dragons being the main motif are seen in greater numbers. Both shin and Gyo Kurikara are seen. Other carvings are Dokko Tsuku Ken, and various designs very intricately carved in relief within a hitsu (frame).

Carvings by Kotetsu are considered to be the equal of those by Umetada and Kinai of Echizen Province, as well as those on the works of the first Tadayoshi in Hizen.

Hamon:

The hamon is formed in nie and the nie will be a little rough, but they have much life and vigor. The pattern will be hiro suguha or o-notare with dense nioi and the nie cluster around the nioi to form ashi. The color of the hamon is white and very strong and this is not often seen on blades during the Shinto period. They are like those made by Rai Kunitsugu of Yamashiro Province during the Kamakura Period, or like those of Soshu Yukimitsu, also from the Kamakura Period.

There are soft areas within the hamon which will generate hataraki (activity) and a lively hamon.

There are works that have a suguha yakidashi, but these are rare.

The majority of his swords are like Koto blades which start out with a midareba.

The hamon starts out and is very narrow at the machi, and then as it proceeds towards the kissaki, the hamon becomes wider and larger in pattern, and especially around the monouchi area, the hataraki becomes strong, and then from about one or two sun below the Yokote and above the yokote, the hamon width becomes narrow as it enters the boshi.

O-midare with a sharp edge (border) are seen on some works.

Kotetsu also made chu-suguha hamon in the Yamashiro tradition with abundant ko-nie.

Boshi:

The boshi are midarekomi with ashi. On reaching the tip, the point is komaru and the kaeri is long.

The nie in the boshi are notably pronounced.

Jitetsu and hada:

The steel is well forged, there is a blackish uruoi effect, and strong ji nie form chikei.

The hada will be ko-mokume hada mixed with o-hada. The o-hada is especially noticeable at the bottom of the blade right above the habaki area, and within the o-hada, there will be steel areas which will seem to be a little weak (dark colored). This is a key point of Kotetsu's jihada.

NOTE: The weak steel mentioned above found in the area right above the habaki will also be found in many other parts of the blade, due to the fact that the blades have experienced many polishes, and this tendency will be seen within the hamon as well on some blades, and it will appear like a shimi (stain) and also be seen within the hamon. These shimi are quite often mistaken for sunagashi in Soshu blades or nie sake sometimes.

Nakago:

The length of the nakago is in proportion to the length of the blade, and they are never too long or too short.

The nakago will taper narrowly going towards the nakago jiri which will be kurijiri.

There will be niku on the nakago surface. The file marks will be katte sagari.

Inscriptions will be NAGASONE OKISATO NYUDO KOTETSU

or various other long inscriptions.

The characters will be on the shinogi line.

TANTO

Tanto are hiratsukuri sunnobi with saki sori. Lengths will be about 1 shaku with some being slightly longer.

There are some tanto with chukan sori (musori or no sori) or slightly longer with a length of about 9 sun.

In all cases, the blade will be thick, and overall, the blade will be very firm or robust.

Osoraku tanto are seen at times.

Carvings will accompany most blades.

Other details are about the same as those given for katana and wakizashi.

Naginata and yari are seen, but those are rare.

OKIMASA 興正

Worked in the Shinto tradition approximately during the Empo era (1673-1680). His work is about the same as Kotetsu's but somewhat inferior.

KATANA AND WAKIZASHI

Shape and Construction:

Overall, the shape of the blade is made strong and robust, and will seem a little awkward. There will be very little sori. The blade will have hiraniku, and be thick.

Some blades will taper strongly towards the kissaki.

Hamon:

The hamon are formed in nie and are wide, but will greatly lack in skill and details when compared to his teacher's.

Omidare with hako (square-like) features are seen.

Nakago:

The nakago are the same as those of Kotetsu, however, inscriptions will have bold chisel work and be bold and large. Inscriptions made in later years become thinner.

NODA HANKEI GROUP 野田繁慶系

Hankei and Shigemasa worked in the Genna era.

Hankei came from Mikawa Province. He went to Edo to become a gunsmith, then went to Suruga Province, and at this time he was known under the name Noda Kiyotaka. He then again went to Edo and lived at Teppo Cho and made guns as his trade, but he is also known to have also made swords at this time too. He became a full time sword smith shortly thereafter.

An interesting story is told about Hankei. At one time, one of the Honami of the time saw a blade made by Hankei and judged it as Masamune. Hankei, upon hearing of this was supposed to have been greatly disappointed and enraged that his work was mistaken for a smith like Masamune. Hankei must have been very conceited, but he

could well afford to be so, since in looking at his works, we are able to see the great ability of this Shinto sword smith.

On rare occasions, he signed Ono Hankei.

HANKEI

Worked in the Shinto Tradition approximately during the Kanei to Genna Eras.

Early work: Katana and Wakizashi

Shape and Construction:

Hankei worked in the shape and style of the Shinto period, however, there is very little sori to no sori at all on some works. The shinogi ji is wide and the niku is appropriate.

On the whole, there will seem to be something missing.

Hi and Carvings:

Bo hi are seen, but rarely.

Hamon:

The hamon are formed in nie with a notare pattern and with hako midare patterns. The edge of the hamon will have abundant mura nie. Kuichigaiba formed by the nie are seen at times.

Boshi:

Boshi are a small pattern midarekomi and sometimes there are hakikake.

Jitetsu and Hada:

The ji is almost muji, and no activities are seen within the ji.

Nakago:

The nakago tapers strongly towards the nakago jiri.

The jiri is an abrupt ha agari kurijiri.

The file marks are inconsistent, that is, they may be suji chigai on the omote, but could be o-suji chigai on the ura or vice versa. Alternatively, they could be the same on both sides. The mune of the nakago is rounded and file marks are seen here.

Inscriptions are Noda Kiyotaka 野田清孝.

LATER YEARS: KATANA AND WAKIZASHI

Hankei's later year's work was in the Soshu tradition.

Shape and Construction:

Shape and the style of the Shinto period with hiraniku lacking. There is a high shinogi, a long kissaki, and the fukura is poor. The mune is shin no mune (mitsumune).

Hi and Carvings:

There are bo hi. The bottom will be finished in marudome or kakudome.

Hamon:

The hamon are formed in nie and the pattern will be a wide hiro suguha o-notare. The nie will be rough and there will be nie kuzure like that seen in early Soshu work. However, the color of the nie will not be as lively.

The nioi will be dense, but it will not be of the type that that one expects on an Ichimonji type hamon. Gunome are seen and as they enter the hamon they form nie kuzure and sunagashi which are found in profusion all along the hamon.

The sunagashi are a little rough and are seen along the entire surface of the hamon, and it is as though the hamon is made up of these sunagashi.

Boshi:

The boshi are midarekomi with nie kuzure and ending in yakizume at the tip, although some boshi have a slight kaeri.

When there is a kaeri, the nie are rough, and there are sunagashi which will run into the mune.

Jitetsu and Hada:

There is a o-itame hada mixed with masame hada and it will produce an an effect which is flat or featureless looking.

The ji nie will form chikei in places.

Between the layers of the steel, there will appear large chikei and this is called "Hankei's hijiki gane". Hijiki is a type of seaweed and these chikei closely resemble this seaweed.

Also, since the steel layers might not have fused together completely during the forging stages, there will be hada ware.

Nakago:

The so-called Hankei nakago is very thin with little niku. The shinogi is rounded and the mune is also rounded, and on the rounded mune, there are higaki file marks.

The file marks on the nakago surface are sujichigai or o-sujichigai, but this is inconsistent, in that both made be found on one nakago: that is one side may be sujichigai and the reverse side will be o-sujichigai.

The tip is kurijiri, but it is made so that the kurijiri is only applied on the cutting edge side.

Commonly, when higaki file marks are made, they are relaxed or almost sloppy. However, with Hankei's file marks, they are made very neatly.

Hankei's signature will not appear as though it was made with a chisel, but rather was stamped, after which it was cleaned or finished with a chisel.

Shigemasa's work will be a very poor version of Hankei's work and are extremely rare.

KYOHO MEIBUTSU CHO

INSTALLMENT 40

SHINOGI TOSHIRO

凌藤四郎

Owner: Gyobutsu

Length: 8 sun 8 bu

Since it is a shinogi tsukuri style, the name follows.

It had been handed down in the Hosokawa family for generations, then it came to be owned by Lord Kitabatake Chujo Tadakatsu.

It has also been known as Ise Toshiro.

Later, Lord Kuroda Jyosui purchased it, and then gave it to Lord Hidetsugu, it was then given to Lord Osaki Shoji Masamune who later presented it to lord Iemitsu.

Yamanaka Note

In the Oda Nobunaga Chronicles, it is mentioned that this blade was given to lord Chujo (Kitabatake) by Nobunaga, and that it was a very important blade.

Kitabatake Chujo Tadakatsu is the second son of Oda Nobunaga and he was adopted by the Kitabatake Clan, and since the Kitabatake ruled at Ise Province, the second name of the blade, Ise Toshiro, came to be attached to it.

It is said that the 3rd Tokugawa Shogun, Iemitsu, asked Date Masamune for this blade, but Date would not part with it. Then in Kan'ei 23, on July 21, Date Tadamune

presented this blade along with a katana by Masamune to Shogun Iemitsu, as the legacy of his father Date Masamune.

It is recorded that Date Masamune refused Iemitsu's request for this blade, and ever since then, Iemitsu held a grudge against him, so on Masamune's deathbed, he told his son Tadamune that after his death he should present the blade to Iemitsu. The Date had requested permission from the Shogunate to reconstruct Sendai Castle, but it had been refused, partly because of Masamune's refusal to part with this blade. After Masamune's death and the blade being given to the Shogunate for which Iemitsu was supposed to have been very pleased, the castle's reconstruction was permitted.

Iemitsu gave this blade to his son, Ietsuna on Keian 3 (1650). From the text and from the various circumstances involving the blade, it truly must have been a fine blade, even though it was made in the shinogi tsukuri style despite the fact that it was a tanto. Generally, a shinogi tsukuri tanto is displeasing or appears awkward.

NAMAZUO TOSHIRO

鯰藤四郎

Owner: Gyobutsu

Signed: on the ura

Length: 1 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Naginata naoshi with unokubi tsukuri shape, and since it resembles a namazu (catfish), hence the name.

There is a naginata hi with soe hi, and there are many uchinoke. It was an Osaka Gyobutsu.

Yamanaka Note

This blade is recorded in the Toyotomi Hideyoshi catalog, the Osaka Gyobutsu. The blade is depicted in various old oshigata books as well, such as the Mori Hon, Otomo Hon, Jyosui Hon, and the Umetada Oshigata.

The blade presently is in the Owari Tokugawa Reimei Kai Collection and it is yakinaoshi, having went through the great fire of the Meireki Era.

OYAKO TOSHIRO

窺子 藤四郎

Owner: Gyobutsu

Signed

Length: 7 Sun 4 Bu

From the olden days, this blade has been accompanied by a kogatana, hence the name. The kogatana was lost when the blade was dropped into the sea.

The tsuka (the kotsuka) had a kiri mon.

It was originally owned by a man named Naraya Soetsu.

The boshi of both blades had kaen.

Yamanaka Note

The oshigata of this blade in the Kotoku Oshigata series has both the kogatana and the Kozuka.

The blade went through the fire on May 5 in Genna 1 (1615) and the blade later was presented to the Shogunate, although its present whereabouts are not known.

For a large percentage of the blades formerly in the Tokugawa Shogunate, the present whereabouts are unknown.

Naraya Soetsu was a famous tea master in Kyoto in the late Momoyama period.

The Tokugawa Shogunate's vast and fantastic sword collection started dispersing shortly after they lost their position, and only a few blades are presently owned by a direct descendant of the Shogun.

In contrast, the Owari Tokugawa should be given great credit for having well preserved their collection, as the majority of that collection is still intact and currently looked after by the Owari Tokugawa Remeikai Foundation. As for the other two Tokugawa families, the Kii and the Mito, the blades owned by these two families were dispersed long ago.

HOCHO TOSHIRO

庖丁 藤 四 郎

Owner: Gyobutsu

Length: 8 sun 6 bu

Owned by Taga Bungo no Kami. A crane was being dressed and a manahashi was placed inside of it and a hocho (kitchen knife) was asked for. Before the Manahashi came, the crane was cut with this blade and it cut through the manahashi quite well, hence the name. Later it went to the hands of Torigai Sokei, who left it to his son Yahei, who later presented it to Lord Hidetada, who then presented it to Lord Ieyasu, and then it was given to Lord Kii, and then given back to the Shogunate.

Yamanaka Note

The blade was owned by Taga Bungo no Kami, whose name has appeared with quite a number of swords previously covered in this Meibutsu. After Taga, it went to a merchant in Sakai, although this fact is not recorded in the Meibutsu Cho. Torigai Sokei purchased it from the merchant and left it to his son, who gave it to Toyotomi Hideyoshi. It was given to Uesugi Kagekatsu, and Kagekatsu gave it to the Tokugawa Shogun Hidetada. Hidetada gave it to his father Ieyasu, who gave it to another son Kii Yorinobu, but Yorinobu gave it back to his father later.

The blade supposedly went through the fire of Meireki 3 (1657). The blade was nominated to Jujo Bijutsu on 14th of September in 1941. This blade presently is in the Owari Tokugawa Collection.

ASHIKAGA - ITZUKA TOSHIRO

足利飯塚藤四郎

Owner: Gyobutsu

Length: 9 sun 3 bu

Value: 3,000 kan

A man named Iizuka of Ashikaga in Shimozuke Province owned it. He always kept it under his pillow at night. He was a retainer of Lord Tadanaga.

Lord Tadanaga got it from Iizuka Hanji and then gave it to Lord Hidetada.

Yamanaka Note

The name for this blade, Iizuka and Ashikaga comes from the fact that it was owned by a man named Iizuka Hanji, as the text states, and Iizuka, a retainer of Suruga Dainagon Tadanaga ruled at Ashikaga.

If the reader refers to our coverage of the Tokigawa Jikki for Kanei 2 or 1625, on February 5, Shogun Hidetada gave Echizen Tadanaga a tachi by Yukihiro, a katana by Go, and a wakizashi Yonezawa Yoshimitsu.

Hidenaga in return, gave Hidetada a tachi by Kiku Ichimonji, a katana by Kiku Ichimonji, and a wakizashi by Iizuka Yoshimitsu.

This Iizuka Yoshimitsu is the Iizuka Toshiro. Tadanaga and Hidenaga are the same man.

The blade was in the Shogunate collection until the time of the compilation of the Meibutsu Cho, however, since then, it left that collection and has been lost since that time.

YAGEN TOSHIRO

薬研藤四郎

Owner: Lord Nobunaga Gyobutsu

Length: 8 sun 3 bu

Owned by Hatakeyama Owari no Kami Masanaga.

On the 9th of April in Meio 9 (1500) the Castle of Masanaga at Shokakuji in Kawachi Province was besieged by the combined forces of Hosokawa Masamoto and Hatakeyama Yoshitoyo. Masanaga tried to end his life with this tanto and tried three successive times to disembowel himself with it, but the tanto just would not

pierce his belly, so feeling that this blade was not what it was thought to be, and that even the tanto had forsaken its master, so he threw it aside, and in doing so, it pierced a yagen (lantern) which was nearby. It had pierced the yagen completely through, and it was thought that the blade had not wished to part with its owner. Tange Tanzo no Kami took an unokubi tsukuri wakizashi, and twice thrust it into his midsection, then taking this blade, he handed it to Masanaga saying that this one has a keen cutting edge and he ended his life with this. This was in the evening.

On the 10th of January of Genki 4 (1573) when Matsunaga Danjo with his son visited Nobunaga at Gifu in Owari, this blade was given to Nobunaga.

The blade went through the fire of Honoji Temple.

Yamanaka Note

This blade is recorded in the Hatakeyama Ki and the comments regarding the blade seem to have been taken from this record. The blade formerly, prior to Hatakeyama, was in the Ashikaga Shogunate collection, as it is recorded in the Meitoku Ki of Ashikaga Shogun Yoshimitsu, who carried this blade along with the famous Futatsu Mei tachi by Norimune.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi got hold of this blade after the remains of Honoji Temple were searched, however, the blade has been lost since that time, as there seems to be no record of this blade in any of the Tokugawa records.

So, as it was a Nobunaga Gyobutsu at the very start of this, the blade must have been a very famous and important one during the pre-Tokugawa days.

HIGUCHI TOSHIRO

樋口藤四郎

Owner: Gyobutsu

Length: 8 sun

Value: 7,000 kan

Owned by Higuchi-Ya of Sakai in Senshu.

It was obtained by Ishida Jibu Shou and given to Lord Hidetsugu. Lord Kyogoku Takatsugu received it and left it to Wakasa no Kami. It was presented to Lord Iemitsu.

It has very little kaeri.

There is a Shu Han by Koshin.

Yamanaka Note

Higuchi Ya was a very rich merchant in Sakai who made his wealth dealing in trade with China during the pre-Tokugawa days.

Kyogoku is the younger brother of Matsumaru, who was one of the mistresses of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and had his fief at Otsu in Omi Province. After the Sekigahara Battle, he was moved to Obama in Wakasa Province. The blade being left to Wakasa no Kami refers to Takatsugu's son, Tadataka. Wakasa no Kami had his fief in Izumo Province as well as Iki Island, and was a brother-in-law to Shogun Hidetada. Koshin refers to Honami Koshin, the elder brother of Koji. He was one of the Mekiki of the early Honami during the pre-Tokugawa days.

TOKUGAWA JIKKI

PART XXIII

TENNA 3, 1683

February 7

Ogasawara Daisuke Nagatane, as a legacy from his father Shinano no Kami Nagakatsu, presents a Katana by Bizen Nagamitsu.

Okubo Awaji no Kami Norifuku, as a legacy from his father Ukyo Norikatsu, presents a wakizashi by Nobukuni.

February 9

A ceremony is held in the court in Kyoto. In honor of the event, the Shogun sends a ceremonial sword to the court and a tachi by Sanekane to the crown Prince.

February 25

An offering is made to the Grand Shrine at Ise, a tachi by Unji 装次, and 10 mai of gold to the Inner Shrine. A tachi by Nagamitsu and 10 mai of gold is presented to the outer shrine.

March 27

Princes and Nobles from Kyoto arrive with gifts from the court. A tachi with its catalog is from the court, a tachi with its catalog is from the Empress, a tachi from each of the two cloistered emperors, and also a tachi with its catalog from the crown prince.

Prince Udaisho Sadayoshi and Prince Saisho Chujo Shigenori each give a tachi with a catalog. Prince Sadayoshi, in appreciation for having received an increase in his fief, and Prince Shigenori for being allowed to rule over his family.

April 4

Sakai Katsunosuke Tadatane, as a legacy from his father Yamato no Kami Tadakuni, presents a katana by Enju Kunitoki 延壽國時.

May 13

Sakakibara Toranosuke Masakuni, as a legacy from his father Shikibu Daisuke Masatomo, presents a katana by Bizen Morie.

Oda Tomono Nagaaki presents a katana by Miike on the event of his receiving a new post.

June 19

Nakayama Kenmotsu Nobunari, as a legacy from his father Ichinosho Nobuyuki, presents a katana by Bizen Kanehira 備前包平. Nobuyuki was an elder minister of the Mito Tokugawa.

July 10

Doi Naiki Toshikazu, as a legacy from his father Noto no Kami Toshifusa, presents a katana by Bizen Sanenaga.

Matsudaira Awa no Kami Tadachika, as a legacy from his father Iga no Kami Tadateru, presents a katana by Bizen Kunimune.

July 25

Abe Bungo no Kami Masatake is called before the Shogun and is commended for having recently issued an edict regarding "heirs assuming family control" and receives a katana by Bizen Sanenaga.

August 22

Mizoguchi Tatewaki Masachika, as a legacy from his father Iyo no Kami Masayoshi, presents a katana by Soshu Yukimitsu 相州行光.

Mori Gonsaburo Tadahiro, as a legacy from his father Kyobu Shou Mototomo, presents a wakizashi by Bizen Ichimonji.

October

A tachi by Sukenori and a horse is offered to the Shrine at Nikko.

December

An edict is issued this month, that even though a person may be employed by a daimyo, if that person's profession is as a Sarugaku dancer, he is not to carry a sword. This applies to those who are painters as well.

Among the populace, if someone may be a Goto (of the mint and the Kinko) or Honami (appraiser and sword polisher), they may not carry swords, and this restriction is to be applied to all areas. If a man may be deranged, if he is a commoner, he is not to carry a sword. If a fight breaks out among the Sarugaku dancers they are to be severely punished.

Note: Sarugaku dancers use swords in their dances.

During this year.....

May 27: The shodai Bizen Yukihiro dies at the age of 66.

Jumyo (nidai or second generation) receives the title of Hokyo and changes his name to Koansai.

Sometime during this year Honami Kokan is born.

Sometime during this year the 5th generation Yasutsugu is born.

JOKYO 1, 1684

January 5

An offering of a ceremonial sword and 5 mai of gold for a horse is presented to the Sanno Shrine by the Shogun.

February 10

Itakura Chikuzen no Kami Shigenao, presents a katana by Sa Hiroyuki in appreciation for his new post.

Kato Magota Akihide, as a legacy from his father Kuranosuke Akitomo, presents a katana by Bizen Motoshige.

March 5

Hotta Shimofusa no Kami Masanaga, for having written the new edict on wearing of clothes, receives a katana by Nobukuni.

March 9

Princes and Nobles meet the Shogun. Prince Dainagon Masanaga gives a tachi with its catalog.

April 7

Yonezu Ise no Kami, as a legacy from his father Dewa no Kami Tadamori, presents a ko-wakizashi by Nobukuni.

June 23

Ota Bitchu no Kami Sukenao, as a legacy from his father Settsu no Kami Suketsugu, presents a katana by Soshu Yukimitsu 相州行光.

August 10

Toda Unemenosho Ujisada, as a legacy from his father Higo no Kami Ujiaki, presents a katana by Chudo Rai Mitsukane 中堂来光包.

October 9

The construction of the new quarters for the Shogun is completed, and for his efforts in the construction, the chief page, Okubo Sado no Kami Tadataka, receives a katana by Hojoji.

October 13

Aoyama Harima no Kami Yukitada, as a legacy from his grandfather, Daizen no Suke Yukitoshi, presents a Katana by Bizen Morie備前守家.

October 19

Wakisaka Chujo Shosuke Yasumasa, in appreciation for his new post, presents a wakizashi by Bizen Kanemitsu.

Ishikawa Kichijiro Norisuke, the eldest son of Mimasaka no Kami Norimasa, presents a katana by Tanshu Kunimitsu舟州國光 as a legacy from his father.

October 27

Hotta Shimofusa no Kami Masanaka, as a legacy from his father Chikuzen no Kami Masatoshi, presents a katana by Kuniyuki.

Itakura Tanomo Shigetaka, as a legacy from his father Etchu no Kami Shigenobu, presents a katana by Ichimonji.

November 26

Those who were responsible for writing the edict on the usage of the seal receive rewards. Hoshibana Itakura Inaba no Kami Tominari receives a katana by Bizen Chikakage. Hoshibana and Jisha Bugyo Honda Awaji no Kami Tadachika receive a Katana by Bizen Shigemitsu備前重光.

April 19

Goto Joken dies at age 19.

May 13

Kawaji Tomochika, the 5th generation 五代河治 友間 tsuba smith of Choshu, dies at the age of 40. He was named Chojiro Gonnosuke, and he was the son of the third Tomochika. After taking the Tomochika name, he received a fief to support 4 men plus 7 Koku of rice.

Sometime during this year....

Kobayashi Hayanoshin Kunitaru dies.

The second Hizen Yukihiro receives the title of Dewa no Kami.

Inaba Masayasu slays the elder Minister Hotta Masatoshi within the castle grounds.

JOKYO 2, 1685

January 15

The Shogun offers a tachi and 5 mai of gold for a horse to the Sanno Shrine.

February 1

The chief abbots of Bishamon Do Temple and Myohoji Temple both present a tachi with its catalog, incense, and scrolls to the Shogun.

February 15

The Shogun gives a tachi by Awataguchi Kuniyasu, a wakizashi by Rai Kunitoshi, and a ko-wakizashi by Shintogo Kunimitsu to a recently born daughter in the Shogunate.

March 6

Lord Chunagon Mitsusada and Lord Chujo Tsunanori visit the castle, and Tsunanori presents a tachi by Bizen Nagamitsu. Mitsusada presents a tachi by Bizen Suemori.

During the exchange of cups of sake, Tsunanori receives a katana by Yoshihiro and the wakizashi Shuhan Masamune (meibutsu).

Mitsusada receives a katana by Taema and the wakizashi Musashi Masamune 武戴正宗 (meibutsu).

May

Abe Bungo no Kami Masatake, as a legacy from his father Yokutsu Nyudo Masayoshi, presents a wakizashi by Rai Kunimitsu.

July 8

Prince Tenshin, chief abbot of Komon Temple, returns to Edo, meets the Shogun and gives him a tachi, cash for a horse, 10 rolls of linen, and an ink slate.

July 26

Matsudaira Iga no Kami Tadachika, page to the Shogun, receives a katana by Yamato Kanenaga大和包永 from the Shogun himself.

July 27

Matsudaira Hoki no Kami Tsunakiyo, in appreciation for being allowed to continue to rule over his hereditary fief, presents a tachi by Nagamitsu.

Matsudaira Sagami no Kami Mitsunaka, in appreciation for his new post, presents a wakizashi by Yoshimitsu.

Maeda Kunai Toshihiro as a legacy from his father Ukon Daiu Toshimoto, presents a wakizashi by Nobukuni.

September 21

Ishikawa Mondo Fusashige, as a legacy from his father Wakasa no Kami Masayoshi, presents a katana by Bizen Masatsune.

October 13

Aoyama Shimozuke no Kami Tadashige, as a legacy from his father Izumi no Kami Tadakatsu, presents a katana by Bizen Unji.

Rokugo Shonosuke Masaharu, as a legacy from his father Dado no Kami Masanobu, presents a katana by Joshu Kanenaga.

Matsudaira Sado no Kami Yasunao, in appreciation for his new post, presents a katana by Nakajima Rai.

October 16

Tsuchiya Sagami no Kami Masanao, the Magistrate of Kyoto, takes leave to go to his post, and receives a katana by Bizen Motoshige from the Shogun himself before departing.

November 13

Sakuma Oribe Katsutoshi, as a legacy from his father Awa no Kami Katsutoyo, presents a wakizashi by Mihara Shigeyasu三原重安.

November 20

An offering of a tachi by Yamashiro Nobukuni and a horse with a saddle is given to Nikko Shrine.

December 22

Naito Noto no Kami Yoshitaka, as a legacy from his father Sakyo Daiu Yoshiyasu, presents a katana by Kunitoshi.

During this year.....

August 9: Goto Joshu dies. He is the son of Zenjo.

Miyoshi Nagamichi dies at the age of 53.

Sword smiths who were active at this time were:

SHIMADA HIROSUKE

ECHIZEN KANENORI

SHINANO NO KAMI NOBUYOSHI

FUJISHIMA TOMOSHIGE

ISE NO KAMI KUNITERU

HIZEN KAWACHI NO KAMI MASAHIRO

MUSASHI FUJIWARA KUNIYASU

TSUDA OMI NO KAMI SUKENAO

NAMINOHIRA YAMATO NO KAMI YASUKUNI

KOBAYASHI HAYANOSHIN KUNITERU

YAMATO NO KAMI TADAYUKI

SHINANO DAIJO TADAKUNI

HORIKAWA FUJIWARA TOSHINAGA