

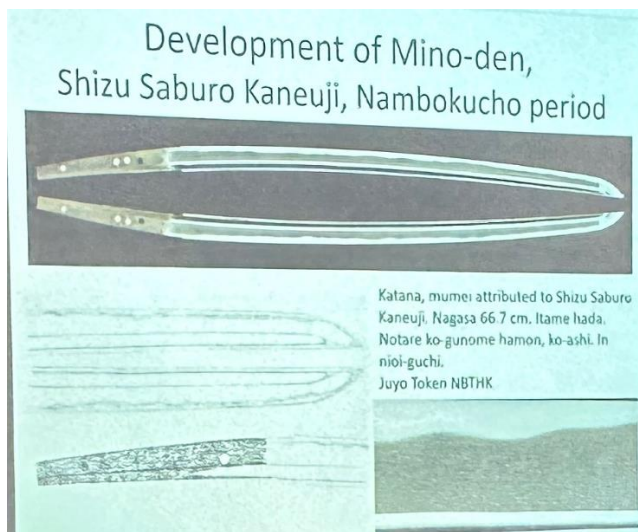
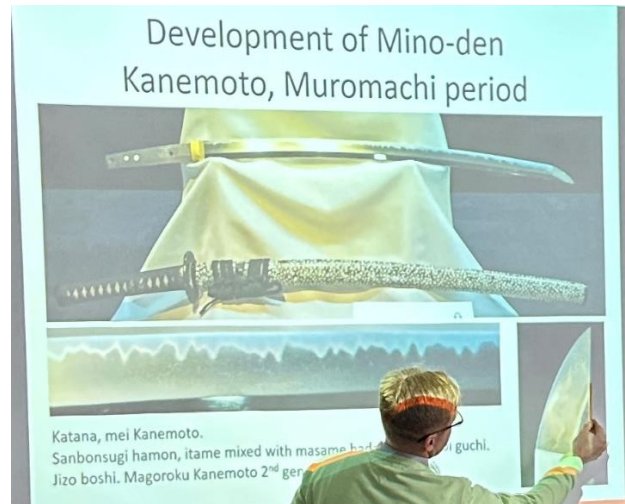
## Overview of the January 2023 London meeting

On 28 January, around fifteen members gathered in a rather diminutive, but imparting a cosy atmosphere, conference room of the Senate House. The reason we had braved the cold weather was the Mino-themed lecture, centred on the popular sword school so well known to nihonto aficionados. Members brought a lot of swords and even tosogu from various Mino schools.

Our secretary Igor Hochmajer presented a very detailed lecture on the Mino den of Japanese swords, from its earliest predecessors through its de facto conception in the warring Nanbokuchō era and its heyday in Muromachi.

The presentation highlighted the features of masters such as Shizi, Kinju, Kanemoto, Kanesada and others. The main kantei features of many were explained and illustrated. Our members took away the key characteristics of pointed togari and regular sanbosugi or gunome and will hopefully recognize the hidden gem when they next see it.

Following the formal presentation, those members who had brought items described them and allowed us to view and study them in person. There was quite an array of papered swords, including mainstays such as Kanemoto, Kanemichi, Kanenobu and Jumyo.



**Development of Mino-den Seki smiths, Muromachi period**

- The founder of Seki kaji (smiths) was Kanemitsu, who moved from Yamato province to Seki village. Kanemitsu was son of Kanenaga and grandson of Kinju.
- Seki kaji was quite unique group. They were established for pure economic activity without support from busho. They were organised in 7 branches called Seki Shichi Ryu. They made union, worked together, planned how many swords to make, cooperate and compete. They also developed a system to sell their swords. Because of sharing technical information and organised production Seki kaji were more effective.
- Heads of branches were: Kaneyoshi (Zenko school, leading descendant from Kanemitsu), Kaneari (Muroya sch.), Kaneyuki (Ryoken sch.), Kanetsune (Nara Sch.), Kanehiro (Tokunaga sch.), Kanenori (San'ami sch.) and Kaneyasu (Toku'in sch.). Worked together shared technique, and control how to make sword. Those unions made also yari, naginata, hocho.
- There are several other important places where swords were made in the early Muromachi period. Akasaka (prominent smith- Senjuin), Hachiya (p.s.- the other Kanesada), Sakakura (p.s.- Masatoshi), Nishigori, Shimizu (p.s.- Jumyo).

	Heian 794-1185	Kamakura 1185-1333	Nambokucho 1333-1392	Early Muromachi 1392-1467	Late Muromachi 1467-1596
MINO-DEN				Seki Shichi school Zenko school Akasaka-Senjuin sch. Hachiya school Jumyo school	





















We would like to thank all our members and guests who attended the event, brought items and participated so actively in the discussions. It proved to be a mixture of education but also fun – those, who were not too certain what their items were, nevertheless talked about them with passion and what they liked about them. There were plenty of questions and an interactive exchange of views.

Importantly, the attendees had the opportunity to examine and study in hand typical examples, papered by the NBTHK and NTHK. Side-by-side comparisons of the different sub-schools and as well as forging styles and periods of manufacture illustrated the breadth of the school.

Importantly, Igor had made sure that those with a sweet tooth were well catered for, with abundance of biscuits and chocolates. The event was eventually wrapped up with a brief drink in a nearby establishment.

### **Overview of the West Midlands, Birmingham meeting in February 2023**

The meeting was held at Hillscourt Hotel, which warmly accommodated us for the event, similarly to prior years.

There were around 25 attendees, who showcased their items, socialised and listened to a number of presentations and lectures. The day was quite interactive.

Mark Radburn, a committee member, gave a presentation about his recent trip to Japan. In November, he visited the Dai Token Ichi (Japanese Sword Fair) in Tokyo. He also visited several museums where he studied nihonto (Japanese swords) and tosogu (Fittings). Mark's talk was an exciting insight into the Japanese sword world with valuable tips and information for collectors.

The second presentation was about making wooden scabbards for storing swords (shirasaya). Mike Hickmann-Smith, explained in detail the steps involved in creating a shirasaya. He also mentioned challenges in the process and gave tips for overcoming them.

In the afternoon, we enjoyed listening to different approaches to collecting Japanese swords. There was a panel-like discussion with experienced collectors and well-known nihonto community members Paul Bowman, Ian Chapman and Les Stewart. Many members contributed with their stories and shared their own perspectives too.

Most meeting participants brought their swords and fittings for display and study. It was a rare opportunity to meet and discuss particular items with more experienced colleagues and see a wide variety of nihonto and tosogu. There were also many books for sale, mostly from the estate of former member Tony Norman, in support of his bereaved family.

We would like to express our heart-felt thanks to those who made this a memorable day!

