



Tō-Ron

Monthly Newsletter of the
Northern California Japanese Sword Club

July 2026

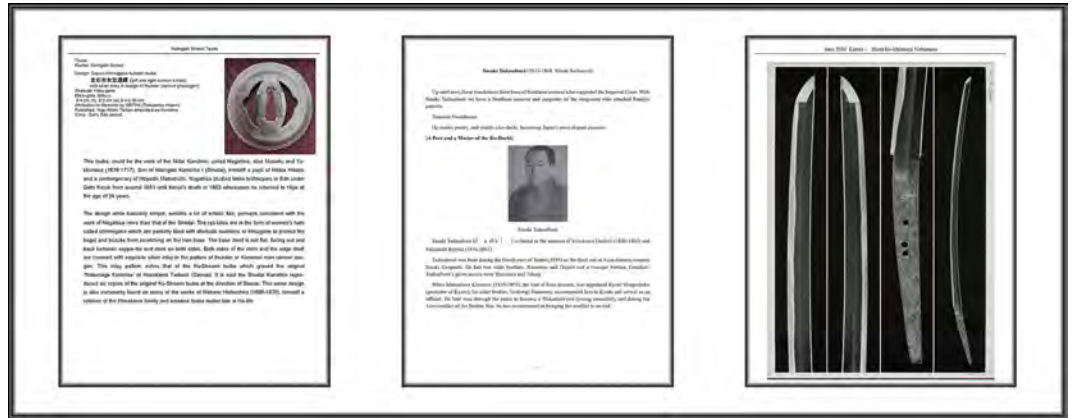
NCJSC
P.O. Box 8149
Foster City, CA 94404
www.ncjsc.org
ncjsc.secretary@gmail.com

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San Francisco 2026
Token Kai

Next General Meeting: 7/19/26

12:30 to 3:30pm



July Meeting: Sho'Ami school Tsuba

This month's theme: Sho'Ami school Tsuba. Did you know there is more than one recognized Sho'Ami group? Let's bring in our best examples and compare and contrast the works of these very prolific groups of artisans.

Don't forget to polish up the eyes for another outstanding Kantei blade to be presented by our own Gordon Robson.

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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: \$60.00
International \$60.00

Dues are due in March of each year.
Send by mail, or use **PayPal** from our website

Contact Information

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

Northern California Japanese Sword Club
P.O. Box 8149
Foster City, CA 94404

ncjsc.secretary@gmail.com

2026 Board Members

President	Tom Helm
Vice President	Fred Weissberg
Corresponding Secretary	Junichi Gondai
Treasurer	Jeff Adachi
Program Director	Tom Helm
Newsletter Editor	Bob McCoy
Boards Members	Steve Crotty Cyril Skladany Gary Wortham Rick Mantegani

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

Bakumatsu (幕末; Japanese pronunciation: [ba.ku.ma.tsu], 'end of the bakufu') were the final years of the Edo period when the Tokugawa shogunate ended. Between 1853 and 1867, under foreign diplomatic and military pressure, Japan ended its isolationist foreign policy known as *sakoku* and changed from a feudal Tokugawa shogunate to the modern empire of the Meiji government. The major ideological-political divide during this period was between the pro-imperial nationalists called *ishin shishi* and the shogunate forces, which included the elite *shinsengumi* swordsmen.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bakumatsu>

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.

2026 Meeting Agenda

January 2026	<u>NCJSC Elections</u> , 2026 is the year of the fire horse
February	Kirin as theme in fittings
March	Ho-o bird in fittings
April	No General Meeting - NCJSC Cherry Blossom Display,
May	Dragons
June	Shishi & mainline Goto
July	Sho'Ami school Tsuba
August	No General Meeting NCJSC Annual To-Ken Kai (sword show)
September	TBD
October	TBD
November	TBD
December	Year In Review" - bring your new acquisitions from 2025
January 2027	<u>NCJSC Elections</u> ,

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.

Sunday In-person Meetings on Zoom*

We have been attempting to present the Sunday meetings on Zoom. For those who are interested in attending Sunday meetings virtually, we are planning to use the dedicated Zoom meeting ID below for all monthly meetings. The plan is to begin the zoom session at **1:00 PM PACIFIC STANDARD TIME** - please remember we are in California folks.

Club meeting Zoom info:

Sunday Club Meeting ID: 885 7539 7080

Passcode: 1868

*Note that due to technical issues not limited to internet, hardware, or personnel, we cannot guarantee that the meeting will be broadcast via zoom. We ask for your understanding and patience if you experience issues when attempting to join our meetings online.

If you are unable to connect

An attempt to reach out to the following emails addresses may alert us to an issue:

ncjsc.secretary@gmail.com

ncjsc.president@gmail.com

Monthly Zoom Meetings for members:

Our Zoom meetings for all members - below you will find an invitation - we're going to schedule the meetings for 17:00 on the third Monday of the month - this may change based on participation. There will be a multiple choice quiz as part of the presentation but I hope you will send me your bids before the 20th of this month.

Thank you,

Thomas C Helm
President, Northern California Japanese Sword Club

June 2026 Zoom Kantei Answer

A joint work by Tadahiro and 3rd Gen Tadayoshi.

Northern California Japanese Sword Club is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: NCJSC Online Kantei
Time: July 20, 2026 05:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)
Every month on the Third Mon, 12 occurrence(s)

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Monthly: [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZAsdOqqqT0qEtWGEF-qEUHO7kNqT2978nxh/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGsrzgpGNOTsBGGRpwIBYjCb-rwtiFfj7dqzrDTjF2VyyvZYelsI4YtSY-I](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZAsdOqqqT0qEtWGEF-qEUHO7kNqT2978nxh/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGsrzgpGNOTsBGGRpwIBYjCb-rwtiFfj7dqzrDTjF2VyyvZYelsI4YtSY-I)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84133276081?pwd=THVYRkMlYWVUWg0OEtcZlgrb0Nidz09>

Meeting ID: 841 3327 6081

Passcode: Keio1865

One tap mobile

+16699006833,,84133276081#,,, *37028146# US (San Jose)

+16694449171,,84133276081#,,, *37028146# US

Dial by your location

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 669 444 9171 US

+1 719 359 4580 US

+1 253 205 0468 US

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 360 209 5623 US

+1 386 347 5053 US

+1 507 473 4847 US

+1 564 217 2000 US

+1 646 931 3860 US

+1 689 278 1000 US

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 305 224 1968 US

+1 309 205 3325 US

Meeting ID: 841 3327 6081

Passcode: 37028146

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/keIwoMd6BM>

In the past year the NCJSC has moved from a printed newsletter to an all electronic format, in that same time we have instituted and new kantei study program for the benefit of our members. This program has three components; Shijo Kantei, Zoom Kantei and in-person hands-on kantei.

Our **Shijo kantei** or “paper kantei” program is otherwise known as “Hon’Ami Koji’s Kantei Kyoshitsu” this is because the program comes from Hon’Ami Koji Sensei of Kamakura, Japan. Hon’Ami Sensei being a 24th generation polisher in the family tradition and head of the local NBTHK branch. In the past year we have looked at mainline Soshu, Hasebe, Enju, Unji of Bizen, Nanki Shigekuni, Inoue Shinkai and others.

Zoom kantei – popular with our out of town members this is our online program that lets you join us for live study from the comfort of your own home. Though many covid restrictions have been lifted we intend to continue this class due in part to its popularity. In the past year we have looked at the schools of Ichimonji, mainline Osafune, Hasebe, Yoshii, and Oei Bizen among others.

In-person hands-on kantei at our regular monthly meetings. This is not a new program, in fact we have been providing this study opportunity for our members each month for over thirty years! In that time we have seen perhaps every major artist in the world of nihonto excepting perhaps Masamune himself.

Each of these programs stands on it’s own and provides incredible insight and value for the student of nihonto. However we would like to propose the following approach; Starting with the Kantei Kyoshitsu, you can see the Japanese descriptions in the original Japanese side by side with an English translation this allows you to start to learn the terms and apply them to known artists work, it can also be used as a tool for learning Japanese as it is applied in the world of nihonto, lastly in the case where the terms are not translated it is an opportunity to refer to your NTHK Novice course and the glossary there for more complete descriptions.

Next is the Zoom kantei. This is a full course of nihonto education designed to take you from the beginning to the stage where you have the tools for in-person kantei. There are no curve balls thrown here and as students we all learn together. The focus is on one or two artists each month with discussion of the subject artists work, what other artists may have done similar work, how to get to the correct answer and strategies for playing the kantei “game”. This is often supplemented with examples of the subject artists work from the Juyo To-Ken Nado Zufu and other sources. Very often we are joined by Professor Gordon Robson from Japan providing for an unprecedented level of instruction found nowhere else.

These first two may be seen as time on the “practice range” and at our monthly meetings we have the opportunity to play hard ball just as they do at kantei meetings in Japan. You may choose to bid individually or to work as a team, the rules are the same as in Japan and the swords we see are the same or better than one might encounter at a meeting there. Granted it may make for a long day but it is always worth it to remain until “the reveal”, and the setsume (explanation) never fails to provide new insight into well-known artists. **Join us.**

Question 61 - Answer

Problem, May 2026

Answer: July 2026

Shinogi-zukuri mihaba koroai, yaya saki-bosori gimi de kokissaki, moto ni funbari-naku gyo no mune, Kasane koroai de sori takai sugata, omote-ura bohi nakago e kakinagashi to nari hisaki noboru, nagasa 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu (70 cm) sori 8 bu (2.4 cm) . kitae koitame tsumite ji-nie bettori to shite midare utsuri migoto ni tatsu. Hamon nioi hon-I, yakihaba sota ni hitoshiiku hirome ni choji to gunome midare wo majie, hachu yo no hataraki ooku, moto no ho kozumi kagen nite choji-midare kawazuko midare wo nigiyaka ni majie, boshi fukaku komaru sagari tonaru. Nakago wa osuriage mumei de, ana 3 ko saki-giri tonaru, ko-kiwame sayagaki aru, yu-to de aru.

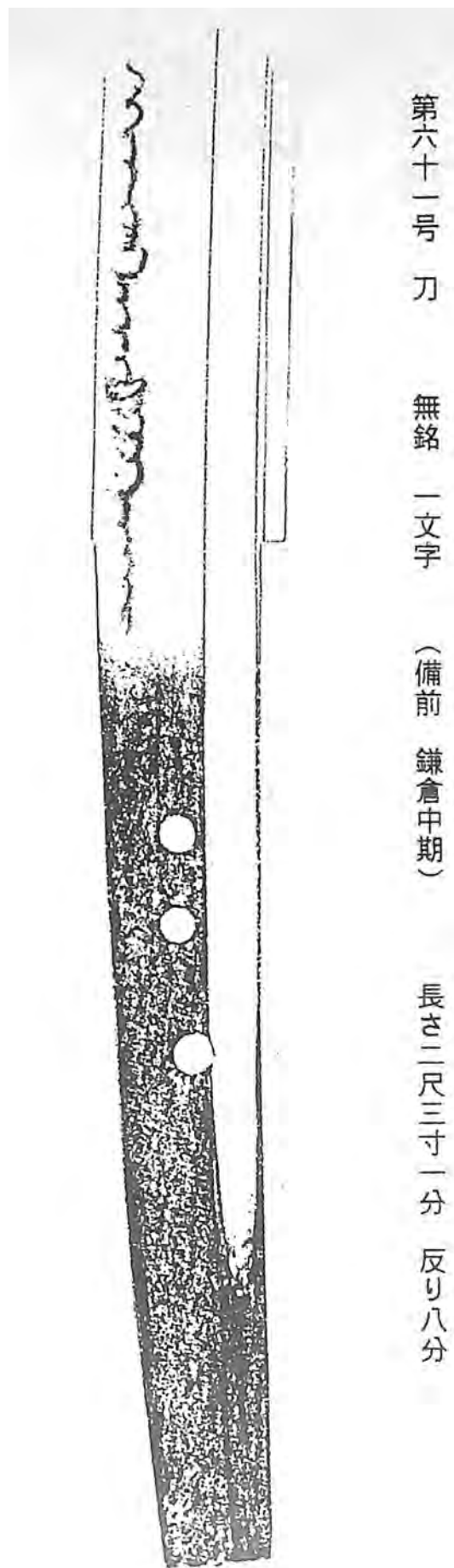
This month's blade is shinogi-zukuri, the width is normal, the tip is a bit slender becoming ko-kissaki, there is no funbari (spreading) at the base, there is an iori-mune, thickness is normal, curvature is deep, On the obverse and reverse there are bohi which extend into the nakago the ends of the hi extend above the yokote. The length is 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu (70 cm) curvature 8 bu (2.4 cm) the forging is done in a tight koitame that is thickly covered in nie, midare utsuri splendidly stands out, The hamon is presented in nioi-deki, the width of the tempering is evenly presented with choji and midare gunome mixed in, within the ha there are a great deal of yo active, toward the base choji-midare and kawazuko-choji are energetically part of the mix, the boshi is deeply tempered ending in komaru set low. The osuriage nakago is unsigned, there are three mekugi-ana the end is kiri, there is a sayagaki giving an old attribution, it is an exceptional sword.

Answer:

This sword carries an old Hon'Ami attribution to "ichimonji". If we follow the old I-Ro-Ha method of kantei and apply it to this sword, then we start off with ｲ “from Sugata we judge the age of the sword” this blade then with ordinary width and though osuriage still has fairly deep curvature near the base of the sword (Koshi) tapering to a ko-kissaki must be from the mid-Kamakura period or a bit later. With rule number two

□ we “look at the jigane”, first off the compact jigane shows prominent utsuri therefore

we can see this as a Bizen work. Rule number three ｾ, has us look at the hamon; a nioi deki choji-midare hamon also was very common in Bizen, consequently we are looking at artists who produced choji-midare hamon such as Ichimonji, Shimada group or Kunimune, high class Osafune artists are also a possibility such as Moriie, or Mitsutada who produced kawazuko choji, looking at the example blade we see compact kawazuko-choji. Moriie and Mitsutada however would be just a bit wider temper and would include juka-choji and this blade does not show juka-choji, so we can say that this is not in the style of Moriie, Mitsutada etc. Therefore we have to consider the Ichimonji ha, if we imagine this as a signed piece we might be looking at Yoshifusa or perhaps Sukefusa, additionally Kunimune is another possibility. There are many works signed simply with the single-stroke “Ichimonji” and these show a lively choji-midare of varying width.



NEW Question 64, July 2026

Problem, July 2026

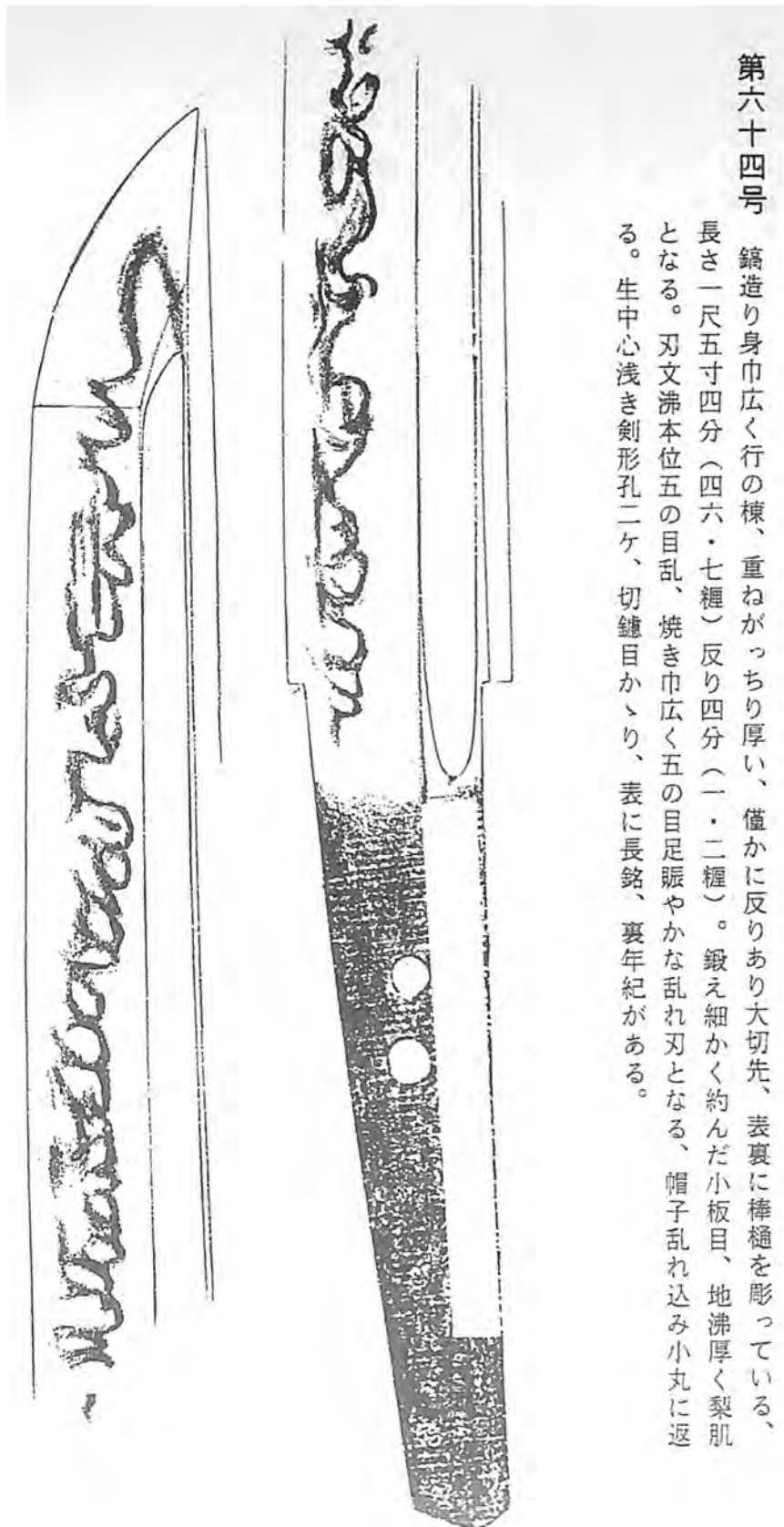
Answer: September 2026

Dai Yonju-yon go - shinogi-zukuri mihaba hiroku Gyo no mune, kasane gatchiri atsui, wazuka ni sori ari okissaki, omote ura bo-hi hotteiru, nagasa 1 shaku 5 sun 4 bu (46.7 cm) sori 4 bu (1.2 cm) kitae komakaku tsunde koitame, ji-nie atsuku nashi-hada to naru. Hamon nie hon-i gunome midare, yakihaba hiroku gunome ashi nigiyakana midare-ha to naru. Boshi midare komi komaru ni kaeru. Ubu nakago asaki kengyo ana 2 ko, kiri yasurime kakari, omote ni nagamei, ura nenki ga aru.

Number 64 - The blade is shinogi-zukuri with a wide body and iori-mune, the thickness is decidedly robust, it has a bit of curvature and an okissaki, on the obverse and reverse a bo-hi is carved. Length is 1 shaku 5 sun 4 bu (46.7 cm) curvature 4 bu (1.2 cm). The forging is minutely compact ko-itame, the ji-nie is thick becoming nashiji-hada. The temper is nie deki gunome-midare, the temperline is wide becoming a lively midare-ha with gunome ashi, the boshi is midare-komi becoming komaru with kaeri. The nakago is unaltered with two mekugi-ana, kiri-yasuri, On the obverse is a nagamei and on the ura is a date.

Now who do you suppose made this? Send us your answers by the 15th of September.

ncjsc.president@gmail.com



第六十四号 鎗造り身巾広く行の棟、重ねがっちり厚い、僅かに反りあり大切先、表裏に棒樋を彫っている、長さ一尺五寸四分（四六・七纏）反り四分（一・二纏）。鍛え細かく約んだ小板目、地沸厚く梨肌となる。刃文沸本位五の目乱、焼き巾広く五の目足賑やかな乱れ刃となる、帽子乱れ込み小丸に返る。生中心浅き剣形孔二ヶ、切鑢目かゝり、表に長銘、裏年紀がある。

The Kantei problem with blade image are sent by email.

These are sent prior to the meeting on the 3rd Monday or each month.

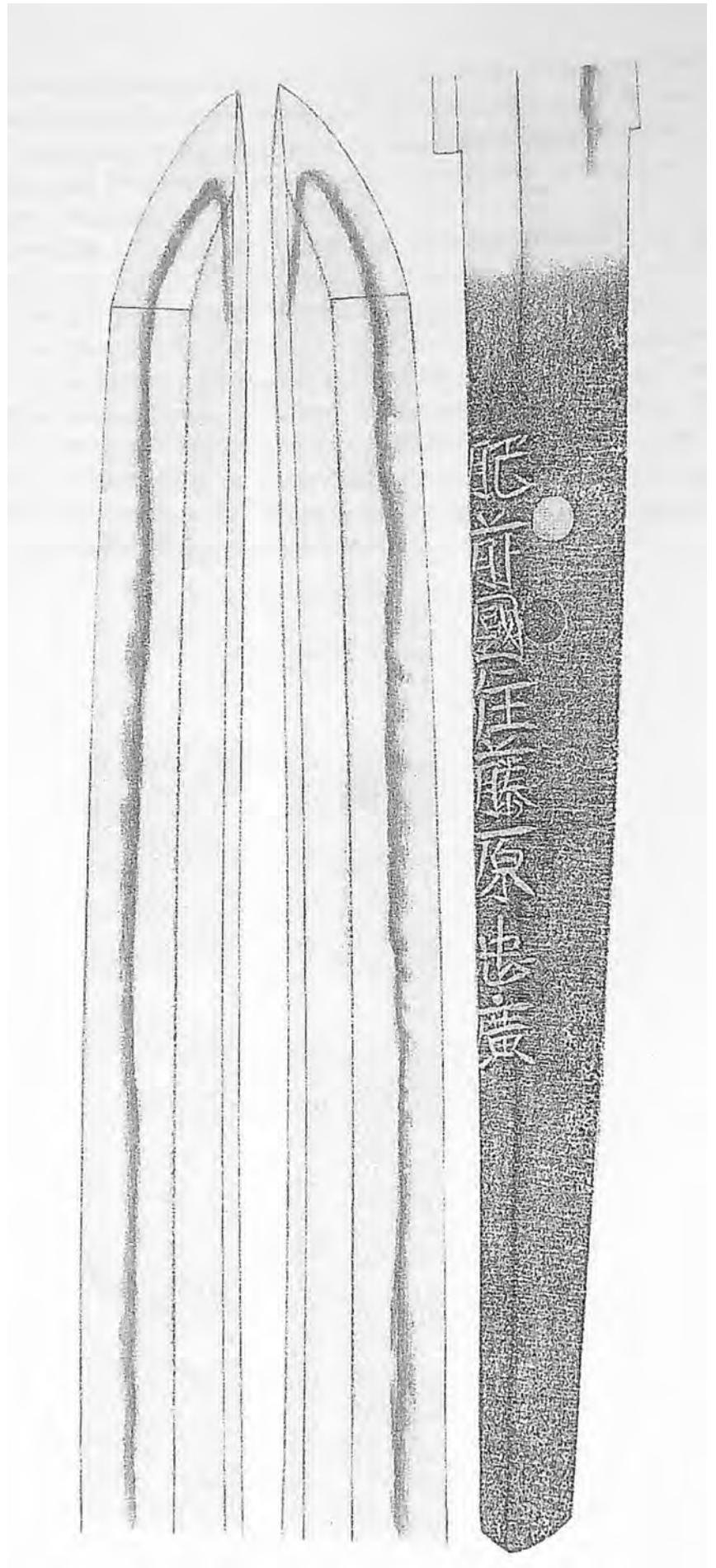
Send an email to ncjsc.president@gmail.com to sign up

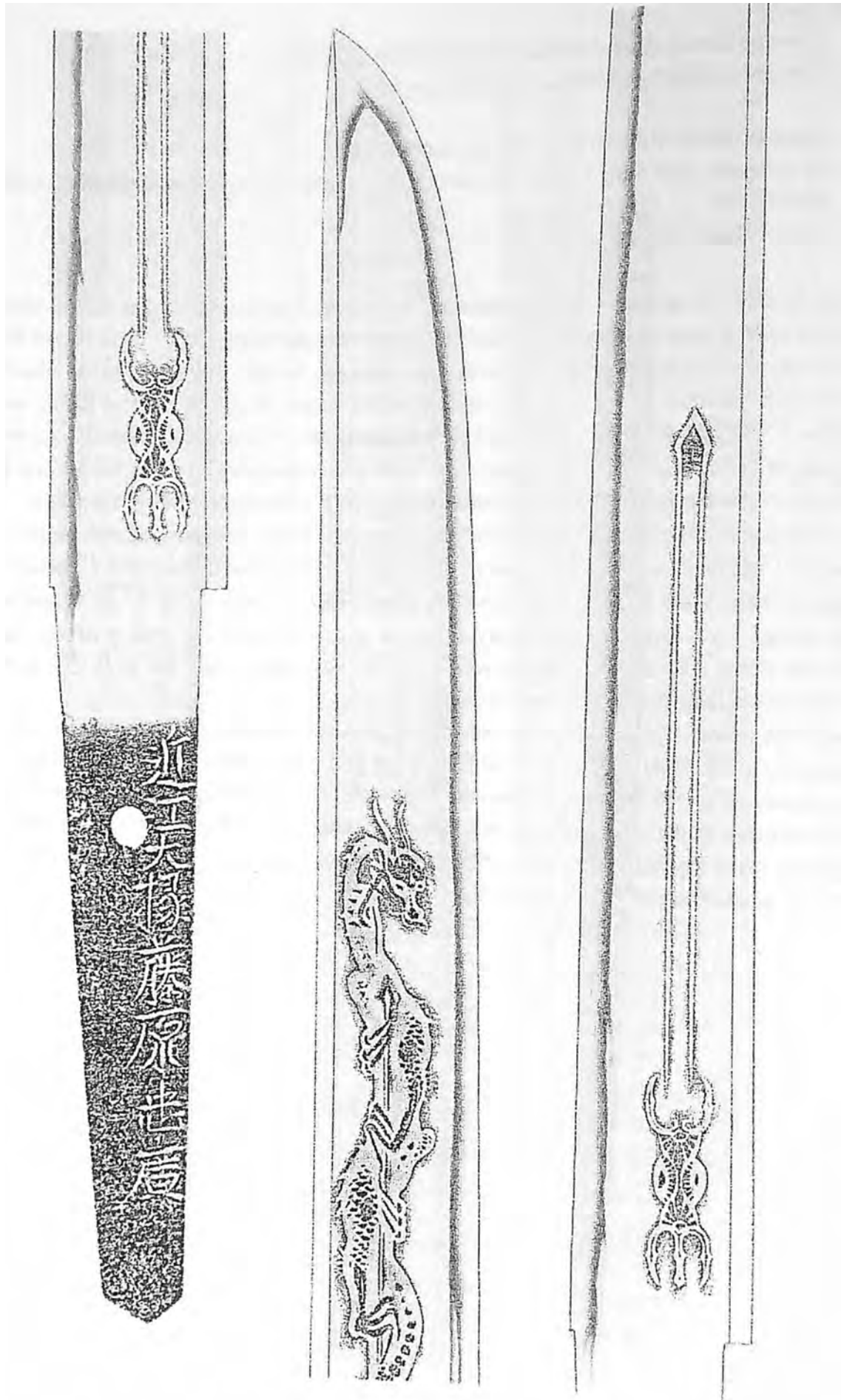
See page 4 for meeting details

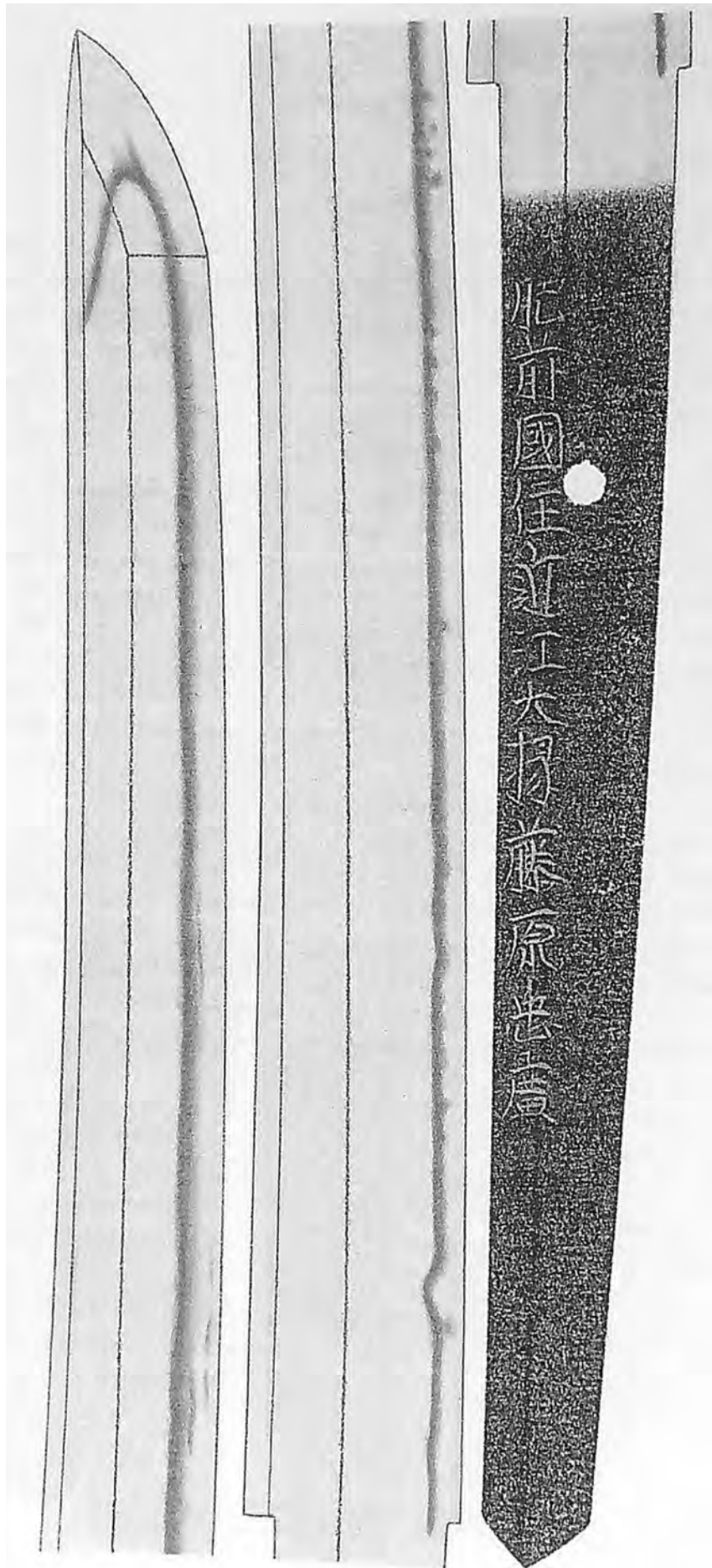
Select oshigata are printed with permission of Markus Sesko

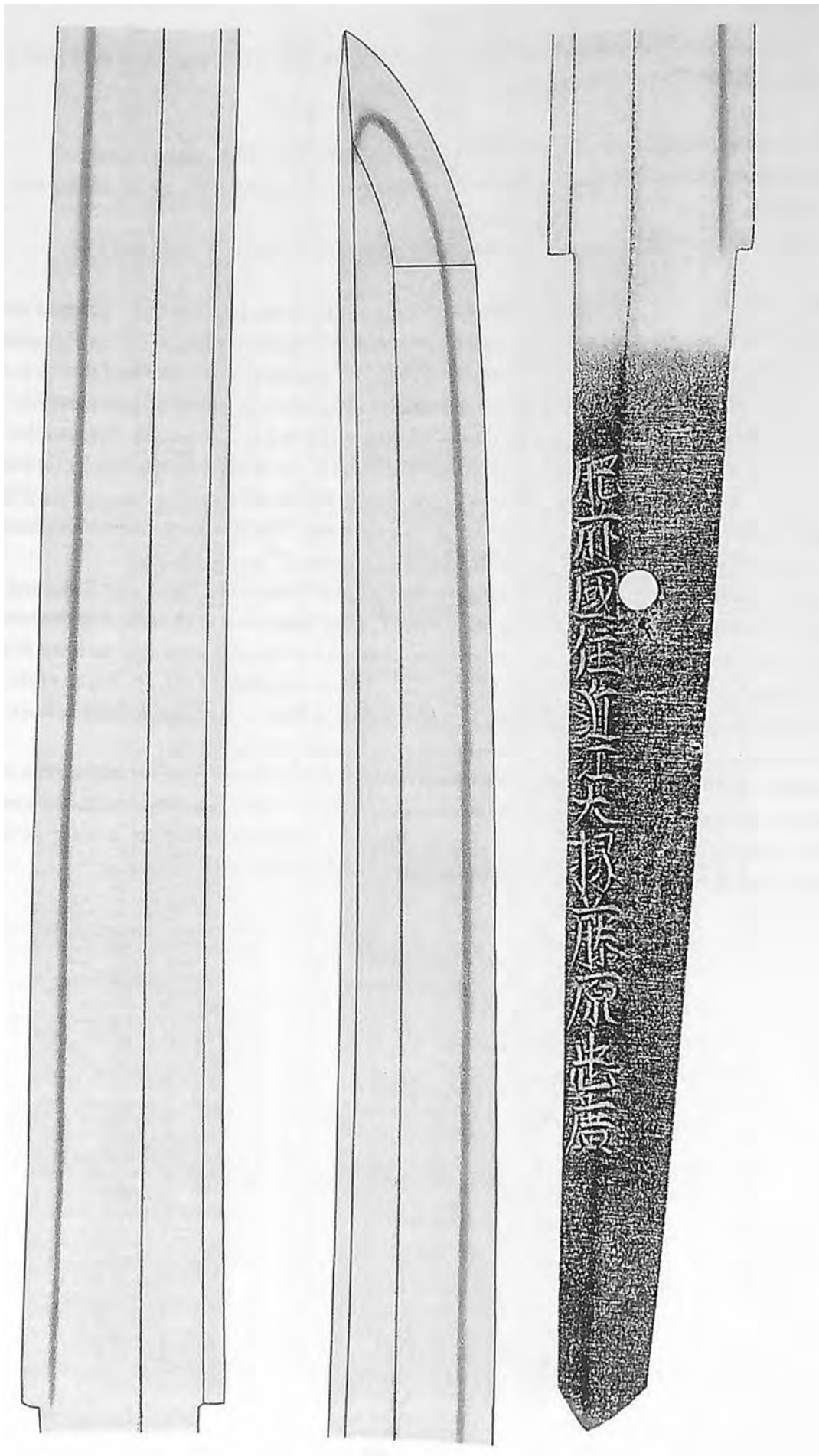
The following pages are images presented during the meeting discussion

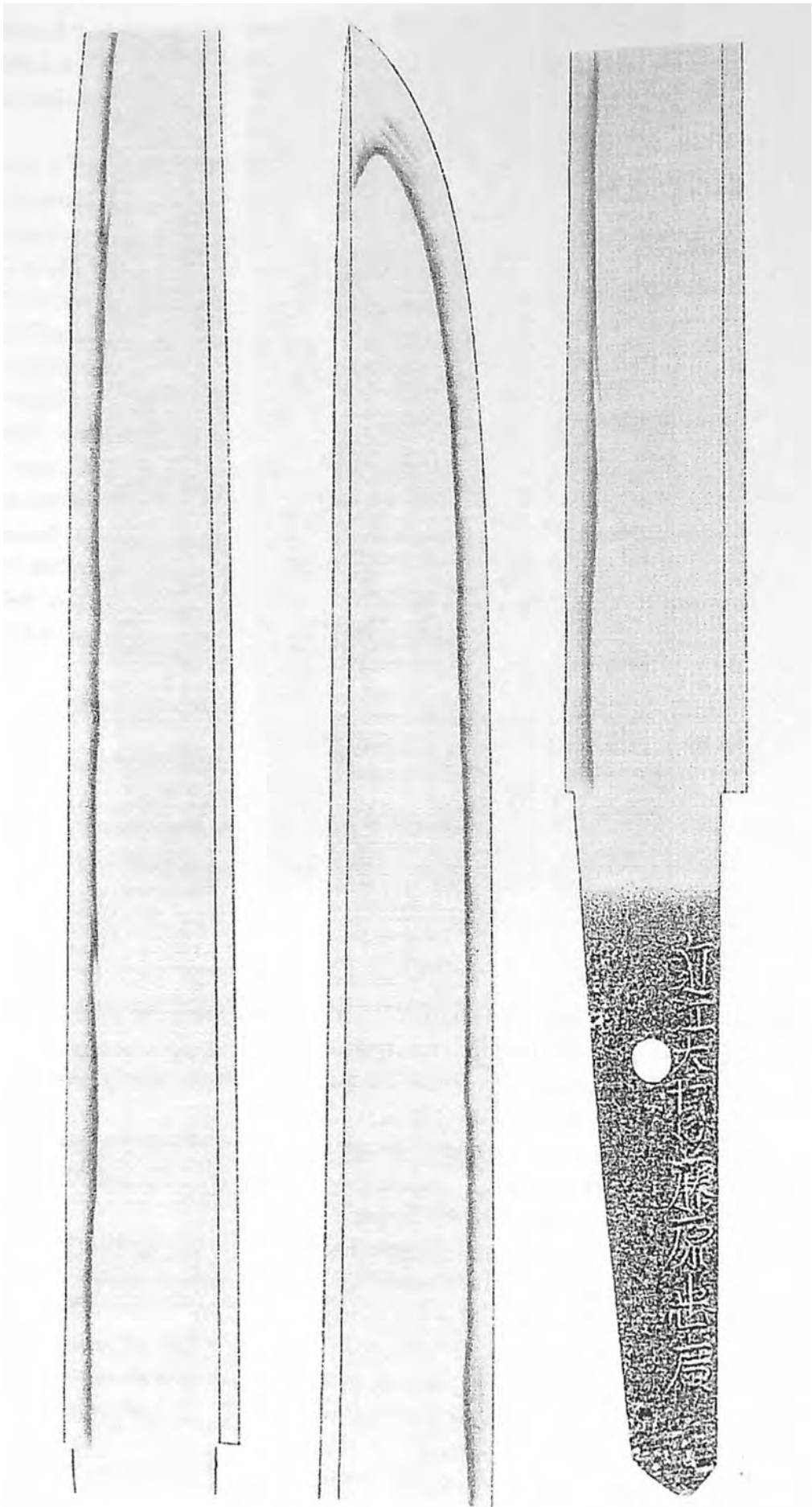
With number 61 we have come to the end of our text, Shin Nihonto Kantei Nyumon by Iida (Translation by Harry Afu Watson). Going forward we will be applying our methodology to select kantei questions taken from To-Ken to Rekishi the magazine of the Nihon To-Ken Hozon Kai.

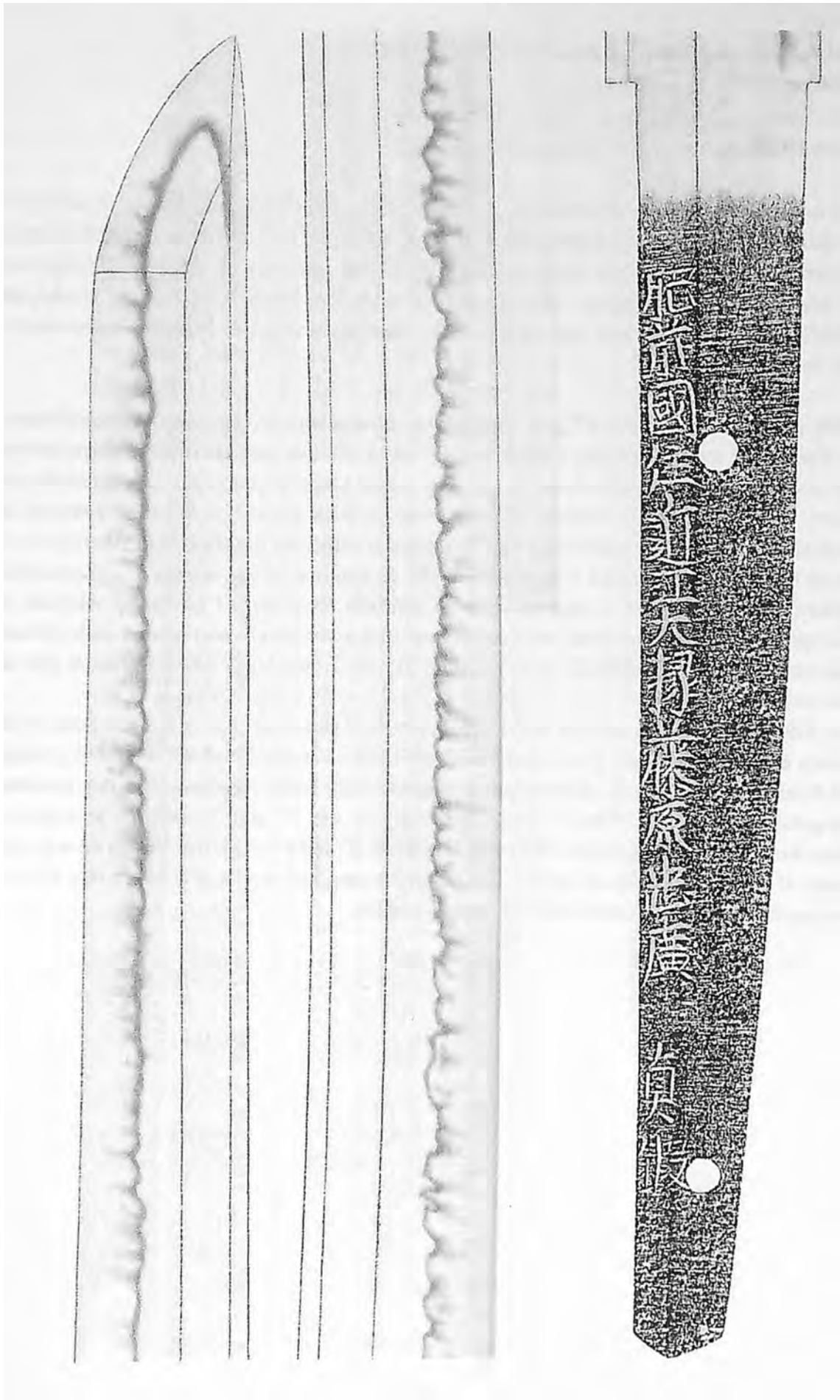


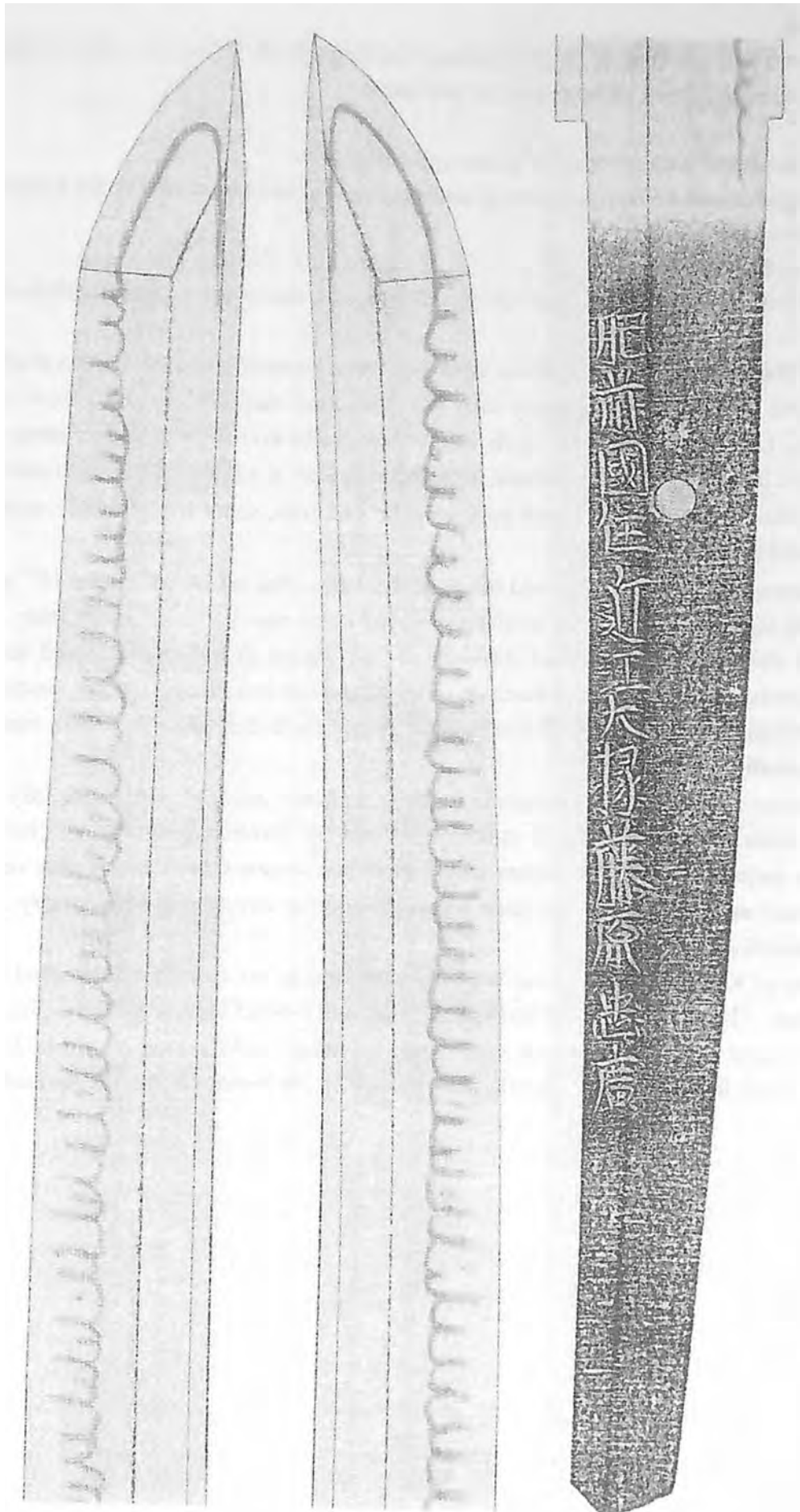


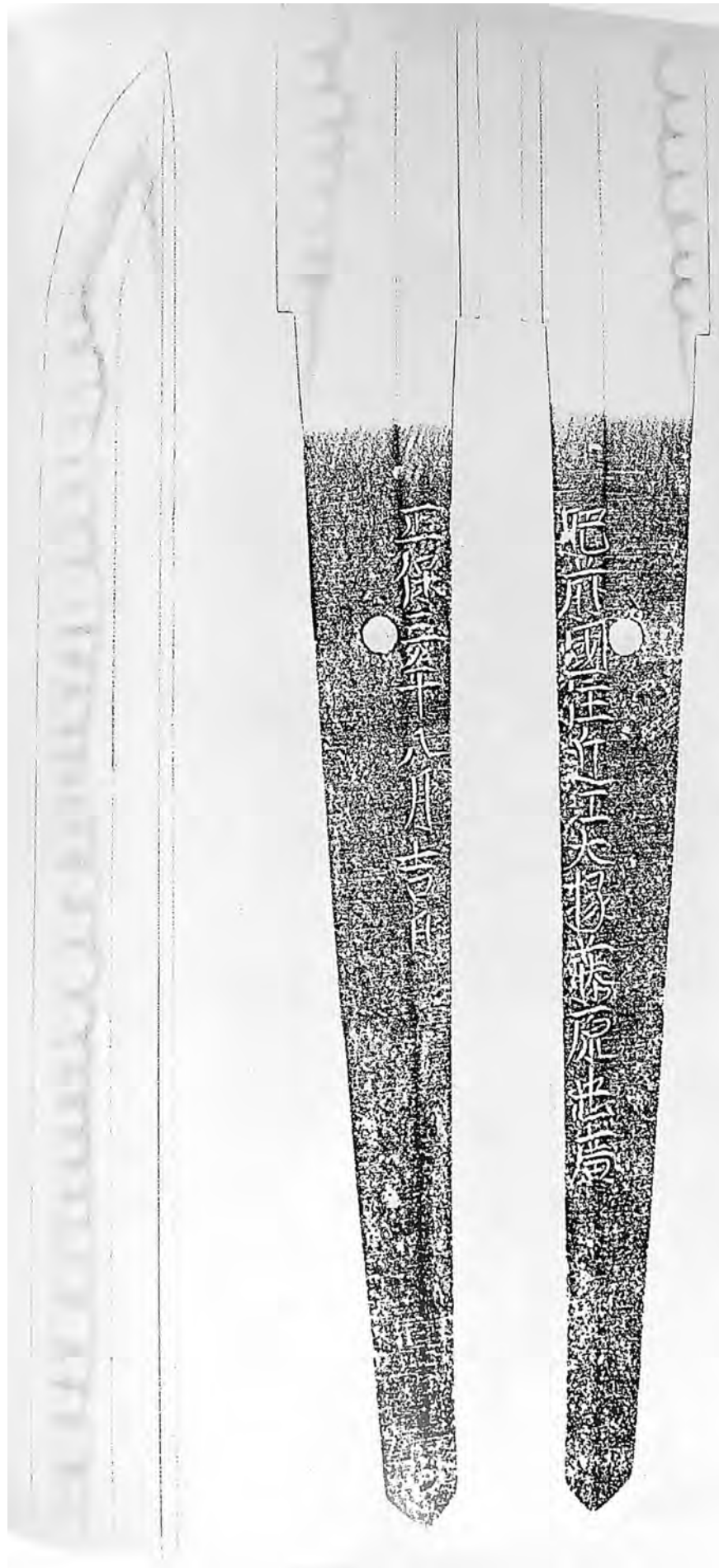


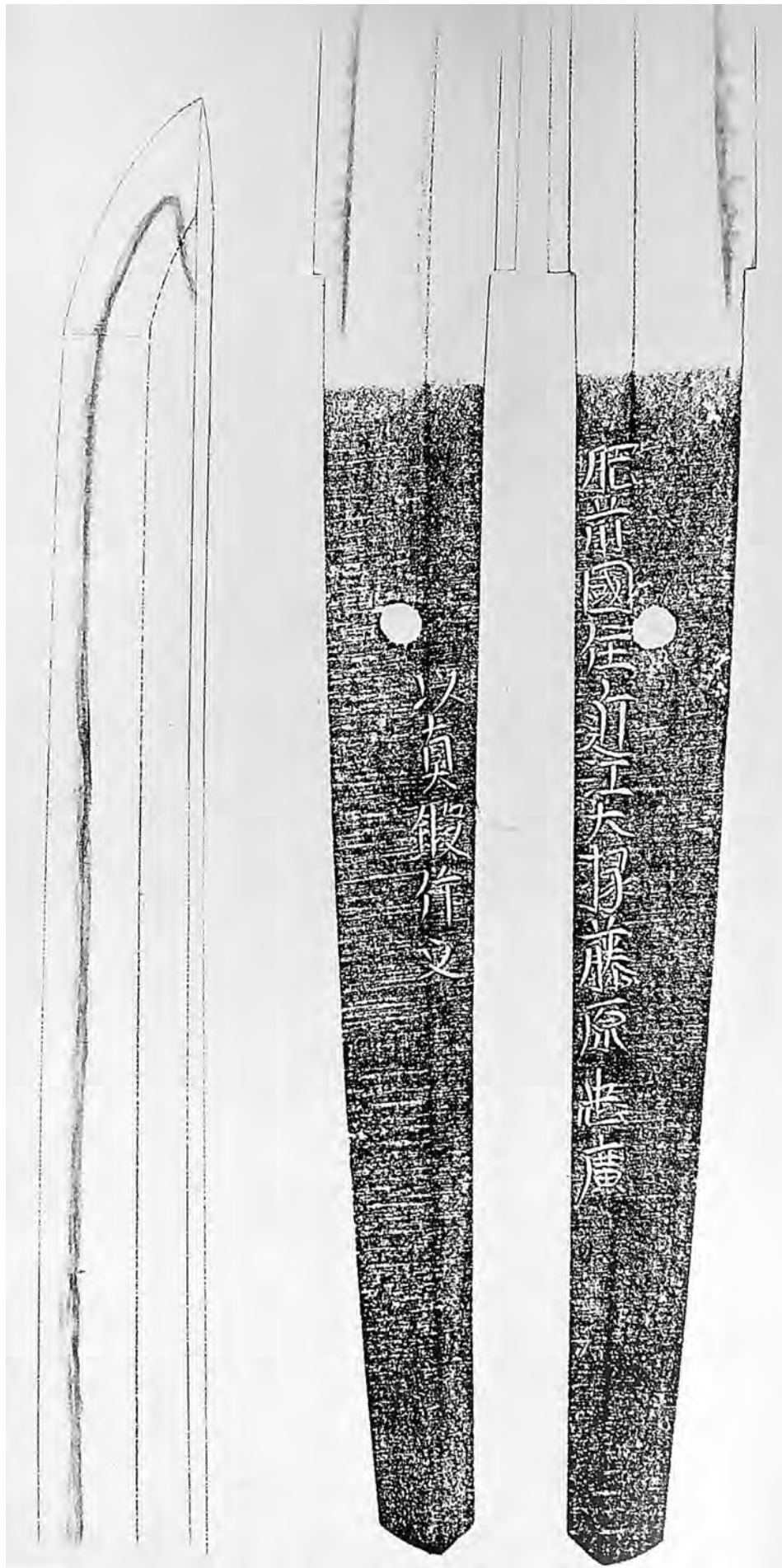


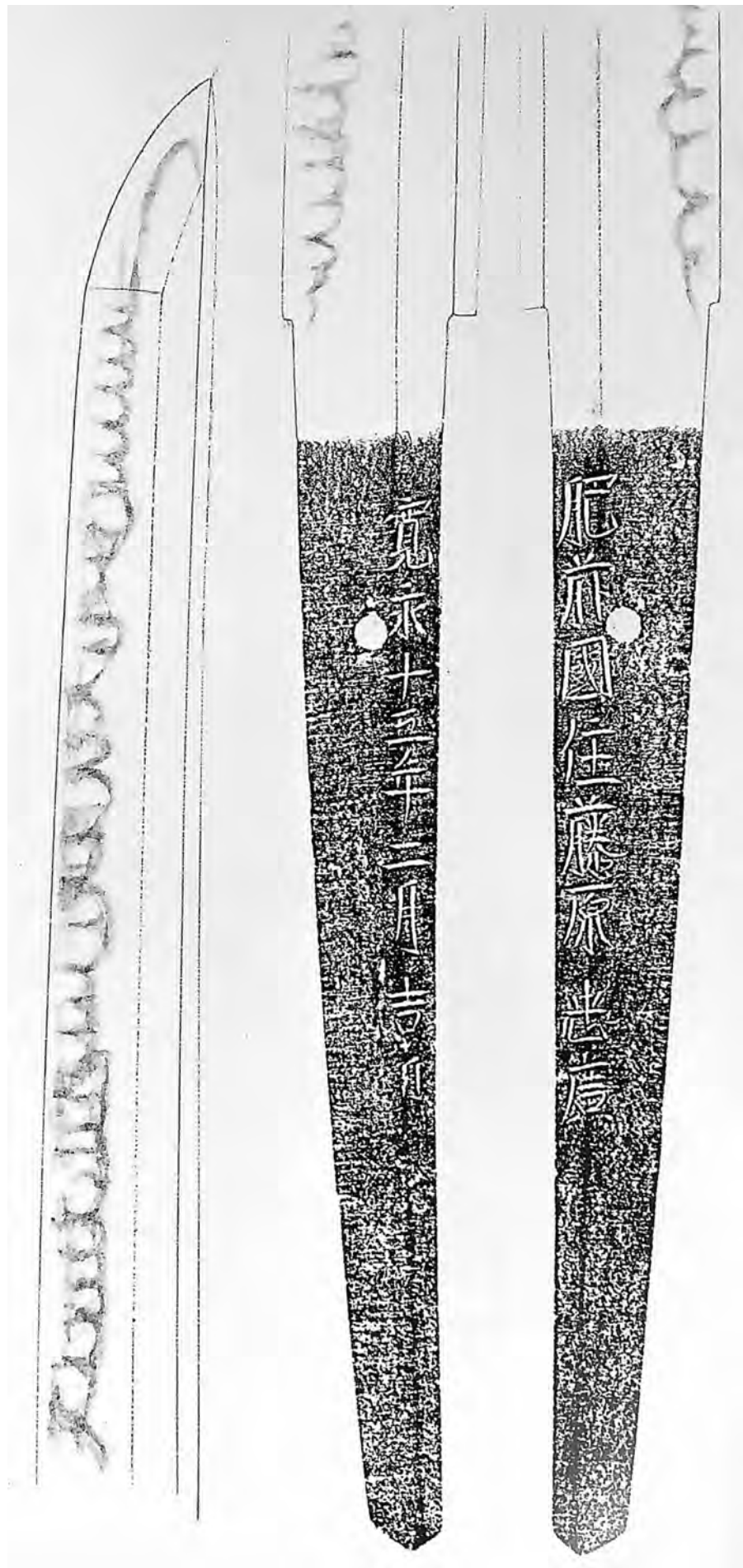


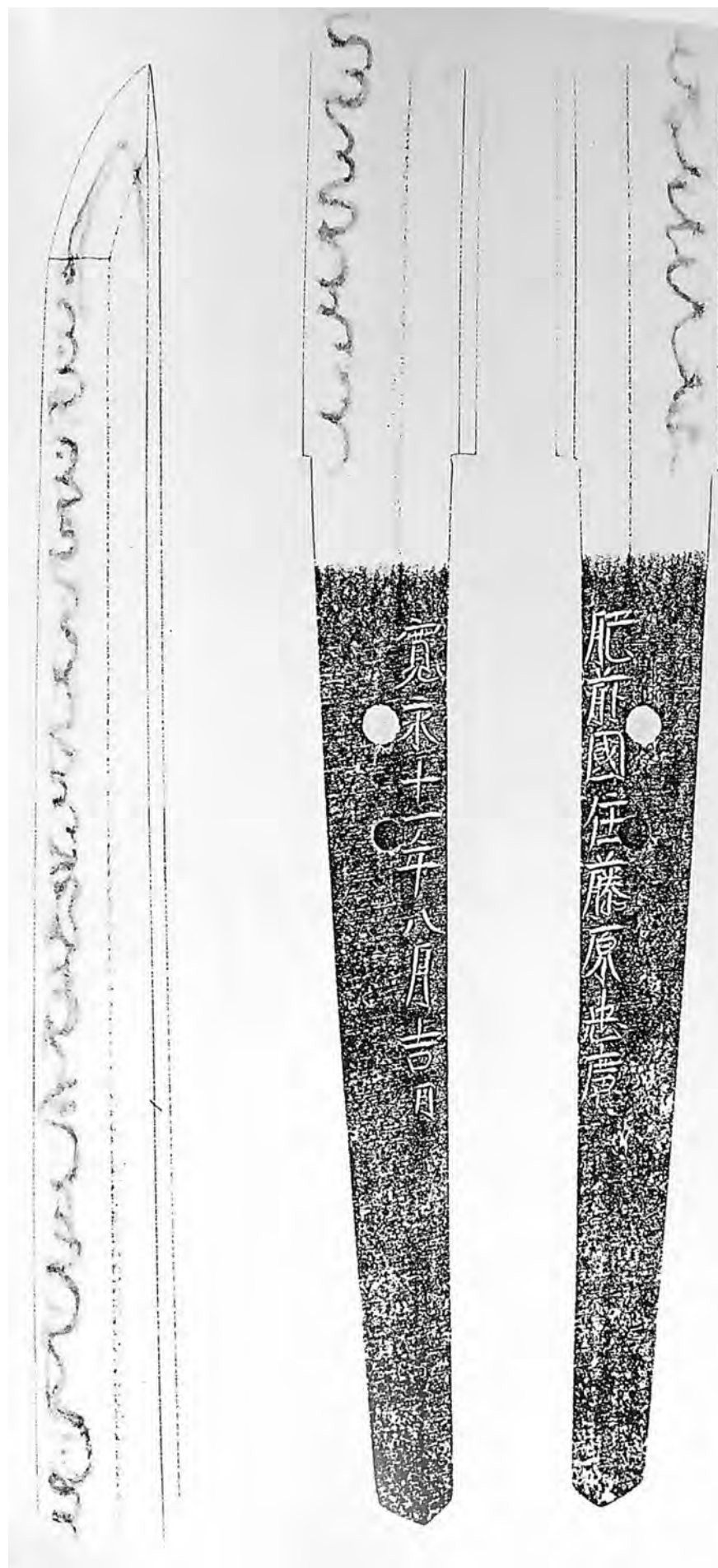


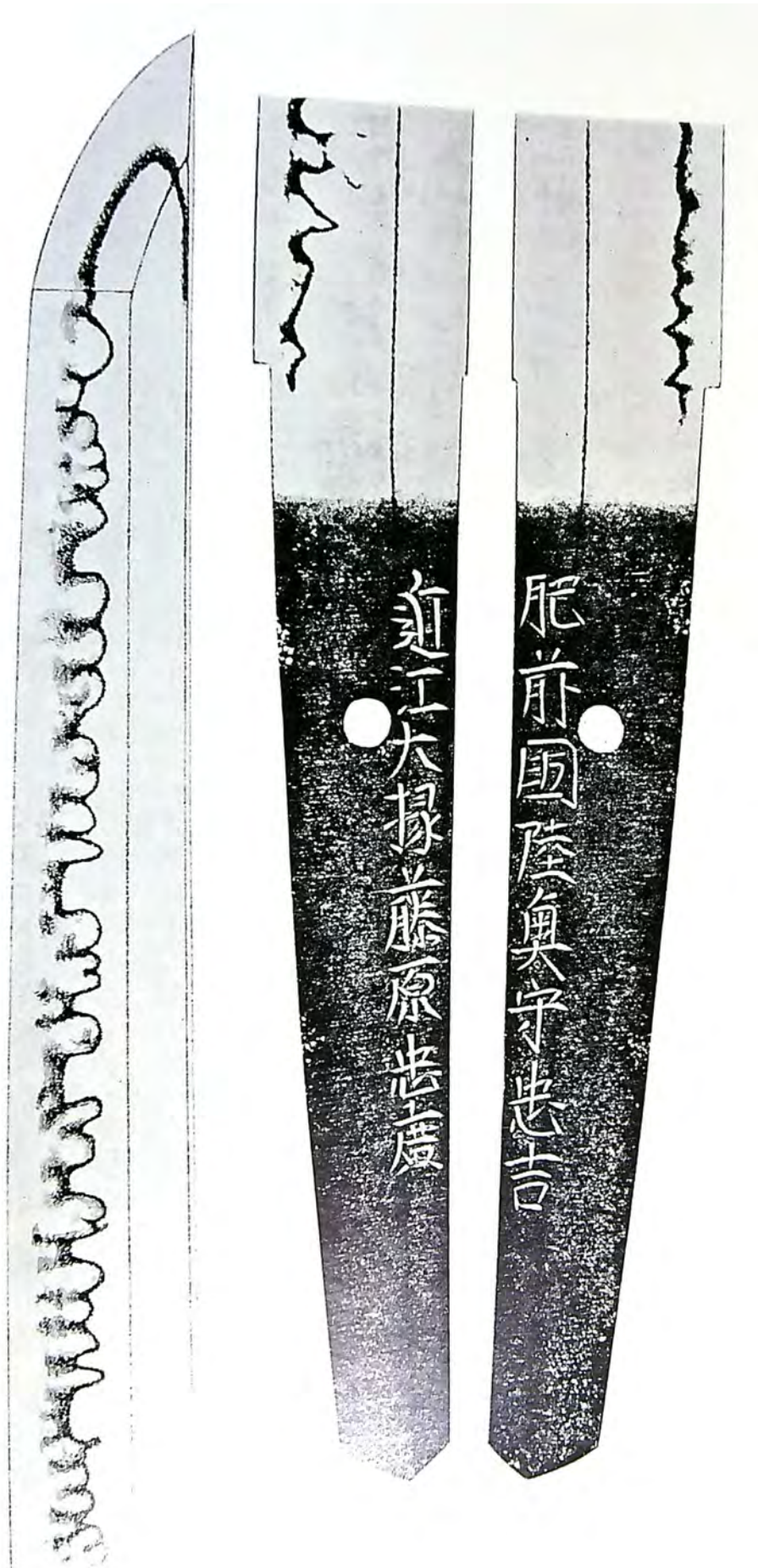












Tsuba
Mumei. Nishigaki School

Design: Sayuu Ichimagasa sukashi tsuba.

左右市女笠透鐔 (left and right women's hats)

with silver inlay in design of thunder (raimon ginzougan).

Shakudo Hitsugane.

Maru-gata, tetsu-ji.

8.4 cm (h), 8.3 cm (w) 0.4-0.45 cm

Attribution to Kanshiro by NBTHK (Tokubetsu Hozon)

Published: Higo Kinko Taikan described as Kanshiro

Circa : Early Edo period



This tsuba, could be the work of the Nidai Kanshiro, called Nagahisa, also Mosaku and Yoshimasa (1639-1717). Son of Nishigaki Kanshiro I (Shodai), himself a pupil of Hirata Hikoza and a contemporary of Hayashi Matashichi. Nagahisa studied kinko techniques in Edo under Goto Kenjo from around 1653 until Kenjo's death in 1663 whereupon he returned to Higo at the age of 24 years.

The design while basically simple, exhibits a bit of artistic flair, perhaps consistent with the work of Nagahisa more than that of the Shodai. The ryō-bitsu are in the form of women's hats called Ichimegasa which are partially filled with shakudo cushions or hitsugane to protect the kogai and kozuka from scratching on the iron base. The base itself is not flat, flaring out and back between seppa-dai and mimi on both sides. Both sides of the mimi and the edge itself are covered with exquisite silver inlay in the pattern of thunder or Kaminari mon raimon zougan. This inlay pattern echos that of the Ko-Shoami tsuba which graced the original "Nobunaga Koshirae" of Hosakawa Tadaoki (Sansai). It is said the Shodai Kanshiro reproduced six copies of the original Ko-Shoami tsuba at the direction of Sansai. This same design is also commonly found on many of the works of Nakane Heihachiro (1806-1870), himself a retainer of the Hosakawa family and amateur tsuba maker late in his life.





Sasaki Tadasaburô (1833-1868, Shinto Seibu-ryû)

Up until now, these translations have been of Southern samurai who supported the Imperial Court. With Sasaki Tadasaburô we have a Northern samurai and supporter of the shogunate who attacked Sonôjôi patriots.

Terrorist Swordsman

He recites poetry, and wields a ko-dachi, becoming Japan's most elegant assassin.

[A Poet and a Master of the Ko-Dachi]



Sasaki Tadasaburô

Sasaki Tadasaburô [佐々木 武蔵 (Ψ)] is famed as the assassin of Kiyokawa Hachirô (1830-1863) and Sakamoto Ryôma (1836-1867).

Tadasaburô was born during the fourth year of Tenpô (1833) as the third son of Aizu domain samurai Sasaki Genpachi. He had two older brothers, Naoemon and Daijirô and a younger brother, Genshirô. Tadasaburô's given names were Yasumasa and Takagi.

When Matsudaira Katamori (1835-1893), the lord of Aizu domain, was appointed Kyoto Shugoshoku (protector of Kyoto), his elder brother, Teshirogi Naoemon, accompanied him to Kyoto and served as an official. He later rose through the ranks to become a Wakadoshiyori (young councilor), and during the Aizu conflict of the Boshin War, he was instrumental in bringing the conflict to an end.



Matsudaira Katamori

When he was about 27 or 28 years old, Tadasaburô was adopted by Sasaki Yatayu who had the same family name and was a vassal of the Tokugawa shogunate. Both families were said to be descendants of the Uda Genji clan. His adoptive Sasaki family received a stipend of 50 koku and provisions for three people.

He was a capable man. According to the “Boshin Monogatari,” he was the best in Japan in ko-dachi fighting. He studied the Shinto Seibu-ryû style of swordsmanship.

Shinto Seibu-ryû was a popular style in the Aizu domain, and was established by its founder, Ogasawara Jônosuke Nagamasa, by combining swordsmanship with jujutsu. Ogasawara Nagamasa excelled in jujutsu, calling it taiyô-jûdokujutsu, and was known for his skill in armored combat, including the skillful use of yoroi-doshi techniques.

It is said that Tadasaburô, who studied the Seibu-ryû style, was also skilled in yoroi-doshi techniques, which is why he was known as the best ko-dachi swordsman in Japan.

He learned spear fencing from Okitsu Sônosuke. His style is said to have been descended from the Ôuchi Muhen style of spear fencing. There is also the explanation that his style was that of the Hôzôin-ryû as the Ôuchi-ryû, Hôzôin-ryû and the Isshi-ryû were also practiced at the Aizu Edo domain residence.

He studied Japanese classics under Noya Tsunekata. Aizu was known for its enthusiasm for poetry, and Tadasaburô left behind some impressive waka poems.

Thinking of the dew on the young bamboo in the garden of life this year

The moonlight is shining brightly

When the day dawns, I will be in Sagami, not knowing what tomorrow will bring

I wonder if the setting moon is beautiful

The whole world is thrilled by the changing frost

Heartfelt white chrysanthemum flowers

Tadasaburô was well educated. The Aizu domain was the most academically renowned domain at the end of the Edo period, and he spent his youth in the Aizu domain residence and was adopted into a retainer of the shogunate, so it was only natural that he had studied hard. However, he is unfairly looked down upon as an assassin.

During the 12th month, the second year of Bunkyû (1862), when the shogunate, following Kiyokawa Hachirô's plan, formed the Rôshi-gumi with Udonô Kyûô (1808-1869) as director and Yamaoka Tetsutarô (Tesshû, 1836-1888) and Matsuoka Yuzuru (1838-1891) as sub-directors with Tadasaburô appointed as their assistant. This appointment marked the beginning of Tadasaburô's name being remembered in the history of the Bakumatsu period.

[He Played the Role of Midwife to the Shinsengumi]

The Rôshi-gumi that came to Kyoto was split into those of Kiyokawa's Edo Higashishita group and a group of those staying in Kyoto due to Kiyokawa's machinations, but for the sake of those staying in Kyoto that included such members as Kondô Isamu and Hijikata Shizô, Tadasaburô mobilized his older brother Naouemon to place them under the control of the Kyoto Shugoshoku, and later played the role of midwife to the Shinsengumi. (Actually, Kiyokawa, during the Rôshi-gumi's march to Kyoto, informed the group that his true intention was to overthrow the shogunate, which led to a split in the membership.)

After returning to Edo, Tadasaburô received orders to assassinate Kiyokawa. On the 13th day of the fourth month, the third year of Bunkyû (1863), Tadasaburô led Hayami Matashirô, Takaku Yasujirô, Kubota Sentarô and Nakayama Shûsuke to the area of Akabane-bashi/Hitotsubashi, Azabu in an attack on Kiyokawa and killed him.



Kiyokawa Hachirô

To provide further information regarding Kiyokawa Hachirô and the activities leading to his assassination I have added translations of the Japanese Wikipedia and other sources.

Impressed by the Sakurada-mon Incident where Ii Naosuke was assassinated (1860), Kiyokawa strengthened his support for the overthrow of the shogunate, restoration of imperial sovereignty and expulsion of foreigners (sonnôjôi). The Sakurada-mon Incident sparked a flock of patriots to the Kiyokawa School. Among them were such shogunate officials as Yamaoka Tesshû and Matsuoka Yuzuru. That same year, he formed the Torao Society (Tiger's Tail), which included Yamaoka and Matsuoka. They planned to burn down the Yokohama foreign settlement, resulting in further reverence for the emperor and the ultimate overthrow of the shogunate. However, this secret plot was discovered by the shogunate, which led to the arrest of a number of Torao Society members who later died in prison.

After this first failed movement, he petitioned Matsudaira Katamori, the Kyoto Shugoshoku through Yamaoka Tesshû and others to implement three urgent measures: 1. Expulsion of foreigners, 2. Issuing a general amnesty and 3. Education of the nation's best. The shogunate, having trouble with sonnôjôi patriots adopted this proposal and Matsudaira Tadatoshi (1818-1882) was given permission to form the Rôshi-gumi with 234 members. Having successfully outwitted the shogunate, he began to gather pro-shogunate supporters in Kyoto. (The degree of Kiyokawa's double dealing is breathtaking. How he expected to get away with all this is beyond belief.)

On the 23rd day of the second month, the third year of Bunkyû (1863), he led the Rôshi-gumi as the vanguard for the shogun Tokugawa Iemochi's (1846-1866) march to Kyoto. However, on the night of the Rôshi-gumi's arrival in Kyoto, he gathered them together at Shintoku-ji in Mibu and stated that his true purpose was not to protect the shogun, but to spearhead the sonnôjôi movement. This led to a split in the group with about 200 members remaining in the Rôshi-gumi and about 43 members, including Kondô Isamu and Hijikata Shizô leaving.

Concerned about the Rôshi-gumi's activities, the shogunate recalled them to Edo. Once arriving in Edo, the Rôshi-gumi attempted to mobilize, but as they were in complete opposition to the shogunate, they became targets.

On the 13th day of the fourth month, Kiyokawa was on his way to visit Kaneko Yosaburô; however, on the way, he stopped by Takahashi Deishû's (1835-1903) home and chatted briefly. When it was time for Deishû to go to Edo castle, Kiyokawa decided to leave as well. However, he asked for two white fans on which he composed the following poems: "Leading again to the mountain of death, I will not stray from the path of the emperor." "Breaking again the waves that come crashing in, they will smash even the rocky corners."



Kiyokawa's "Mountain of Death" Fan Poem

Deishû was surprised by these poems and said, "Isn't this a death poem?" and tried to stop Kiyokawa, but Kiyokawa ended up heading for Kaneko's home.

Kiyokawa then visited Kaneko, and after sake and conversation, he left around four pm. He headed east, passed the Nakanobashi and reached the foot of Akane-bashi. "Kiyokawa sensei, it's been a while," someone called out. That person was none other than Sasaki Tadasaburô. "Ah, Sasaki-kun." Kiyokawa stopped in his tracks, and Sasaki bowed deeply. Seeing this, Kiyokawa reached for the chin strap of his jingasa to return the bow; however, Hayami Matashirô slashed him from behind. Kiyokawa was then beheaded by Sasaki Tadasaburô with the participation of others at Akabane-bashi/Hitotsubashi, Azabu (near the current Asabu-Jûban shopping arcade).

I will now return to the original source to continue the translation.

Due to this achievement, Tadasaburô was later promoted to the head of the Mimawari-gumi and given an additional stipend of 1,000 koku; however, it is unclear if this stipend information is reliable.

The shogunate felt the need to establish a powerful police force to maintain order in Kyoto, so they recruited samurai and formed the Kyoto Mimawari-gumi, a police force with a capacity of 400 members during the fourth month, the first year of Genji (1864). Tadasaburô was appointed as the group's head police officer.

The Mimawari-gumi also took part in the Hamaguri-Gomon Incident in the seventh month of the same year. (This was a one-day battle between Chôshû domain samurai and daimyô forces supporting the shogunate [Aizu, Fukui, Satsuma, Ôgaki, Kuwana and the Mimawari-gumi]. The Chôshû forces were defeated with a loss of 400 fighters to a loss of 60 fighters on the shogunate side.)

During the 12th month, the first year of Keiô (1865), he was promoted to the position of Yogashira with a stipend of 300 koku and an additional 300 koku for his forces. During the second year of Keiô, he opened a school for literary and martial arts to help the members of his group learn academics and martial arts, and Tadasaburô was ordered to serve as the school's head.

On the 15th day of the tenth month, the third year of Keiô (1867), the Imperial Restoration took place. On the 15th day of the 11th month, Tadasaburô led several members of the Mimawari-gumi, including Imai Nobuo (1841-1918), in a surprise attack on the Ômiya in the Takoyakushi area of Kyoto and assassinated Sakamoto Ryôma and Nakaoka Shintarô.



Sakamoto Ryôma

Once again, I will refer to other sources such as the Japanese Wikipedia to provide more information on the assassination of Sakamoto Ryôma.

On the 15th day of the 11th month, the third year of Keiô, Ryôma was staying on the second floor of the main house of Ômiya Shinsuke, a soy sauce merchant in Takoyakushi, Kawaramachi. Around eight pm, while Ryôma and Shintarô were talking, several men, calling themselves Totsugawa samurai, requested a meeting. When the servant Fujiyoshi announced their request, these men rushed upstairs, slashed Fujiyoshi and forced their way into the room where Ryôma and Shintarô were talking. Neither Ryôma nor Shintarô were armed, and Ryôma was first slashed deeply in the forehead and then in several other places, nearly

killing him instantly. Shintarô was also attacked and cut in 11 places on his arms and legs. However, he survived for two more days, dying on the 17th day of the 11th month.



Nakaoka Shintarô

When Ryôma was assassinated, the Shinsengumi was strongly suspected of involvement. However, in the fourth month of the first year of Meiji (1868), the chief of the Shinsengumi, Kondô Isamu, was arrested after turning himself in to the authorities. He was later beheaded, but while he was convicted of killing patriots, he was never charged with the murder of Ryôma. Another member of the Shinsengumi, Ôishi Kuwajirô, confessed to killing Ryôma after being tortured, but later retracted his confession.

In 1870, Imai Nobuo was taken prisoner during the Battle of Hakodate. During interrogation he confessed that the head of the Mimawari-gumi, Sasaki Tadasaburô and six of his subordinates (Imai Nobuo, Watanabe Yoshitarô, Takahashi Yasujirô, Katsura Sanosuke, Doi Banzô and Sakurai Daizaburô) had killed Ryôma. Imai, for his part, claimed to have only been a lookout and was not involved in the actual killings. He served a two-year prison term and went on to live a full life, dying in 1918 at the age of 77. This is now the accepted version of this assassination.

I will now once again return to the original source for this translation.

At the end of the same year, Tadasaburô moved to Osaka, following Tokugawa Yoshinobu's (Keiki, 1837-1913) departure from Kyoto.

At the Battle of Toba-Fushimi during the first month of the fourth year of Keiô (1868), Tadasaburô led 400 Mimawari-gumi troops, but was defeated and fled. On the sixth day of the first month, he was shot in the side near Kuzuha (present day Osaka Prefecture) and seriously wounded. He was escorted to Osaka and received treatment, but as the former shogunate forces withdrew from Osaka, Tadasaburô was transferred to Kishû, where he died on the 12th day of the first month at Kimii-dera at the age of 36.

Sasaki Tadasaburô's sword was by Bizen Osafune Sukesada. It is unclear if it is dated.

BIZEN KO-ICHIMONJI NOBUMASA

備前古一文字信正

By Fred Weissberg 6/26

The Ichimonji School (一文字) in Bizen Province was a large school that was founded in the beginning of the Kamakura period and lasted through the Nanbokuchō period. From the beginning to the middle of the Kamakura period, works by this school are commonly referred to as Ko-Ichimonji (古一文字) works. From the middle of the Kamakura period, the center of the production done by this school was located in the area of Bizen called Fukuoka (福岡). From the end of the Kamakura period and through the early part of the Nanbokuchō period, the center of production moved to Yoshioka (吉岡). Around the Shōchū era (1324-1326) another branch of the Ichimonji school sprang up in Iwato (岩戸) in Bizen. This branch is called the Iwato Ichimonji (岩戸一文字). Since it was most active around the Shōchū (正中) era, it is also called the Shōchū Ichimonji school (正中一文字). Around 1225 Norifusa is said to have founded the Katayama Ichimonji school (片山一文字) when he moved to Katayama from Fukuoka.

The name of the school is derived from the fact that many of the swords extant today are signed only with the *kanji* character “Ichi” (一). To this day there is uncertainty as to whether any of the smiths who signed with individual names are one and the same as any of these practically anonymous artisans who signed with only an “Ichi” (一).

In the early Kamakura period, workmanship of the Ichimonji smiths was classical and subdued. It was close to that of the Ko-Bizen (古備前) smiths but different in certain respects. Smiths from this period are known as the Ko-Ichimonji (古一文字) smiths. The main characteristics of the Ko-Ichimonji school (古一文字) are as follows:

- SUGATA:** They generally worked in the Yamashiro tradition. Although made in the style and shape of the late Heian period, they are slightly stronger in all respects while still retaining all of the grace and elegance of the Heian period works. They will be slender, have a deep *koshi-zori*, and *ko-kissaki*.
- JITETSU:** They will be well forged with fine *ko-mokume hada* mixed with *o-hada*. *Jifu utsuri* will generally be present.
- HAMON:** The width of the *yakiba* will be narrow and done in a *ko-chōji midare* based on *suguha* and worked in *nioi*. There are others that are worked in *ko-chōji midare* with *nie* clustering together within the *hamon* and with the *nioi* forming deep *ashi*. In certain works, the width of the *yakiba* is made wide in *suguha chōji* worked in *nioi* and it will have *nie* worked in. In these works, the grain of the steel will stand out considerably within the *hamon*. *Koshiba* is occasionally seen toward the bottom.

- BÔSHI:** They will be *ko-maru*, *ko-maru sagari*, or *ko-midare* and the *kaeri* will be short.
- NAKAGO:** They will be made a little long with the width made narrow towards the end forming a *kurijiri* tip. *Kijimomo* will be seen on occasion. File marks, if any, are in *kiri* or *suji chigai*.
- MEI:** When signed, a two-character is usual. Occasionally, we find them adding the kanji, saku (作), after their two-character mei.

According to tradition, Nobumasa (信正) was the son of Nobufusa (信房). The Meikan puts Nobufusa as working in the late 1100's into the early half of the 1200's. His real name was Nagahara Gonnokami (長原権守). He was on the *goban-kaji* list of Emperor Gotoba that consisted of 24 smiths. According to this list, he worked with Kanesue (包末) in the ninth month. This was quite an honor. Fujishiro dates him to around Genryaku (元暦, 1184-1185) and rates him a jôjô-saku. The Meikan also lists that among his surviving swords are one Kokuho tachi, four Jûyô Bunkazai tachi, and one Jûyô Bijitsuhin tachi. I included all of this information to point out that today's smith, Nobumasa, came from a very impressive father/sensei.

Today's kantei blade is by Nobufusa's (信房) son, Nobumasa (信正). His first names were Gonzaburô (権三郎) and Tarô (太郎), he is also listed with the name Nagahara Gonnokami (長原権守). This was an early name that his father also used. Nobumasa is also noted as having served as a *ban-kaji* (Imperial guard smith) during the Jôkyû era (1219-1222). Like his father, he was also reputed to have been invited by Emperor Gotoba to be one of his Oki-goban-kaji. This was a group of smiths invited by Gotoba during his exile on Oki after the failure of a coup in 1221. Nobumasa is listed to have worked in the ninth and tenth month, he signed with just the character "ichi" (一) at that time.

Reliably authenticated extant works bearing his signature are extremely few, and examples that retain an *ubu nakago* and are preserved in essentially complete condition are exceedingly rare. Because it has retained its original shape, it has become a textbook example of the sugata of the blades made in the late Heian and early Kamakura eras. There is a pronounced straightening of the sugata in the monouchi area. We are fortunate to have here today one such example of his work. This sword obtained the rank of Jûyô Tôken at the 38th Jûyô shinsa in October of 1992. The following is a translation of the Jûyô setsumeï:

Jûyô-Tôken at the 38th Jûyô Shinsa from October 30, 1992

Tachi, mei: Nobumasa saku (信正作)

Measurements

Nagasa 75.4 cm, sori 2.7 cm, motohaba 2.7 cm, sakihaba 1.65 cm, kissaki-nagasa 2.5 cm, nakago-nagasa 19.3 cm, nakago-sori 0.1 cm

Description

Keijō: shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, relatively slender mihaba, normal kasane, deep koshizori, funbari, ko-kissaki

Kitae: itame that is mixed with mokume and partially with some ō-hada and that features fine jinnie, chikei, and a midare-utsuri

Hamon: ko-nie-laden and partially somewhat subdued hoso-suguha that is mixed with ko-chōji, ko-midare, ashi, yō, and with fine sunagashi

Bōshi: sugu with hakikake at the tip and with a ko-maru-kaeri

Horimono: on the haki-omote side a suken at the base

Nakago: ubu, ha-agari-kurijiri, katte-sagari yasurime, three mekugi-ana, the haki-ura side bears above of the mekugi-ana and towards the nakago-mune a relatively thickly chiseled sanji-mei

Explanation

According to the *Meikan*, Nobumasa (𠂔 𠂔) was the son of Bizen Fukuoka-Ichimonji Nobufusa (𠂔 𠂔 𠂔 𠂔 𠂔 𠂔) and active around Jōei (𠂔 𠂔, 1232–1233), and one theory suggests that he was the same smith as Nobumasa (𠂔 𠂔), who wrote his name with a different, but homophonous character for Nobu, although this topic needs further study. Only very few authentic signed works of Nobumasa exist, and this is even more true for such that are perfectly preserved with an ubu-nakago as this blade. With its deep koshizori, funbari, and ko-kissaki, this blade is of an elegant and highly dignified tachi-sugata. Its jiba reflects in many aspects what are referred to as the classical aesthetics of the Ko-Ichimonji approach, and the condition of its jiba is strikingly healthy. Among all known signatures of this smith, themei here belongs to the smallest examples, and what makes it rare is that it is placed on the haki-ura side.

In April of 1994 it was submitted to the Tokubetsu Jūyō shinsa and it passed. This was the first Tokubetsu shinsa since it was awarded Jūyō Tōken and it passed easily on the first submission. Below is the translation of the Tokubetsu Jūyō setsumeimei:

Tokubetsu-Jūyō Tōken at 13th Tokubetsu-Jūyō Shinsa held on April 27, 1994

Tachi, mei: Nobumasa saku (信正作)

Measurements

Nagasa 75.5 cm, sori 2.8 cm, motohaba 2.7 cm, sakihaba 1.65 cm, kissaki-nagasa 2.5 cm, nakago-nagasa 19.3 cm, nakago-sori 0.1 cm

Description

Keijo: shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, relatively slender mihaba, normal kasane, deep koshizori, funbari, ko-kissaki

Kitae: itame that is mixed with mokume and nagare-based ō-hada in places and that features fine jinie, a little bit of chikei, and a midare-utsuri

Hamon: suguha-chō in ko-nie-deki that is mixed with ko-chōji, ko-midare, ashi, yō, and fine sunagashi, and the nioiguchi becomes somewhat tight from the monouchi upwards

Boshi: sugu with a ko-maru-kaeri and a few hakikake at the tip

Horimono: on base of the haki-omote side a suken in the shinogi-ji

Nakago: ubu, ha-agari-kurijiri, katte-sagari yasurime, three mekugi-ana, the haki-ura side bears above of the first mekugi-ana and towards the nakago-mune a relatively thickly chiseled sanjime

Artisan *Ko-Ichimonji Nobumasa*

Era *Early Kamakura period*

Explanation

According to the Meikan, Bizen Nobumasa (信正) was the son of Fukuoka-Ichimonji Nobufusa (信房) and active around Jōei (貞永, 1232–1233). One theory suggests that he was the same smith who signed his name with the homophonous characters (延正), but further research is necessary to either confirm or dismiss this approach. Only very few authentic signed works of Nobumasa exist, particularly such that are perfectly preserved with an ubu-nakago as is the case here. This blade has a deep koshizori with funbari and a ko-kissaki and is thus of a graceful and dignified tachi sugata.

The jiba reflects all the classical aesthetics of what is referred to as the Ko-Ichimonji style, and both ji and ha are perfectly healthy. Among all signed blades known, this blade bears one of the smallest mei, and it is rare for this time period for the signature to be positioned on the haki-ura side.

BIZEN KO-ICHIMONJI NOBUMASA

This sword comes in a shirasaya with an extensive sayagaki by Tanobe Sensei formerly of the NBTHK. The sayagaki contains the following information:

Tokubetsu-Jūyō at 13th Tokubetsu-Jūyō Shinsa

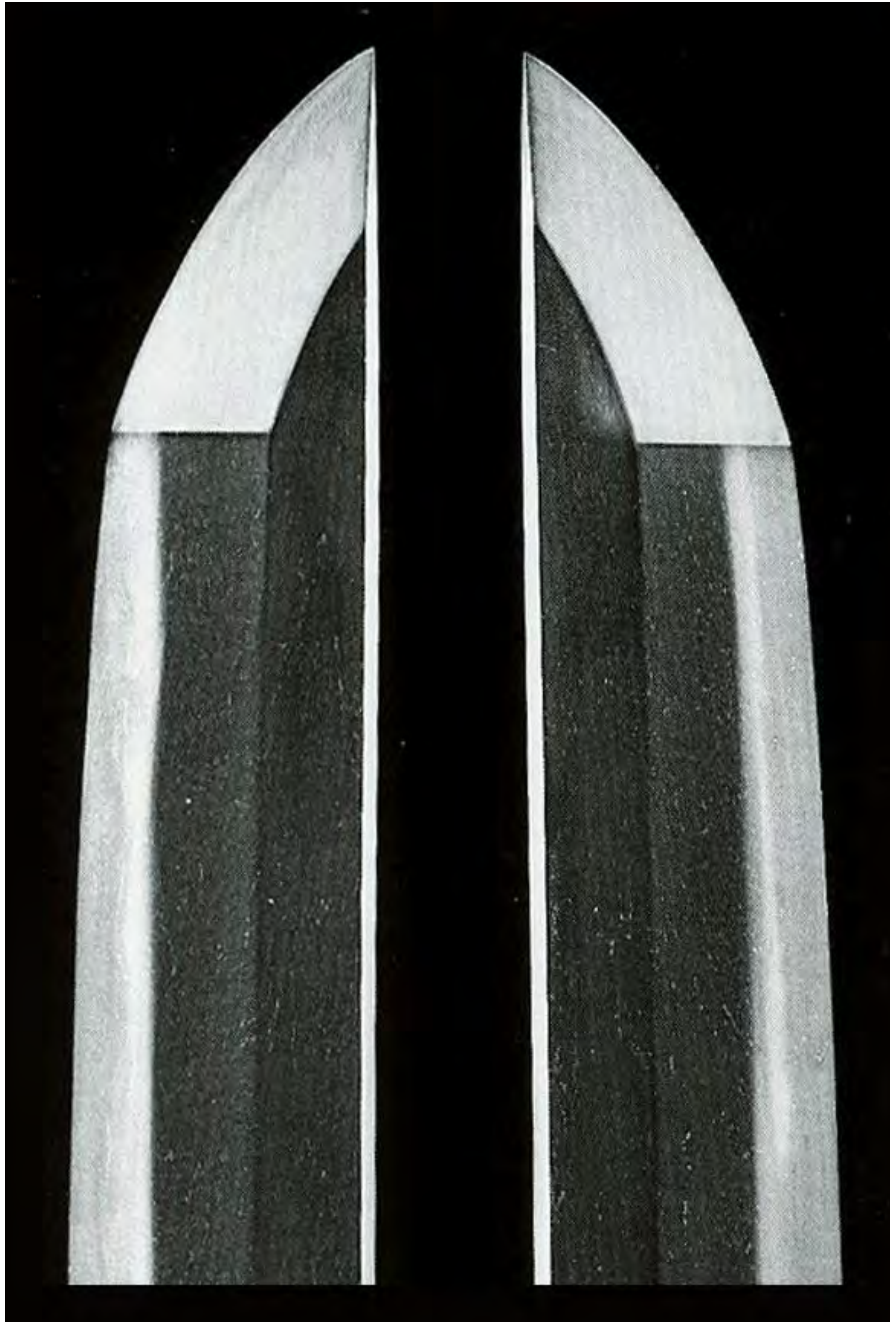
Made by Nobumasa from Bizen province

This blade has an ubu-nakago, bears a three-character signature, and displays with its slender mihaba, ko-kissaki, deep koshizori, and funbari the elegant and graceful shape from the end of the Heian and early Kamakura period. The forging structure is an itame mixed with mokume that features fine ji-nie and a jifu-utsuri, the hamon is a nie-based suguha-chō mixed with ko-chōji, ko-midare, ashi, and yō, and the bōshi is sugu with a ko-maru-kaeri. Thus, we have here an elegant and dignified blade of classical elegance, which can be regarded as an outstanding masterpiece of all works known by this smith. According to tradition, Nobumasa was the son of Nobufusa, and he is classified as a Ko-Ichimonji smith. Surviving works of his are rare, and it should be pointed out that this blade is signed in katana-mei.

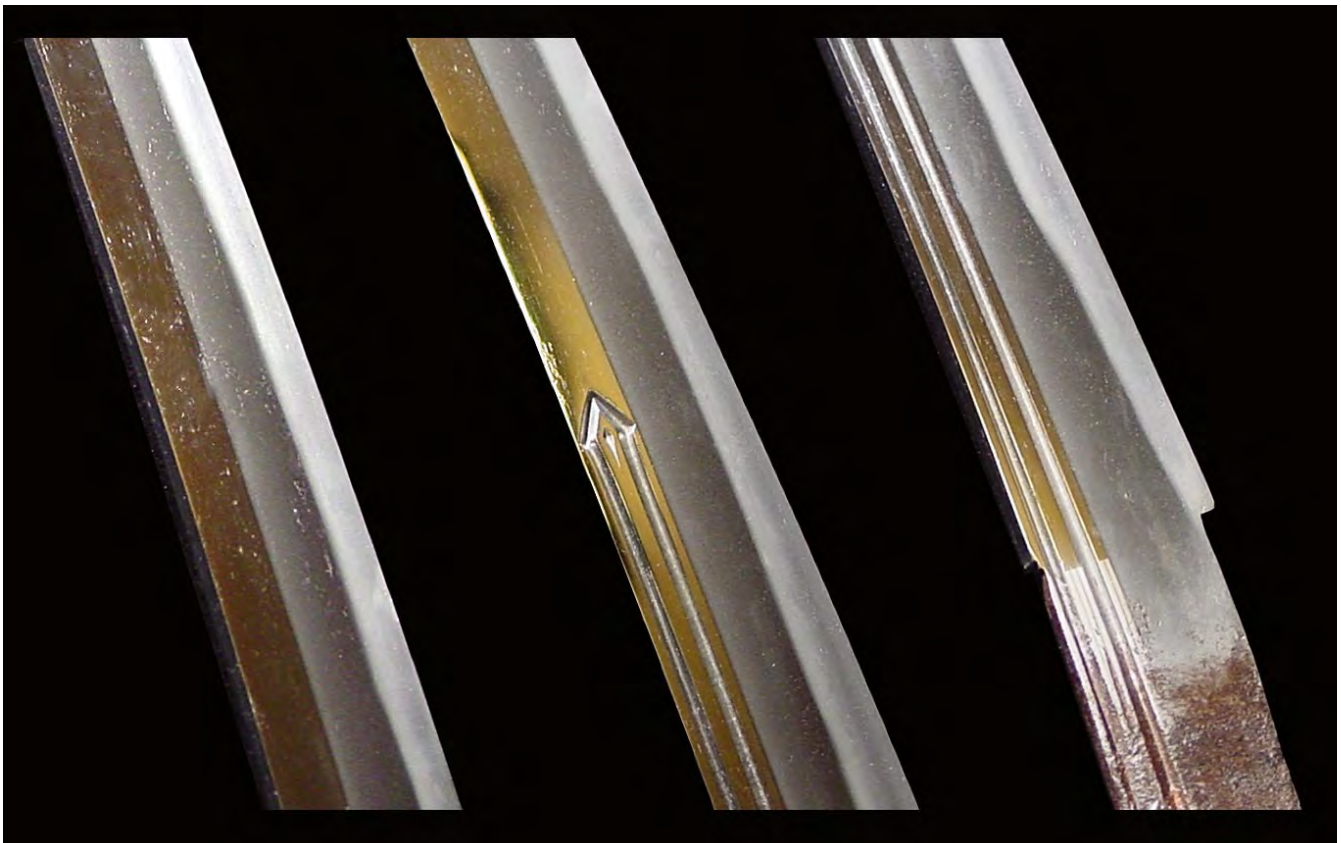
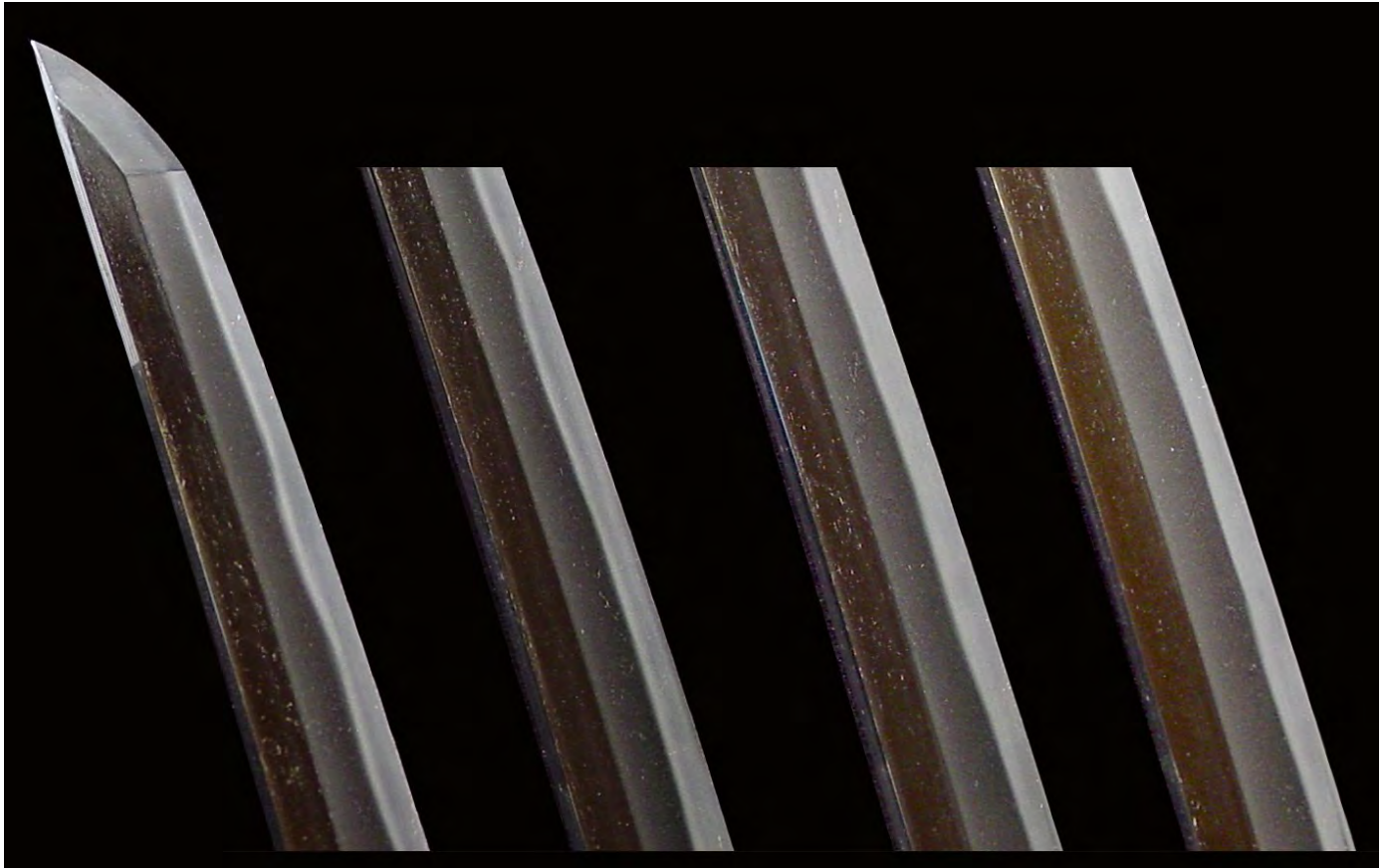
Blade length ~ 75.5 cm

Written by Tanzan [Tanobe Michihiro] on a lucky day in March in the year of the horse of this era (2026) + monogram.

This blade is also accompanied by a beautiful koshirae known as a Kenshin koshirae. It is a late Edo copy of a famous koshirae owned and created for the famous Sengoku Jidai Daimyo, Uesugi Kenshin. The original koshirae of this design was used by Uesugi Kenshin to house the famous Sanchômô Ichimonji blade now a part of the Setouchi City Bizen Museum in Okayama Prefecture, Japan.



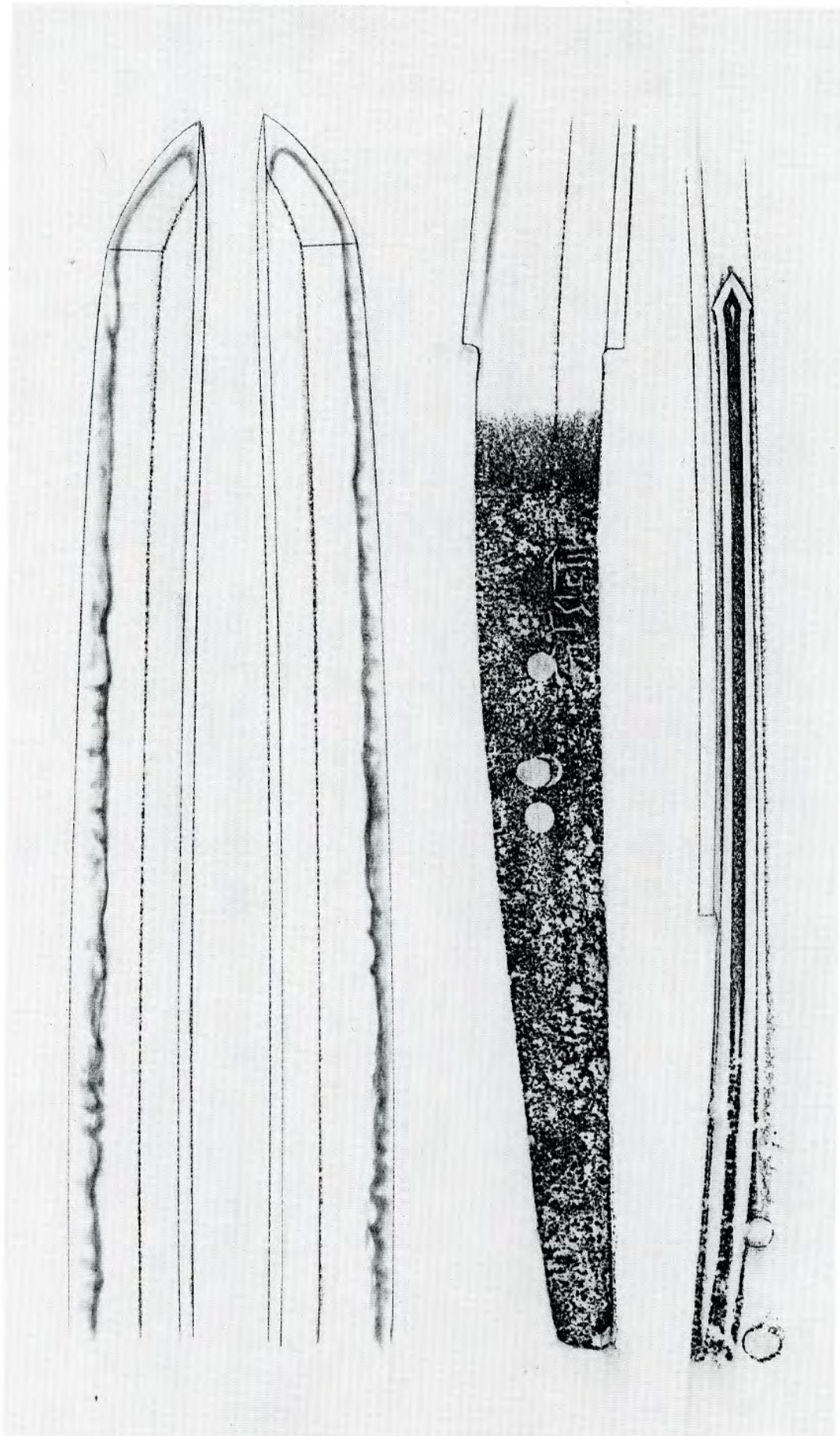








太刀 銘 信正作



太刀 銘 信正作

特重要第五四號

指定書

太刀 銘 信正作 一口

法量 長さ七五、五釐 及び二八釐 元幅三七釐

形状 鎬造 庵棟 身幅やや狭く腰及び高く小鋒

鍛 板目に奎交じり地并細かにつき地景入り乱れ映り立つ

刃文 直刃調に小丁子、小乱れ交じり足、葉入り小并出末

砂流しかかる

帽子 直ぐに小丸へ返り先掃きかける

彫物 佩表の腰元 鎬地に素剣

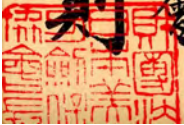
茎 生ぶ 鑓目勝手下り 目釘孔三

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
特別重要刀剣に指定する

平成 六年 四月 二 日

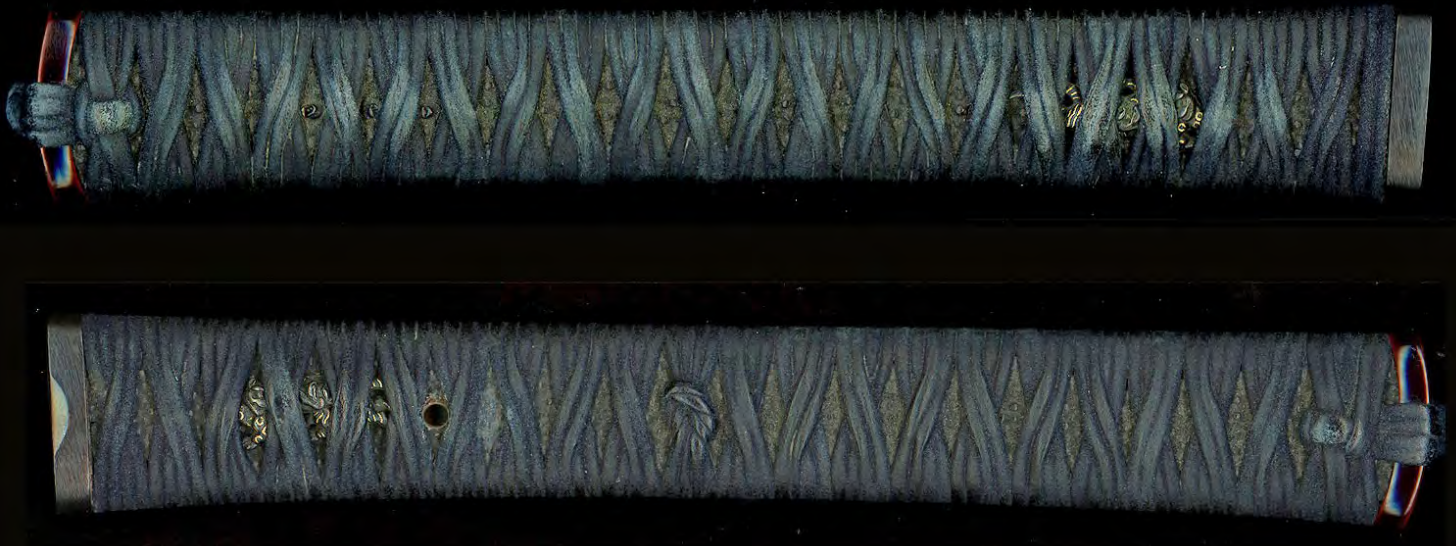
財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會

會長 山中貞則





TSUKA



PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE NCJSC

NTHK Novice Course, 3rd Edition

by Yoshikawa Kôen , Translated by Dr. Gordon Robson

This “Novice Course” on Japanese swords (Nihonto) was first written as a series of articles by Yoshikawa Kôen sensei for the Nihon Tôken Hozon Kai (NTHK). Dr. Gordon Robson translated the text into English for the Northern California Japanese Sword Club (NCJSC) and organized the material into book form in 1990-1992. A little over half the book introduces the Gokaden (Five Traditions). The rest of the book includes a glossary of sword terms (in Japanese and English) and chapters on the principles of sword polishing and making oshigata. Also included is a chapter on the NTHK shinsa (screening) system, explaining the point system and how to read “papers.” The 2023 edition has improved print quality and incorporates updates and new oshigata from Dr. Robson. 239 pages, over 100 illustrations, softcover, 3rd Edition, 2023.
\$35.00 (US) - available through the lulu.com bookstore.

Tsuba, An Aesthetic Study, 2nd Edition

by Kazutaro Torigoye and Robert E. Haynes

This book is about tsuba (Japanese sword guards) covering the inception of tsuba, the main schools in chronological order, specific schools and makers. Appendices include a glossary of tsuba-related Japanese terms as well as descriptions of forging, surface finishes, coloring of metals, fukurin (rim covers), inlay styles (zôgan) and the composition of metal alloys used in tsuba.

This book is mainly a translation of Tsuba Geijutsu Kô, 鐔芸術考 (A Treatise on the Aesthetics of Tsuba), but additional information was added to assist Western students. The 2022 edition has improved print quality.

237 pages, 119 figures in black and white, softcover, 2nd Edition, 2022.

\$25.00 (US) - available through the lulu.com bookstore.

Translation of the “Kinkô Meikan” (TEXT ONLY)

by Senichiro Masumoto and Kenichi Kokubo, 1974, translated by John Yumoto and Allan Harvie

The Masumoto and Kokubo original has 630 pages of photographs of signatures on sword fittings, including tsuba, fuchi, kozuka and menuki. This translation (without the photos) by John Yumoto and Alan Harvie includes many translator’s notes. The 2022 edition corrects of some previous printing errors.

196 pages, softcover, 2nd Edition, 2022. \$25.00 (US) - available through the lulu.com bookstore.

A Brief History of Japanese Sword Fittings Artisans, a translation of Hompô Shôken Kinkô Ryakushi

By Wada Tsunahirô, translation by Henri Joly and Alan Harvie

229 pages, spiral bound. Compiled from Tō-Ron, completely reformatted and indexed.

A Brief History of Japanese Sword Fittings Artisans can be purchased through the website, www.ncjsc.org, or by mailing in this form, along with your check or money-order in US dollars, to: Northern California Japanese Sword Club, P.O. Box 8149, Foster City, CA 94404

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SAN FRANCISCO 2026 TOKEN KAI

OVERVIEW: On **July 31, August 1, 2, 2026** the Northern California Japanese Sword Club (N.C.J.S.C) will be hosting its 36th annual Token Kai at the **S.F. Airport Marriott Hotel**.

.....

DIRECTIONS: To help us serve your table needs at the 2026 Token Kai, please complete and return the exhibitor information section on page two.

Mail your completed form and check payable to the Northern California Japanese Sword Club to:

Fred Weissberg, V.P.
Northern California Japanese Sword Club
P.O. Box 1708
Monterey, CA 93942
Email: ncjsc.vicepresident@gmail.com

If you prefer, you can go to the **San Francisco Token-Kai** page under the **Events** section of our club website at: <http://www.ncjsc.org>. You will find registration forms and a PayPal option for payment.

.....

2026 TOKEN KAI COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENT:

The 2026 Token Kai will be held at the same location as last year, the Marriott Hotel at the San Francisco Airport. The address is 1800 Old Bayshore Highway in Burlingame, CA 94080. **Send in your form early for 2026!**

HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:

You must book your room directly with the hotel. To arrange your hotel accommodations at the S.F. Airport Marriott call (650) 692-9100. You can also book online. Check the **San Francisco Token-Kai** page of the club website for the link to the hotel reservation page.

If you have problems or need help, contact me.

NOTE: If you are planning to stay at the S.F. Airport Marriott, please book your rooms early as you can cancel with no penalty! In addition, when making your reservations, be sure to mention that you are attending the **Northern California Japanese Sword Club Sword Show** to receive the special show room rate. **NOTE: ROOM RATE EXPIRES 30 DAYS PRIOR TO SHOW. BOOK EARLY AS THE ROOM BLOCK AT THE SPECIAL SHOW RATE USUALLY FILLS UP!**

THIS PAGE **MUST BE COMPLETED AND RETURNED WITH YOUR CHECK OR A NOTE THAT YOUR FEES WERE SENT VIA PAYPAL TO RESERVE A TABLE.**

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CITY_____ STATE_____ ZIP_____

Name(s) of Pass Holder(s) (please include you own name):

1._____ 2._____

3._____ 4._____

TABLE RESERVATIONS:

Number of tables requested: _____@ \$250.00 comes with one pass

_____@ \$310.00 comes with two passes

_____@ \$370.00 comes with three passes

THERE WILL BE A MAXIMUM OF THREE PASSES PER TABLE!!!

TOTAL NUMBER OF TABLES_____ = TOTAL FEE: \$_____

- Will you be staying at the S.F. Airport Marriott Hotel?_____. Staying at the hotel is essential for the success and future of the show.