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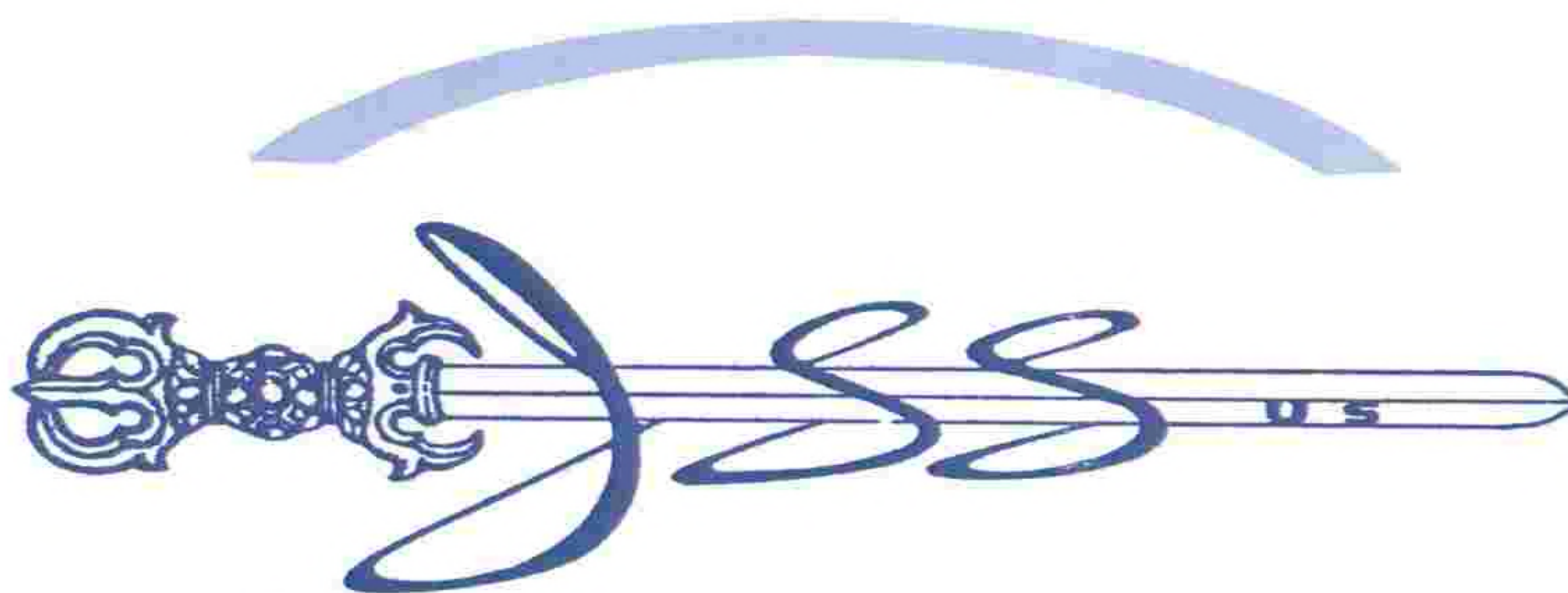
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Real-life *kantei* of swords, Part 3: Other weapons, with unusual *tsurikuri komi*.

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Introduction: Two previous articles (**Coutinho (2010-a)** and **Coutinho (2010-b)**) discussed some problems encountered when examining unusual swords. This article will examine another problem encountered when confronted with the question of ascertaining the quality and maker of two blades with unusual *tsurikuri komi*. The first blade is an *unokubi zukuri* type *tanto* (see **Coutinho (2008)**) and the second is a *jumonji yari*. In these two cases, the usual *kantei* steps – shape, *hada*, *hamon* and *nakago* – are much less useful than for the more usual *tsurikuri komi*: *shinogi zukuri* blades and *hira zuruki* blades. Consider first the shape of the pieces. In the case of *unokubi zukuri* type *tanto* this *tsurikuri komi* can be easily classified if the blade is very old; however, in the case of *Shinto* and *Shinshinto* pieces the shape is not a good guide. For the case of the *jumonji yari*, the literature seems to be very limited. There seems to be no book that classifies the change in shapes of this unusual *tsurikomi* according to production time. Two well-known books are **Knutsen (2007)** and **Iida (1973)**. Neither author delves into this subject deeply enough. **Iida (1973)** has a long chapter on the evolution of *yari*, but little on *jumonji yari*. However, both books are useful for the discussion that follows. The usual recommended approach to *kantei* is to first examine the shape to determine the period of production and then to look at the *hada* to both judge quality and time of production. Unfortunately for these blades, the state of polish was poor. The *hamon* of both pieces were visible but not in sufficient detail to see *hataraki* and other qualities that would give hints about School, time of production, and quality. Accordingly, *nakago* and *mei* were examined. This is usually straightforward but in this case, there were problems with each piece. These problems are discussed below.

First Blade : a *tanto*

Figure 1 shows photographs of the *tanto*. In addition to the usual view, a photo of the blade viewed from the top is provided to illustrate the shape of *unokubi zukuri* type blades.

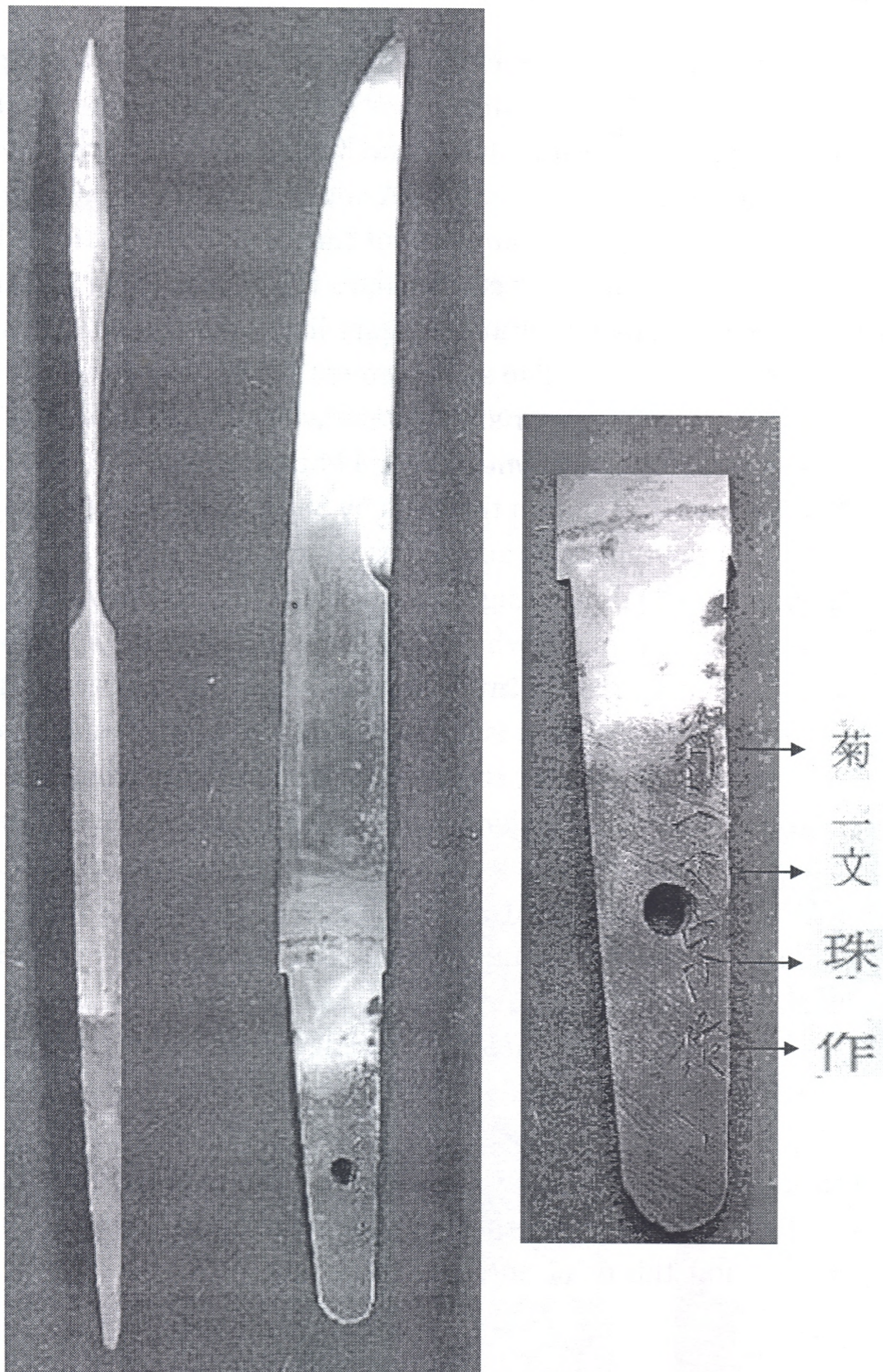


Figure 1

The *tanto* measurements are as follows:

Total length: 27.00 cm *Nagasa*: 18.05 cm, *Moto Haba*: 2.00 cm, *Moto Kasane*: 0.85 cm

The thinning of the *mune* is the property that defines the shape as *unokubi zukuri*. The *hamon* is a gentle *notare* in *nioi*. The *mei* in Figure 1 has *kanji* that are difficult to read. *Kanji* in printed form have been added to make the *mei* readable. A notable feature of this *mei* occurs where the outline of the *kanji* is not carved but only indicated by small cuts. This is commonly seen on blades made during the Second World War; the books by Fuller and Gregory listed in the references have many such examples. The signature reads *Kiku ichi Mon Ju(?) Saku*. If it was a Second World War signature, it would probably not be in the *meikan* directories. The *mei* is found both in the publication by Hawley (1981), page 259, and in the book by Shimizu Osamu (2005), page 614. This apparent contradiction is what makes this *tanto* interesting. Hawley (1981) dates a signature like this to a smith working around 1870, living in Yamato, who also signed *Goshiro Kanenaga*. Hawley rates the smith at ten points. Shimizu Osamu, Osamu (2005), also lists *Kanenaga*. If the blade was indeed made at the beginning of the *Meiji* Era it has historical importance. The question remaining is whether or not the signature is *shoshin* or *gimei*. The common belief among collectors is that the work of low-ranked smiths was hardly ever, if ever, faked. Considering the possibility of a Second World War smith, works by Gregory and Fuller were consulted. Gregory (1975), page 26, shows a smith whose signature was translated by the authors as *Seki Ichi Mon ji*. The *kanji* *Seki* in the signature is somewhat difficult to read. It could be *Kiku* and so this smith could have signed *Kiku Ichi Mon Ji*. Unfortunately there is a *ji* and not *ju* in the inscription and the rest of the signature is very different. The same smith is also found in Fuller (1983), page 72, where this smith signs as *Endo Ichi Mon Ji*. With this information, this dead-end road stops.

Consultation with a specialist in Japan indicated that the signature was not the smith listed in **Hawley (1981)**. The signature was *gimei*! Here is case of a low-level smith being forged. In conclusion, this blade was made not long before the Second World War by a smith who tried to inscribe the name of a better-known smith.

The second blade is by a smith that **Hawley (1981)** gives eighty points. This piece is more likely to be a forgery than the just-examined blade signed *Kiku Ichi Mon Ju saku*.

Second Blade: *jumonji yari*

A look at both **Iida (1973)** and **Knutsen(2004)** reveals quite a few types of *jumonji yari*. This example is called *Uekama -jumonji yari* and is type (c) in Figure 24 of the book by Ronald and Patricia Knutsen (**Knutsen (2004)**). It is considered the most common type of *jumonji yari*. The dimensions of the blade are given below.

Figure 2 shows where the measurements were taken as well as the actual *yari* before and after polish. Total length- 67 cm, along the *shinogi* (A)- 17.5 cm, along the Cross (B)-11.5 cm, *kerakubi* (C)-1.5 cm

The *nakago* is also known as *kuki*. The total length (67 cm) is from the tip of the *nakago* (*kuki jiri*) to the *hosaki* (point of the blade).

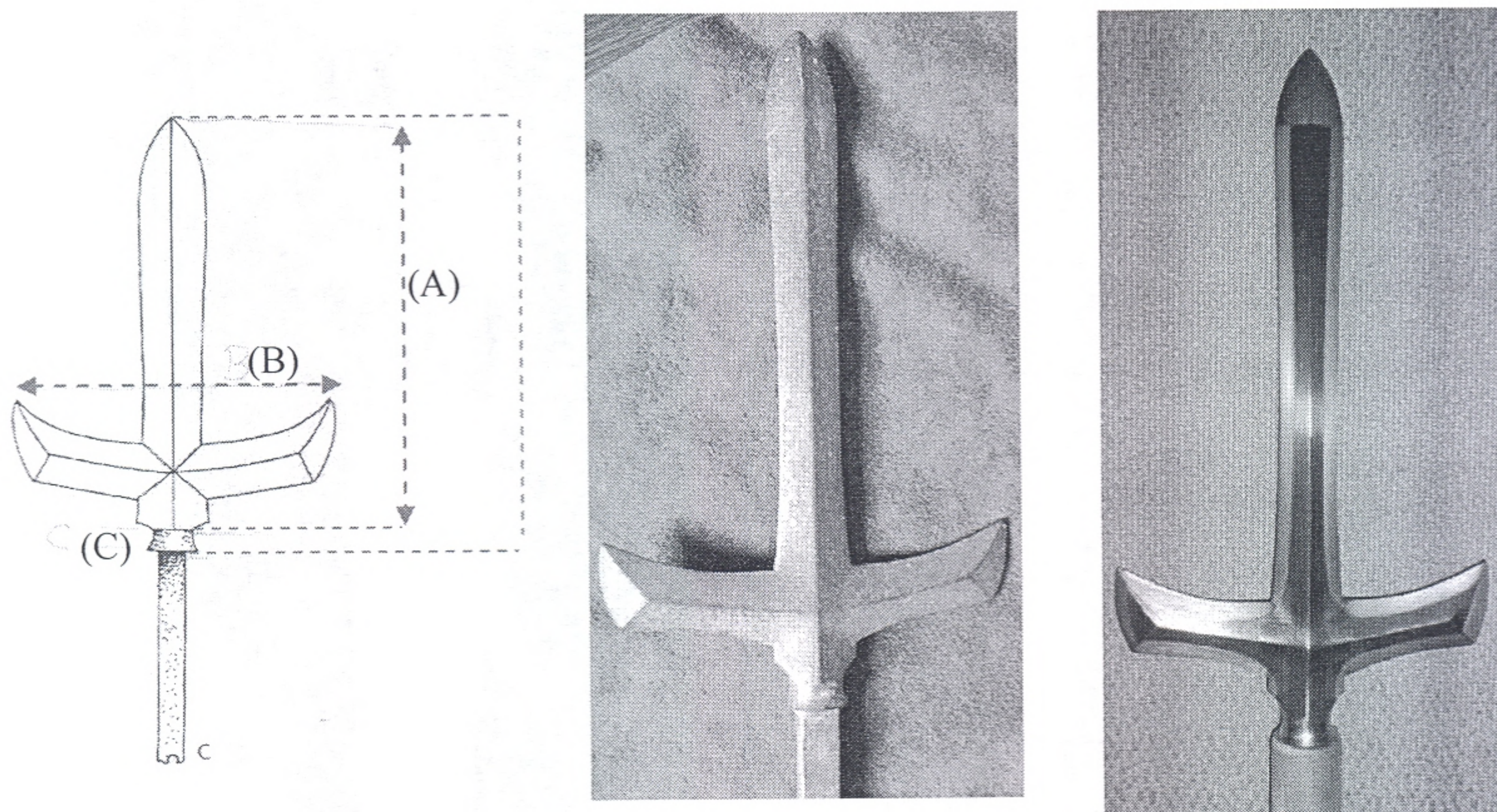


Figure 2

The figures 3a and 3b below show photographs of the *nakago* and two *oshigata* taken from **Kazan (2005)** for comparison purposes.



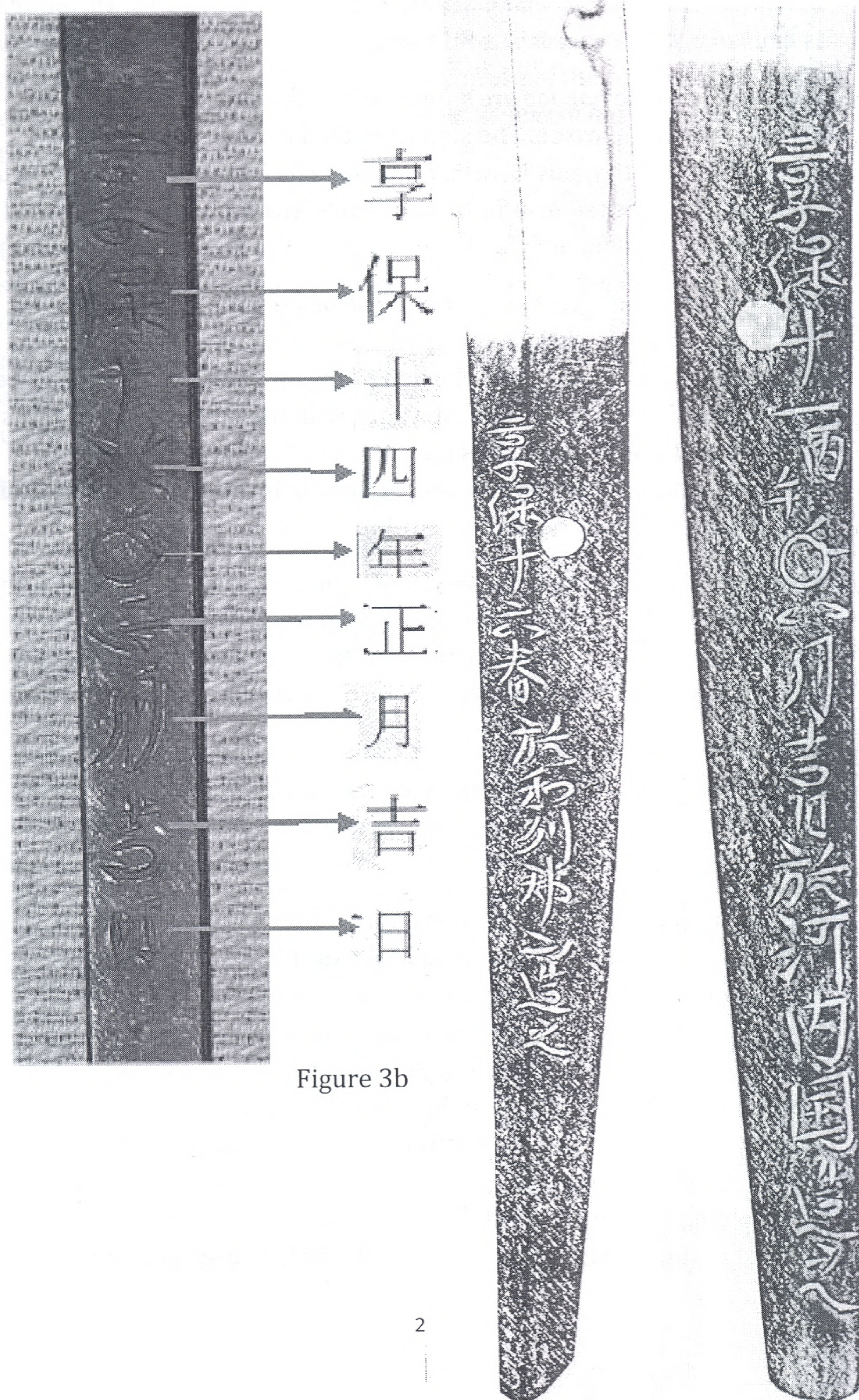


Figure 3b

After polishing, the blade revealed a *nie* covered tight *itame hada*. The *hamon* is *suguha* in *nie* and *nioi* and it has *hotsure* in places. The point it is *hakikake*. It is a very beautiful blade.

The photos of the *nakago* are shown in Figures 3a and 3b with two *oshigata* for comparison. The signature on the side containing the name of the smith reads *Wa Shu Kuni Yama Ju Tsutsu I Etchu kami Nyu Do Ki Ju*. The other side with the date reads *Kyo Ho 14 Nen cho Gatsu kichi Jitsu*.

The *mei* had to be considered first as the blade was not in polish and this type of *tsurikuri komi* is not well-described. Deciphering *shosho* signatures is never easy; deciphering a long one, such as this signature, was a difficult task. After some struggle, with the help of many friends in Brazil and also in Japan, this task was accomplished. The method used to decipher the signature is described below because this kind of task is sometimes a problem in real-life *kantei*.

The general procedure to be used in deciphering signatures in Japanese Art objects has been described in many references. Two especially useful ones are an article by **Bottomley (1995)** and the book by James Self and Nobuko Hirose (**Self 1987**).

In this case, the first step was to assume that in one of the sides there is a date. The first two characters in both sides were examined and on one side it was found *kyo ho* - a Japanese historical period (1716 - 1736). This side is called the *ura* side. The *omote* side contains the *mei*.

It is necessary to look for "sign posts" in the *omote* side; here was found *Etchu no Kami*. **Honma and Masakuni (2010)** contain a list of swordsmiths listed by honorary title, such as *Harima no Kami*, or *Kodzuke Suke* with the dates when the smith worked. The list was created to help people with *suriage* blades determine the maker of the blade. Fortunately, in this case there is both a title and a date. Thus checking in the list given by **Honma and Masakuni (2010)** for *Etchu (no) Kami* and the date (*kyo-ho*) one finds that the swordsmith is *Kiju*. On checking **Hawley (1981)**, page 258, where this smith was found, the rest of the signature can read. Unlike the first example, this smith,

Kiju is considered very good and rated eighty points. Highly-rated smiths are often faked. A search for examples leads to **Kanzan (2005)** where the *oshigata* in figures 3a and 3b were taken. The signatures in the *oshigata* compare well with the signature of the *yari* being examined. Polish and *shinsa* resulted in *tokubetsu hozon* papers for this *jumonji yari*.

The following information on this smith is taken from **Yoshikawa (1982)**. This smith, *Kiju*, was the son of *Etchu no Kami Kanekuni*. He signed *Terukuni* at the beginning of his career. In the final years of *Genroku* period (beginning of the 18th century), he became a Buddhist monk (took tonsure) and began to sign *Kiju*. His production increased after the *Shogun Yoshimune* took steps to foster the sword-making craft.

Conclusions of the series of articles on real-life *kantei*

This series of articles aims to share with readers some of the common problems faced when trying to decide on the authenticity and possible historical value of unusual pieces. Pieces are still found in the market in unpolished (a more difficult problem) and in polished states (an easier problem).

Some readers of this series provided feedback on the first two articles in this series **Coutinho (2010-a)** and **Coutinho (2010-b)**. Some were, for example, troubled by the traveler's sword of the first article, **Coutinho(2010-a)**. One of them remarked, he couldn't understand why someone would buy such a sword, since it was legal to buy swords and there were good swords everywhere. "Certainly not for protection" he remarked. He is right. The traveler's sword was not bought for protection, but even so it is easy to understand why such swords had a market. Swords were used by samurai and –if less than one *shaku* in length- by commoners as well. The reader should remember that the traveler's sword was made in *Edo jidai* - a peaceful era. At this point in the history of Japan, commoners and also most *bushi* (*samurai*) didn't expect to use their swords in fights. Swords were used (as in Europe in the 18th century) as part of clothing. As will be argued in a forthcoming article, fights with swords at this point in history of Japan were

confined mostly to master fencers defending the skill of their Schools. Thus it is easy to imagine a traveler visiting a center of sword production, very much like a modern factory outlet, and finding a sword cheaper than it would cost at home. To reiterate, the traveler's sword, while not a tourist souvenir, is a weapon that happened to be a good purchase made while passing through a production center.

In response to the second article on unlisted smiths, **Coutinho (2010-b)**, most readers seem to have come across unlisted smiths. These blades are fairly common and must be distinguished from fakes.

This, the third article in the series, on other types of blades, allows one to consider *jumonji yari* made in the *Edo jidai* when these types of weapons were made for display. Also, one should be aware that even lower-ranked smiths were sometimes faked.

The area of unusual weapons is one that is in need of further research. It is hoped that work in this area will happen and make the task of real-life *kantei* a little easier for all of us.

Acknowledgments

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Coutinho (2010 b)- F.A.B. Coutinho " Real-life *kantei* of swords, Part 2: Unlisted smiths and undecipherable inscriptions" *Newsletter of the Japanese sword society of the USA* Volume 42 #2 pages 14 – 23.

Coutinho(2008)- "About The Types of Japanese Swords" *Newsletter of the Japanese Sword Society of the USA* **40, (2) 9-16**. See this **article** for the distinction between *Unokubi Zukuri* and *Unokubi Zukuri* shapes.

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Hawley (1981)- Willis Hawley, *Japanese Sword Smiths* Hawley Publication
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R. Knutsen and P. Knutsen (2007)- "Japanese Spears and their use in Old Japan"
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There is controversy among Japanese *sensei* when it comes to unusual *Tsurikuri komi*. Take, for example, *naginata* versus *nagamaki*. According to Sato Kazan, **Kanzan (1981)**, *nagamaki* is only a special *koshirae* for the *naginata*. However, *sensei* Nagayama Kokan describes the two pole weapons in his book, **Kokan (1987)**, as different things. I tend to agree with *sensei* Kazan. For a good description of *nagamaki koshirae* see the article by Guido Schiller on the web at URL <http://forums.swordforum.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=12524>

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