



Tō-Ron

Monthly Newsletter of the

Northern California Japanese Sword Club

December 2006

NCJSC
P.O. Box 7156
San Carlos, CA 94070
www.ncjsc.org
info@ncjsc.org

Next General Meeting: 12:30 to 3:30pm

December 17, 2006



Review of the October Meeting

The theme of the October meeting was tanto Sugata, (shape). Over a dozen tanto were put on a table in random order with the idea that we would, as a group, determine the age based on the shape. The blades were then re-arranged from oldest to newest, and the details were then revealed and discussed

Normally it is difficult to extend the events of the meetings to our non-local members but this month the reader is asked make their own determination of age and the answers will be provided in the January 2007 Tō-Ron.

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- Monthly Topics to 04/2007
- Directors & Committees
- Announcements / Requests
- The Tanto
- Bizen Blades of the Muromachi Era, Part I
- Tanto Sugata Exercise, Part I
- Midwest Token Kai
- NTHK Shinsa 2007

December Meeting Topic: Sui (Water), Second element

This month we move to the next element of five; water. In keeping with that we are looking for blades and fittings from Mito, also Mizuta, Mizukage or Suishinshi if you have them. Fittings with a water theme would also be welcome.

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Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held on the third Sunday of the month on the second floor (outside stairs). Directions can be found on the club website.

Japanese Cultural & Community Center
of Northern California
1840 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94115

Annual Dues

Domestic: \$42.00
Canada: \$50.00
International \$60.00

Dues are due in January of each year.

Contact Information

All messages and inquires should be directed to the Corresponding Secretary.

Northern California Japanese Sword Club
P.O. Box 7156
San Carlos, CA 94070

info@ncjsc.org

2006 Board Members

President Ralph Bell
Corresponding Fred Weissberg
Secretary
Treasurer Sean Sweeny
Program Director Tom Helm
Newsletter editor Bob McCoy
and Publisher
Boards Members Bill Browning
 Duane Hanson

NCJSC Website

The club website contains information on NCJSC history, meetings, membership, gallery, visual glossary, library, sword events, publications and the NCJSC Token-Kai (sword show) details.

<http://www.ncjsc.org>

Factoid

A tanto is one *shaku* in length or 11.93 inches (30.3 cm)

Submitting Articles

Anyone can submit an article for publication in the NCJSC Tō-Ron Newsletter. Members who are not able to attend meetings are encouraged to submit. These can be one page event reports, description of an interesting Japanese sword or related item or topic, ideas for an article not written yet, history topics, study guides or any information that our club members might find interesting.

If accepted for publication you will be contacted with further details, the NCJSC contact information is on the left side of this page.

2006 Meeting Agenda

January	Elections, All things ichi (-, the number “one”)	
February	Iron & Steel: tsuba w/bones, hada, iron fittings, other objects	
March	Silver: fittings, habaki, coins, tsuba, stirrups, inlay	
April	No Meeting —NCJSC Display at the SF Cherry Blossom Festival	
May	Gold: fittings, habaki, coins, tsuba, stirrups, inlay	
June	Shakudo: Any items made of shakudo & different alloys	
July	Bizen-Den Pre-show review , member sales & trading	
August	No Meeting —San Francisco To-Ken Kai Sword Show August 17,18,19 & 20	
September	Brass, Copper. Also Treasures from the 2006 SF To-Ken Kai	
October	Tanto Sugata, what the shape of a tanto tells us about its age	
November	Chi (Earth), first of five elements,	See page 3 For a detailed Description
December	Sui (Water), Second element	
January 07	Ka (Fire). Third element, 2007 Elections	
February 07	Fu (Wind), Fourth element	
March 07	Ku (Heaven), Fifth element	
April 07	NCJSC Cherry Blossom Display (2 days), No General Meeting	

Policy: The NCJSC does not endorse, necessarily agree with or validate the content of articles published in this newsletter. The individual authors are solely responsible for the content of their articles and any statements contained therein. The sole intent of the NCJSC, its board and the membership, is to further the study and appreciation of the Japanese Sword publishing current relevant information for its members.

Notes, Announcements, and Requests, September 2006

Wanted: for research project now in progress; printable images of Hon'Ami Oshigata, Origami, Kin-mei, shu-mei, sayagaki, swords with same and other materials related to the family of sword appraisers. Please contact Tom Helm toryu@toryu-mon.com or the editor of this newsletter.

Wanted: I am working on a research project on Japanese Yanone (arrowheads) and I am trying to collect full images, scans, photographs, dimensions and signatures. If you would like to contribute, please contact Bob McCoy at mccoy@mccoyweb.org

Meeting Topics: November 2006 Through March 2007

Chi (earth)	November 19, 2006
Sui (water)	December 17, 2006
Ka (fire)	January 21, 2007
Fu (wind)	February 18, 2007
Ku (heaven)	March 18, 2007

A BRIEF STUDY OF BIZEN BLADES OF THE MUROMACHI ERA

By Fred Weissberg 02/06

Title	Publication Date
THE ŌEI BIZEN SCHOOL (応永備前)	December, 2006
THE EIKYO-BIZEN SCHOOL (永享備前)	January, 2007
SUE-BIZEN SCHOOL (未備前)	February, 2007

THE TANTO

By Fred Weissberg 09/06

A *tanto* is traditionally described as being a Japanese sword of less than one *shaku* in length. This equates to 30.3 cm or a shade less than 12 inches. *Tanto* existed as early as the Heian Period. Most were utilitarian and made for practical use. Very few fine examples of these *tanto* remain today. *Tanto* came into widespread use after the two attempted invasions by the Mongol fleet in the latter part of the thirteenth century. *Tanto* production at that time was especially prolific in the Soshu tradition of Sagami Province. This Middle Kamakura era marks the beginning of the production of high quality *tanto* being produced by top quality smiths. This shift by skilled smiths to the production of *tanto* occurred not only in the Soshu tradition as mentioned; but also in other schools of sword production as will be explained later.

Tanto shapes varied greatly over the hundreds years from the Heian period to modern times. Prior to the Muromachi Period, we find *hira-zukuri* as the style of choice with the occasional exception of a *kanmuri-otoshi tanto* from Yamato or Yamashiro. Also making their appearance in the late Kamakura Period was the *unokubi-zukuri* and *kata-kiriha-zukuri tanto*. Starting with the middle Muromachi Period we find new shapes of *tanto* such as *moroha-zukuri* and *shobu-zukuri* often produced. More rarely we find *osoraku-zukuri tanto*.

Prior to the Muromachi Period the word *katana* generally referred to a *tanto*. Long blades were called *tachi* or *uchi-katana*. The *koshigatana* (waist-sword) was a sword worn at the waist. From the Kamakura Period on, it was used along with a *tachi* as a *sashizoe* when armor was worn and it had *aikuchi* mountings with no *tsuba*. This *koshigatana* was usually a *tanto*. From the beginning of the Nanbokuchō Period onward, a *wakizashi* was sometimes used in place of a *tanto*.

Small *tanto* that were carried concealed in the robes were called *futokoro katana* (breast swords). They also used *aikuchi* mountings with a round *kojiri* and no *kaeshitsuno* (small hook on the side of the *saya* to hold it in the sash).

Tanto changed in size, shape, and function over the many eras. While, as we stated, one *shaku* is considered to be the maximum length for a *tanto*; as with every subject in the field of Japanese swords, we find exceptions. Most common are the *sun-nobi* (extended) *tanto* of the early Muromachi Period.

The following is a rough breakdown of various *tanto* characteristics, shapes, and some of the better-known *tanto* makers over the various eras:

HEIAN PERIOD – EARLY KAMAKURA PERIOD (987-1231)

Tanto existed as early as the Heian Period. Most were utilitarian and made for practical use. Very few fine examples of these *tanto* remain today. Given the natural rate of consumption and everyday use of these *tanto*, this is not surprising. Those surviving tend to be *hira-zukuri* with a *ha-watari* of less than 24 cm. They were *uchi-zori* and, as stated, very few survived.

In the early Kamakura Period, the most common *tanto* type is *uchi-zori*, but on occasion we find some with a slight *sori*. Some of the well known makers of these early *tanto* were the Awataguchi School 粟田口 (i.e. Kunitomo 国友), Hisakuni 久友, and Bungo Yukihiro 豊後行平.

MID-KAMAKURA PERIOD (1232-1287)

Starting in the middle of the Kamakura Period we find a number of top quality smiths who specialized in the production of high quality *tanto*. Many of these *tanto* survive today. They still tended to be *hira-zukuri* like earlier *tanto* with a *ha-watari* of 21-26 cm. The average *nagasa* of these *tanto* tended to be on the high side of this scale at around 25-26 cm. Also during this time period, *kanmuri-otoshi tanto* make their first appearance in the Yamato and Yamashiro Schools.

Some of the leading *tanto* smiths of this period were of the Awtaguchi School 粟田口 (Norikuni 則国, Kuniyoshi 国吉, Yoshimitsu 吉光), Rai Kunitoshi 来国寿俊, and the Shintogo school 新藤五 (Kunimitsu 国光 and Kunihiro 国弘). It should be noted that some of these smiths, particularly Awtaguchi Kuniyoshi 粟田口国吉, were known to have made *tanto* in many various sizes and shapes. Examples of his various shapes are attached as appendix A.

LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (1288-1333)

Tanto during this period tended to be on the long side, say about 26 cm. For the most part these *tanto* had no *sori* or even slight *uchi-zori*. These slightly longer and stronger *tanto* were a reflection of the martial spirit of the late Kamakura Period when martial skills and battle necessities started dictating changes in sword shapes.

The *hamon* of the *tanto* of this period is like that of *tachi* with the exception of the lack of *choji midare hamon*. The *gunome midare* and *suguha* of such smiths as Nagamitsu and Kagemitsu is representative of the types of *hamon* produced on Bizen *tanto*. Yamashiro blades continued to show the *suguha* of former times for the most part, but we find exceptions in the *midare hamon* of some of the Rai smiths.

The smiths of Yamato produced *tanto* with a *suguha* based *hamon* that also contained *gunome* and *hotsure*. The Soshu smiths most often produced *tanto* with a *midare hamon*. One notable exception is the fantastic *suguha* produced by arguably the greatest *tanto* maker of these times, Shintogo Kunimitsu 新藤五国光.

While *hira-zukuri* was still the norm, new shapes were appearing in the various schools and it might be best to breakdown the various prominent *tanto* sword smiths by school and styles of *tanto* produced.

- A. *Hira-zukuri tanto* with a length of about 28cm, *mu-zori*, or very shallow *sori*. Width that is a little wider than the middle Kamakura Period: -- The Rai 来 school (Kunimitsu 国光, Kunitogu 国次, Sadamune 貞宗, e.g)
- B. *Hira-zukuri tanto*, with a *mihaba* (width) that is wide in comparison to the length. Thin *kasane* and a shallow *sori*: - Yukimitsu 行光
- C. *Kanmuri otoshi-zukuri* or *unokubi-zukuri tanto* with a thin *kasane* and *mu-zori*: -- The Taima school 当麻, Ryokai 了戒, Shikkake Norinaga 尻懸則長, e.g.
- D. *Katakiriha-zukuri* with *mu-zori* or very shallow *sori*: -- Sadamune 貞宗, Osafune Kagemitsu 長船景光, Takagi Sadamune 高木貞宗, e.g.

NANBOKUCHO PERIOD (1334-1389)

The period of war between the Northern and Southern Courts brought with it a new style in swords. While works of the previous periods tended to be elegant, we now find a movement toward a more exaggerated grandeur. This included the shapes of *tanto*. *Tanto* reached lengths of 30 cm and more. The line between what we call a *sun-nobi tanto* and a *ko-wakizashi* become somewhat blurred. *Wakizashi* came into being that tended to be broad and some exceed 40 cm in length. The *kasane* is thin and the *sori* is slight. This style is seen in the works of Akihiro 秋広 and Hiromitsu 広光 of the Soshu tradition. The Soshu tradition made famous by Masamune 正宗 became popular throughout the country.

Rarely we find small *tanto* of smiths such as Samonji 左文字, but they tended to be a miniature version of the typical *wakizashi* mentioned above.

Just as the shape of *tanto* in this period reflected the trend toward exaggerated grandeur, so did the temper of many of the leading smiths. Most notable was the *hitatsura* temper of the Soshu smiths Hiromitsu 広光 and Akihiro 秋広. As a rule we find many blades with a robust *notare-midare hamon* during this period.

Some of the leading sword smiths of the Nanbokucho period:

- A. *Hira-zukuri ko-wakizashi* and *o-tanto* with a *ha-watari* of about 30 cm, rounded *fukura*, thin *kasane*, and *saki-zori*. - The Hasebe 長谷部 school (Kunishige 国重, Kuninobu 国信); Nobukuni 信国; the Masamune 正宗 school (Masamune 正宗, Sadamune 貞宗, Hiromitsu 広光, Akihiro 秋広); the Kanemitsu 兼光 school (Kanemitsu 兼光, Tomomitsu 倫光); the Omiya Bizen 大宮 school (Morikage 盛景, Morishige 盛重); and the Shizu 志津 school (Shizu 志津, Kanetomo 兼友, Kanetsugu 兼次).
- B. Other major sword groups that had outstanding smiths – The Rai 来 group; the Heianjo 平安城 group; the Sa 左 group of Chikuzen; The Fujishima 藤島 Group of Kaga; and others.

MUROMACHI PERIOD (1392-1572)

With the reconciliation of the Northern and Southern courts during the rule of the Ashikaga Shoguns, the Muromachi period began. This ushered in a golden age of culture and art, but is generally considered to be a low point in the history of quality sword production. While the court was unified, the country as a whole was torn by constant civil war particularly after the death of the third Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshimitsu.

Prior to the Muromachi Period the word *katana* generally referred to *tanto*. Long blades were called *tachi* or *uchikatanana*. We find *tanto* surviving from this time that emulate the middle Kamakura style, i.e. blades of 21-24 cm with *uchizori* and others with the Nanbokucho *sun-nobi* length. After the middle of the Muromachi period, there appeared many rather broad, *saki-zori* blades of less than 36 cm.

Some of the leading *tanto* smiths of the early Muromachi period (1392-1428):

- A. *Hira-zukuri tanto, ha-watari* of less than 30 cm in length with *mu-sori*. – The Oei Bizen 応永備前 school (Yasumitsu 康光, Morimitsu 盛光); Nobukuni 信国.
- B. Kanmuri-otoshi-zukuri with mihaba in proportion and mu-sori. - Tegai Kanezane 手搔包真; the Nio 二王 school (Kiyonaga 清永, Kiyokage 清景).

Some of the leading *tanto* smiths of the later Muromachi period (1467-1572):

- A. *Hira-zukuri, ha-watari* of about 23-26 cm, *uchi-zori*, similar to the *tanto* of the Kamakura period. – The Sue-Seki 末関 school (Kanesada 兼定, Kanetsune 兼常); Osafune Sukesada 長船祐定; Shimada Yoshisuke 島田義助; and Tegai Kanekiyo 手搔包清.
- B. *Hira-zukuri, ha watari* of 20-23 cm, *uchi-zori*, extremely narrow *sakihaba*, very thick *motokasane*. – The Sue-Bizen 末備前 school (Sukesada 祐定, Norimitsu 則光, Tadamitsu 忠光).
- C. *Moroha-zukuri, ha-watari* of 20-23 cm, shallow *sori*. – The Sue Bizen 末備前 school; the Sue-Seki 末関 school; The Sue Mihara 末三原 school.

THE AZUCHI-MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1573-1643)

The final unification of Japan started with Oda Nobunaga when he entered Kyoto in 1568 on behalf of the final Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshiaki. He first defeated the enemies of the Shogun and then wrested power from the Shogunate for himself. Nobunaga's unification efforts were cut short by his assassination in 1582 by Akechi Mitsuhide. One of Nobunaga's generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi took up the reins and continued with the unification. Tokugawa Ieyasu completed the final unification of Japan in 1615 with the summer campaign against Osaka castle.

The Momoyama period marks a major turning point in the history and development of Japanese swords. The end of the long period of civil wars also brought about the end of the need for vast quantities of mass-produced, low quality swords. There was a marked return to the development of artistic blades of beauty and strength reminiscent of the masterpieces of the Kamakura and Nanbokuchō periods.

Along with the decrease in the required number of swords, the general style of fighting also changed. Gone were the mounted Samurai with their long *tachi* slung from the waist. Massive armies of Samurai fighting on foot were the norm, and these warriors wore their swords thrust edge upward through their sash. Accordingly the longer, older *tachi* were shortened to accommodate this new style of wear. As the *daisho* of two swords became the style, the *wakizashi* pretty much replaced the *tanto* as the second sword of this daisho. Thus the need for *tanto* greatly diminished and high-ranking Samurai probably used them primarily for wear around the home. The many existent high quality *tanto* from earlier periods filled this need and the production of new *tanto* was a low priority for sword smiths.

Another important social change occurring around this time was the shift of sword production from areas where quality ore was available to the castle towns that developed throughout the country. Thus the five Koto schools died out or were diluted with smiths moving to the new economic centers to do their production. *Tanto* were produced in limited numbers and some very skilled smiths ushered in the Shinto era of sword making. One of the most famous was Umetada Myōjū 埋忠明寿 who is considered to be the founder of the Shinto sword making tradition.

Some of the leading *ko-wakizashi* and *tanto* smiths of the Momoyama period:

- A. *Hira-zukuri ko-wakizashi* and *tanto* with a wide *mihaba* and *saki-zori*. This type of blade was an imitation of the *sugata* of the Nanbokucho period, but the *kasane* is thicker, the *saki-zori* is strong, and the *fukura* is much more rounded. – Umetada Myoju 埋忠明寿; the Horikawa 堀川 school (Kunihiro 国広, Kuniyasu 国安, Kunimichi 国路, and Kunisada 国貞); Etchu no Kami Masatoshi 越中守正俊; Tadayoshi I 忠吉; Yasutsugu I 康継; Higo Daijo Sadakuni 肥後大掾貞国; and Kanewaka 兼若.
- B. *Katakiriha-zukuri tanto* with a *ha-watari* of about 30 cm, a wide *mihaba* and shallow *sori*. – Umetada Myoju 埋忠明寿; the Horikawa 堀川 school; Tadayoshi I 忠吉; Yasutsugu I 康継; and Higo Daijo Sadakuni 肥後大掾貞国.

EDO PERIOD (1644-1876)

The Edo period marks a timeline of approximately 250 years of peace under the Tokugawa Shogunate rule. The seat of government was moved to Edo (modern Tokyo) giving this period its name. Just as the Momoyama period may be called “the age of revival” with swords harkening back to the great masterpieces of the Kamakura and Nanbokucho eras; the Edo period marked an extended period of peace where swords were produced with hamon of a florid richness never seen before. This taste was reflected in many *tanto* also.

Also, as with the immediately prior period, *tanto* production was sparse as the demand was low. Unfortunately, the quality of swords started a steady slow decline as the period of peace reigned and military needs decreased. The desires of the rising merchant class created a need for *wakizashi* (they were not allowed to carry *katana*), thus producing an inordinate amount of swords of this type.

There were exceptional smiths during this period, to be sure, but they did not exist in the great numbers that we found in the prior eras of top quality sword production.

Late in the Edo period a sort of sword revival got underway thanks to the smith, Suishinshi Masahide 水心子正秀. He advocated for a return to the quality swords of the past and was instrumental in fermenting a movement to that end. He was an outstanding smith who attracted other able smiths to his cause. Thus in what we call the Shinshinto era of sword production we find many fine examples produced by some of the most talented smiths in history. *Tanto* are more numerous in this latter part of the Edo period and their style represents a revival of the Kamakura and Nanbokucho eras.

- A. Early Edo: The Yamashiro 山城 group (Kinmichi 金道, Yoshimichi 吉道, Masatoshi 正俊, Kunikiyo 国清); the Mushashi 武蔵 group (Yasutsugu 康継, Kotetsu 虎徹); the Echizen 越前 group (Yasutsugu 康継, Sadatsugu 貞継); the Hizen 肥前 group (Tadahiro 忠広, Masahiro 正広, Tadakuni 忠国, Tadayoshi 忠吉);
- B. the Satsuma 薩摩 group (Masakiyo 正清, Yasuyo 安代, Masayoshi 正幸); and others.
- C. Late Edo: *Hira zukuri tanto* with a *ha-watari* of 24-27 cm, proportional *mihaba*, and shallow *uchi-zori*. – The Musashi 武蔵 region smiths (Masahide 正秀, Naotane 直胤, Masayoshi 正義, Tsunatoshi 綱俊, Munetsugu 宗次, Korekazu 是一, Nobuhide 信秀, and others); The Satsuma 薩摩 group (Motohira 元平, Masayuki 正幸, etc.).

THE MEIJI/TAISHO PERIOD (1876-1925)

In the ninth year of Meiji (1876) the government abolished the wearing of swords. This was the death knell for the true Samurai sword. Many *tanto* were produced during and after the start of the Meiji period but they are mere shadows of the great swords that came before.

Tanto production in the Meiji period was continued on the smallest of scales, primarily to create *tanto* for state ceremonies, gifts and dedications for the Imperial Household. These were blades that were never meant for public "consumption".

This was a time of the opening of Japan to the West and the demand for Japanese swords was not one of practical use. Rather it was a souvenir or oddity sought out by the Europeans. We find outstanding *koshirae* produced during these times for the export market and most of the *tanto* found in these high art fittings were little more than metal *tsunagi* used to hold the mounts together. The age of the making of great *tanto* was, for all intents and purposes, over.

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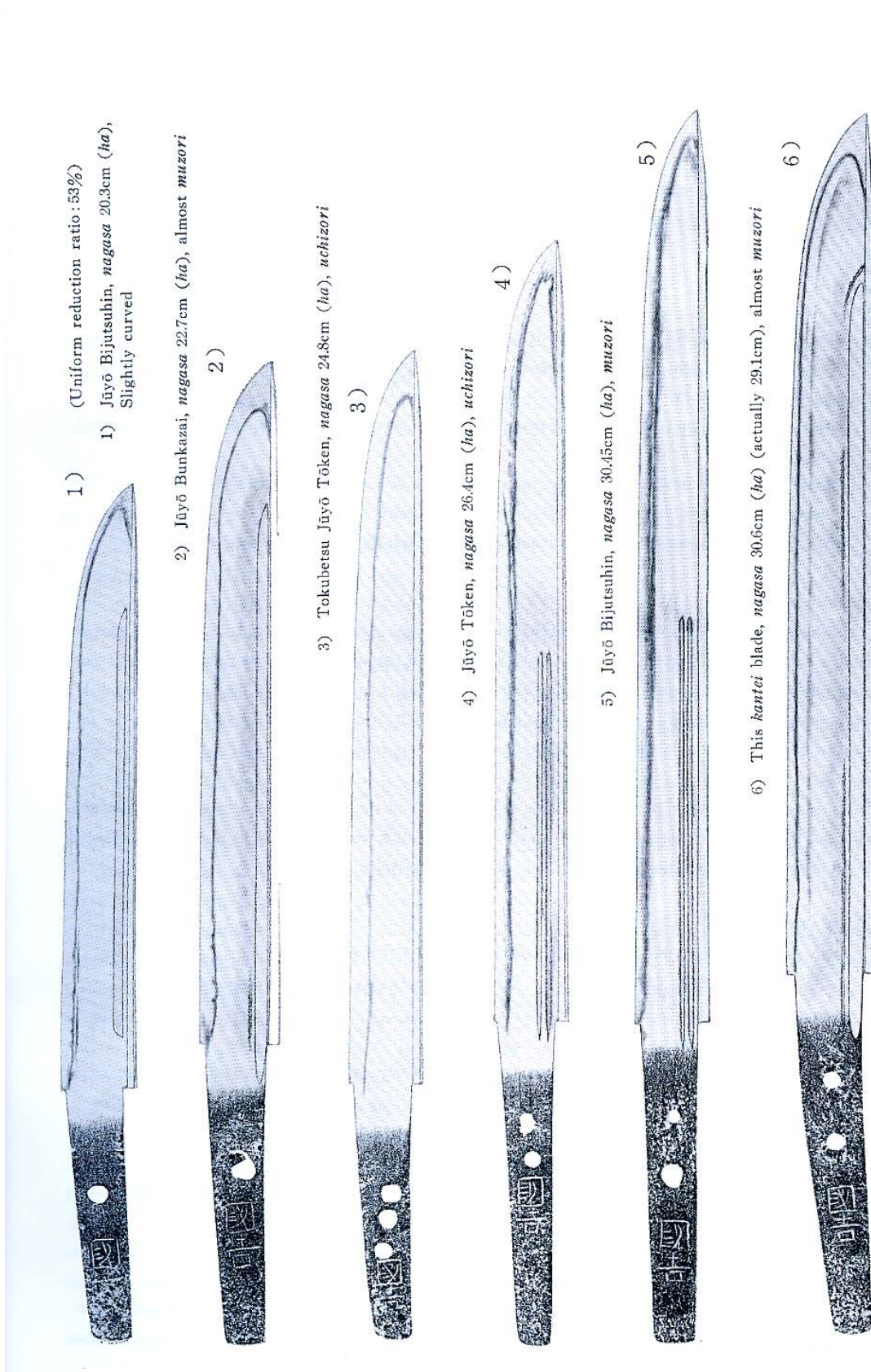
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Appendix A



A BRIEF STUDY OF BIZEN BLADES OF THE MUROMACHI ERA

THE ŌEI BIZEN SCHOOL (応永備前)

By Fred Weissberg 02/06

Part 1

THE ŌEI BIZEN SCHOOL (応永備前)

At the beginning of the Muromachi (室町) period around the Ōei (応永) era (1394) most of the different schools in the Bizen (備前) province were virtually absorbed by the Osafune (長船) School. The Osafune (長船) School had long been the main school in Bizen (備前) province. The various schools gradually lost any distinctive characteristic features they may have had, and began to display the characteristic features of Bizen (備前) workmanship of this period. Ōei-Bizen (応永 備前) is the general term for the Osafune smiths who worked in the Ōei (応永) era (1394-1428). The most famous smiths of this period were Yasumitsu (康光), Morimitsu (盛光), and Moromitsu (師光). They were collectively known as the Ōei no San Mitsu (応永の三光) (three mitsu of the Ōei era).

The characteristics of the Ōei Bizen (応永備前) School are as follows:

- SUGATA: There are *tachi*, *katana*, and *wakizashi* of both *shinogi-zukuri* and *hira-zukuri* form. *Tanto* of less than 30 cm are rare. These smiths tried to copy the *tachi* shape of the Kamakura era but these blades are different in that they have a shallow *saki-sori* rather than a sweeping *koshi-zori*. Generally the *nagasa* of *tachi* will be about 70 cm and *wakizashi* will be about 50 cm. This is the period that marked the beginning of the production of *katana* and *wakizashi*. *Wakizashi* generally have narrow *mihaba*, small *kissaki*, and *saki-zori*.
- JIHADA: The *jigane* is soft and the *jihada* is *mokume-hada* mixed with *O-hada*. Clear *bō-utsuri* appears. Even when the *hamon* is *midareba*, the *utsuri* tends to be *bō-utsuri*. On occasion, *midare-utsuri* can be found also.
- HAMON: It will be *nioi-deki* and tends to be *koshi-no-hiraita midare* mixed with *chōji midare*. The thick *nioi* line is very soft. Also one finds *suguha* mixed with *ko-midare* or straight *suguha*.
- HORIMONO: *Bō-hi* with *soe-bi* or *tsure-bi* are quite common. The top of the *hi* is located just above the *yokote*. The bottom of the *hi* is finished around the *machi*. *Horimono* is often found on *wakizashi* with the design on both sides being the same. *Ken-maki-ryu* or the names of gods and deities are engraved on the *omote* and *ken* with *dokko*, *tsume* or *bonji* on the *ura*. *Bō-hi* with *Soe-bi* or *tsure-bi* whose bottoms are *maru-dome* are usually engraved above the *horimono*.
- NAKAGO: Shorter and less tapered *nakago* with *kurijiri* are found. *Cho-mei* (long signature) including the date is common. We find *katana-mei* becoming common since this marks the beginning of the increase of the production of *katana*.

Can "You the reader place these blades in a proper timeline based solely on the shapes?"

The theme of the October meeting was tanto Sugata, (shape). Over a dozen tanto were put on a table in random order with the idea that we would, as a group, determine the age based on the shape. The blades were then re-arranged from oldest to newest, and the details were then revealed and discussed

Normally it is difficult to extend the events of the meetings to our non-local members but this month the reader is asked make their own determination of age. The blades are numbered from left to right, page 13 to page 17. Mark down the age of the blade on the sheet and try to decide on an order. The full details with large images of these blades will be in the next Tō-Ron newsletter in January, 2007.

These blades were photographed at the October 2006 general meeting, there were more blades photographed than appear in the newsletter. Not all the blades photographed were part of the Sugata exercise. The images have been normalized to 10 inches tall, If the image is multiplied by 1.875 the original height is restored.

Tanto Dimensions

Tanto	Nagasa, Nakago (Inches)	Nagasa, Nakago (cm)
1	8.875, 3.75	22.5, 9.5
2	9.25, 3.75	23.5,9.5
3	9.84, 3.9	25,9.9
4	7.125, 3.25	18.1, 8.3
5	8.625, 3.4375	21.9, 8.7
6	12, 4.5	30.5, 11.4
7	14, 4.75	35.6, 12.1
8	11.25, 3.5	28.6, 8.9
9	11, 3.625	27.9, 9.2
10	12.375, 4.8	31.4, 12.2
11	12.625, 4	32.1, 10.2
12	10.25, 4.625	26, 11.8
13	13.875, 4.75	35.3, 12.1
14	12.4375, 4.375	31.6, 11.1
15	8.063, 3.25	20.5, 8.3
16	11.5, 4	29.2, 10.2
17	11, 5	27.9, 12.7
18	14, 4.75	35.6, 12.1
19	14, 4.5	35.6, 11.4
20	12.5, 4.25	31.8, 10.8



1



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To-Ron

December 2006



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20

BIZEN OSAFUNE MOTOSHIGE

備前長船元重

By Fred Weissberg 09/06



Bizen Osafune Motoshige (備前長船元重) is generally thought to be the son of Morishige (守重) of the Hatakeda School (畠田系). Other texts, however, say that he is the son of Morizane (守真) of the Hatakeda School (畠田系). The earliest dated work of Motoshige (元重) gives a date of Showa (正和) at the end of the Kamakura period. The latest date known is in Jōji (貞治) in the middle of the Nanbokucho period. This would give him a working span of more than fifty years. This has caused great speculation as to whether or not there were actually two generations of smiths by this name. This is similar to the current thinking and debate about Kanemitsu (兼光).

The earlier blades by Motoshige (元重) are done in true Kamakura period style that is of a slender *sugata* with *suguba* of tight *nioi* with *ashi iri* bearing a resemblance to the works of the Aoe (青江) and Yamashiro (山城) smiths. Additionally the signatures are always done in *niji mei* (two character) with the size of the *mei* being rather large. The later works from the time around the Kanō (観応) era are signed with a much smaller signature.

We should keep in mind, however, the changes in the overall style of swords between the Kamakura and Nanbokucho periods; not forgetting that the works of smiths who spanned both periods would naturally change to meet the demands of the changing times. Additionally, the signature becoming smaller could naturally be accounted for by the decrease in the width of the *shinogi-haba* which took place in the Nanbokucho period. As Fujishiro Matsuo pointed out, signing a *tachi-mei* necessarily entailed fitting it between the *shinogi* ridge and the *mune*, thus the size of the *mei* had to be determined by the width of the *shinogi haba*. The fact that Motoshige's (元重) *mei* on *tanto* and *hira-zukuri wakizashi* remained unchanged which seems to verify this line of reasoning of one smith.

Feeding fuel to this fire of the common conception of two generations is that the second generation Motoshige (元重) was historically considered to be one of the three great students of Sadamune (貞宗). This resulted in a number of his works being done in the Bizen-Soden style. Subscribers to this two-generation theory refer to the first Motoshige (元重) as Ko-Motoshige (古元重) and the second generation as Motoshige (元重).

However this controversy turns out, there is agreement that the works of Motoshige (元重) are of the highest quality and he is credited with founding the Motoshige (元重) School of Bizen Den. Smiths of the Motoshige (元重) School include Shigezane (重真) and Motozane (元真). Hereafter in this paper, we will refer to Motoshige (元重) as being the smith whom most consider to be the second generation smith by this name.

- Sugata:** Since there is no doubt that this smith spanned both the end of the Kamakura period and well into the Nanbokucho period, we find two distinct shapes to his blades. Early blades have the graceful slenderness of the Kamakura period while later blades are done in true Nanbokucho *sugata*. That is, the later blades are long, wide and have extended and often very large *kissaki*. *Tachi* are most common and they have *koshi-zori* with a wide *mihaba* and a high *shinogi*. *Wakizashi* tend to be *hira-zukuri*. *Tanto* are rare and the style varies between *hira-zukuri* ones with a wide *mihaba*, *sun-nobi* length, and *saki-zori*; and those that are *mu-sori* and small.
- Jitetsu:** The *kitae* is *itame* mixed *mokume*. Occasionally we will find *masa-gokoro* where the *itame* mixes with *masame*. Dark spots or *jifu* will also be found. *Midare utsuri* will be found.
- Hamon:** The *hamon* will be *nioi* based, as is the case with Bizen works. It will consist of square shaped *kaku-gunome* and *kataochi-gunome* mixed in with the *suguha*. One of the important *kantei* points of this smith is that the inner outline (tops) of the *midare hamon* will make a seemingly straight line as a whole. Further the *hamon* is mixed with more compact *midare* patterns than the works of Kagemitsu (景光) or Kanemitsu (兼光). *Kinsuji* will be seen as well as *ashi, y`o* and *sunagashi*.
- Bōshi:** Motoshige's (元重) *bōshi* is also unique. It will undulate modestly forming a *ko-maru* shape with a short *kaeri* at the tip and give the semblance of a *sansaku* type of *bōshi*. His average *bōshi* has a pointed tip with *kaeri*.
- Nakago:** The tip of the *nakago* will be *kurijiri* and the *yasurimei* will be *katte-sagari* or *sujikai*.
- Horimono:** *Bō-hi* and *futatsu-hi* on *tachi* and *suken* and *bonji* on *ko-wakizashi* are seen.
- Mei:** BISHŪ OSAFUNE MOTOSHIGE
BISHŪ OSAFUNE JŪ MOTOSHIGE

Monthly Kantei Blade



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HANDS ON DISPLAY AND LECTURE

◆ **IMPORTANT JUYO SWORDS**

courtesy of the American Branch of the NBTHK

◆ **IMPORTANT TSUBA**

courtesy of the American Branch of the NBTHK

◆ **SWORD ETIQUETTE**

courtesy of the JSSUS

◆ **MARTIAL ARTS EXHIBITION**

subject to space availability

SHINSA 2007

Nihon Token Hozon Kai

SHINSA: (evaluation)

A team of experts from the NTHK will evaluate sword blades and fittings that make up the handle and other parts of the sword. The team will be headed by Mr. Yoshikawa Eiichi; Curator of Swords for The Japanese Imperial Household Agency. The Shosoin Treasure House in Nara. The Seikado Museum Collection and the polisher for The Imperial Household.

The items will be evaluated for authenticity and if deemed correct or meet the criteria of the Shinsa team, papers will be issued for the item. The papers are issued from Japan a few months later.

COST: \$75. for each item submitted and \$75. additional for each item that papers are issued, for a total of \$150. (\$75. if no papers are issued)

No one will be allowed to submit to the Shinsa except during their reservation time slot. The early reservations have the best chance of receiving their choice of sessions.

The number of reservations is limited, early reservations are recommended.

Shinsa Results Explanations: Each day will feature a question and answer session with the Shinsa team from 6:00-7:00 pm. Anyone submitting items for Shinsa will be able to bring their questions about Shinsa results directly to the Shinsa team. Translations will be provided. The exact time will depend upon when the Shinsa team finishes for the day.

Reservations must be made in advance for each item submitted.

Send \$75. for each item reservation. *Make check payable to; Marc Porpora*

Mail to:

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