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Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Tokubetsu Juyo Token

Type: Katana

Mumei: den Awataguchi Kuniyoshi

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 6 bu 2 rin (65.5 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motohaba: slightly over 8 bu 7 rin (2.64 cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 1 bu 7 rin (0.55 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 6 bu (slightly less than 14.0 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight (0.1 cm)

Commentary:

This is a shobu zukuri katana with a marumune, a slightly wide mihaba, a standard kasane, and a large sori. The jihada is a tight ko-itame with ohada in places. There are dense ji-nie, and frequent fine chikei. The hamon is a suguha style, mixed with ko-gunome. There are frequent ashi and yo, dense ko-nie, and the nioiguchi is very clear. The boshi has a wide yakiba, is straight with a komaru and return. The horimono on the omote and ura side are bo-hi with marudome, and on the omote at the koshimoto there is a bonji. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is ha-agari kurijiri; the yasurimei are a shallow katte-sagari, and there are three mekugiana and it is mumei (there is no signature).

In Yamashiro-kuni (province), Awataguchi was one of Kyoto's seven guchi or gates (the entrances to Kyoto since Medieval times: the exact locations and the number of entrances or gates is uncertain and depends on the specific era). Another name for this entrance was the Sanjo Guchi (gate). This was in the Seirenin area, and in medieval times, it was called Shirakawa from the river's name. It is known that swordsmiths lived in Awataguchi; in the "Uji Shui-monogatari" (an early 13th century book) in the 1st issue in the 15th story, an "older boy working for the temple who stole salmon" said the Awataguchi swordsmiths were there. The Awataguchi school was active at end of the Heian period to the end of the Kamakura period. They were known to be part of the Fujiwara family and had the name Hayashi, and some historical books listed the Fujihayashi mei, but we have

never seen such a name. According to the “Koto-meizukushi Taizen” the founders of the school were Kuniyori and Kuniie, but today we do not see their names on any blades. Kuniie’s sons are supposed to be Kunitomo, Hisakuni, Kuniyasu, Kunikiyo, Arikuni, and Kunitsuna, and these six brothers were all well known as great masters. Kuniyoshi’s grandfather was Kunitomo, the oldest of the six brothers, his father was Norikuni, and his son or student was Toshiro Yoshimitsu: from the work of these smiths, the school’s name is very well known. Today we do not have any dated Kuniyoshi blades. But according to the “Koto-shito-taikan first volume” written by Kawaguchi Choku, “Awataguchi Kuniyoshi is listed as working in Koan 3 nen Kanoe Tatsu 7 gatsu hi”. Also, the “Token-mei Jiten” by Kawaguchi Choku, Furuyabu Tsuneo and Kishimoto Kannosuke, and the “Nihon koto-shi” (history of koto) by Honma Junji said “Kuniyoshi tanto are dated Shogen (1259) and Koan (1278), and Yoshimitsu’s work looks later than this”. Another historical book lists a date of Kenji 4 nen (okinsho). Judging from these references, Kuniyoshi’s active period seems to around the mid-Kamakura period. Kuniyoshi signed his name with his title “Sabyoejo” and he is one of the early examples of a smith who signed with a title. This blade is a similar to his long signature hirazukuri uchigatana (1 shaku 7 sun 8 bu, with the meibutsu go Narikitsune, classified as Juyo Bunkazai). The jitetsu is a tight ko-itame, there are dense thick ji-nie, frequent chikei, and an elegant strong jigane. The hamon is chu-suguha mixed with ko-gunome. There are ashi, ko-nie below the nioiguchi, and dense frequent ha-nie. The ji and ha are both bright and clear, and it is a very elegant looking sword.

(Explanation and oshigata by Hiyama Masanori)

Meitan Kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba & kodogu

Hankai (a historic Chinese general) zu tsuba

Mei: Ryunsai Omori Teruhide (kao)

Meiwa kanoe tora 6 gatsu kichijitsu

This is a tsuba design based on an old Chinese story “Komon kai “ (the general Hankai story) from the founding of the Chinese nation or empire, and this is also a play for the theater. At the end of the Shin era in China, Ryuho and Kou competed with each other, and Hankai was Ryuho ‘s vassal. Both of them marched to Shin’s capital Rakuyo, and at first, Ryuho captured the area. But Kou had a larger army, and he marshalled his army in the Komon-saka area, and tried to defeat Ryuho. Ryuho realized that he did not have not much of a hope to win, and he went to Kou’s camp by himself for negotiations. During a party there, Kou try to assassinate Ryuho. Hankai realized his lord was in danger, and he carried a shield, shook off

his guards, jumped into the party and he saved his lord. Because of this action, Ryuho escaped danger, and later, he defeated Kou, conquered the country, and become the Kan people's founder. This story is loved not only in China, but also in Japan, as an example of a chugi-tan, (story of loyalty) and as a goyu-tan (story of bravery), and this theme is often used for the design of tosogu. The artist, Omori Teruhide, was Yokoya Somin's student Omori Terumasa's successor, and became the Omori school's second generation. He was also a master smith who brought prosperity to his school. Most notably, he created what we call the Omori-nami (Omori style wave), an original wave pattern using a kinkeshi technique with sunako zogan (sand inlay). He created nashiji-zogan, which looks like makie, and his style has a strong personality. This design shows Hankai just jumping into the enemy's camp, and has a dynamic feeling, with dynamic takabori, bright iroe, and gorgeous gold nashiji. This work fully shows Teruhide's high level of skill.

(Explanation by Iida Toshihisa)

Shijo Kantei To No. 662

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 661 issue Shijo Kantei To is April 5, 2012. Each person may submit one vote. Submissions should contain your name and address and be sent to the NBTHK Shijo Kantei. You can use the Shijo Kantei card which is attached in this magazine. Votes postmarked on or before April 5, 2012 will be accepted. If there are swordsmiths with the same name in different schools, please write the school or prefecture, and if the swordsmith was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

Information:

Type: tachi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu (71.2 cm)

Sori: slightly less 6 bu (1.8 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 5 bu 8 rin (4.8 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 2.5 bu (18.94 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. This has a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is an okissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, and the entire hada is visible. There are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a pale midare utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are ashi, a bright nioiguchi, frequent ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is slightly suriage, and the nakago jiri is a ha-agari type kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari, and there are two mekugiana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature located towards the mune edge of the nakago, and the ura side has part of the date.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For February

The swords discussed below were shown in the February, 2012 meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

During these meetings, five swords are displayed for examination. The blades can be examined, but the nakago are covered and cannot be seen (they are left in the shira-saya tsuka). After examining the 5 swords, the meeting attendees must decide who they think made the 5 swords which were available for examination, and submit a paper ballot with these names. The 5 swords seen in the October meeting are described below, and the correct names of the makers are presented, along with an explanation of important details which should lead a person to pick the correct swordsmith's name. This lecture and the explanations were given by Ooi Gaku.

Kantei To No. 1: Wakizashi

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Sakyoshin Munemitsu
Jiro saemonjo Katsumitsu
Eisho 5 nen 2 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 1 shaku 7 sun 6 bu
Sori: slightly less than 4 bu
Style: shinogi zukuri
Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada; there are fine jinie, and slightly pale midare utsuri
Hamon: gunome mixed with square shape gunome and togari; in places there are open bottom gunome, and the entire hamon has a high yakiba with a midare hamon; there are ashi and yo, nioi type small ko-nie; in places there are kinsuji; and on the omote and ura, near the central area there are small tobiyaki.
Boshi: the omote at the yokote has yaki-komi and is straight; the ura is a shallow notare; both sides have a wide yakiba and a komaru and a long return.
Horimono: at the koshimoto on the omote side, there is a gyo style kurikara; the ura has a rendai with a shiketsu (a Buddhist ceremonial platform).

This wakizashi is less than 2 shaku long. The tip has sori, and in the boshi, the yakiba is wide with a long return, and from these characteristics, this obviously is a Muromachi period katate-uchi (one hand) uchigatana. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there is a refined hada, the nioiguchi is bright, the jihada and hamon are both sophisticated, and one has the impression that this is the work of a mainstream master smith. There is a pale midare-utsuri, and from this, we can judge this as a Sue Bizen wakizashi. Beside this, the gyo style kurikara horimono at the koshimoto is characteristic. The dragon's face is in profile, and he holds the ken at the top, and this is a characteristic Sue Bizen design. Other examples of a Kurikara dragon's profile are the Kamakura period's Nagamitsu, and Kagemitsu, and the Nanbokucho period's Kanemitsu, Chogi, and Motoshige. However, these dragons' torso's are narrow, and then swell just like a sail with the wind, and are called "Harami Ryu" (a dragon carrying a baby), and they are different from this. The square featured hamon stands out more than the usual ones, but some parts have open bottom gunome, and from this, most of the people voted for Sue Bizen smiths such as Katsumitsu. Jiro saemonjo Katsumitsu and Sakyoshin Mumemitsu are nephew and uncle, and we sometimes see their gassaku work. In most of their gassaku work, the nephew Katsumitsu signed first and signed in a higher location, but this is the opposite from the usual pattern, and it is interesting. In the "Tsuchiya Oshigata", there is a dated Bunmei 3 work, and Munemitsu signed his age as 35, and from this, this Munemitsu's age was 72 when this gassaku work was made with his nephew. But 2 years later, there is a gassaku sword dated Eisho 7, and on the ura side there is a signature "otouto (younger brother) Sakyoshin Munemitsu": this indicates that we may have to reconsider their relationship in the future.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Sanenori (Ko-ichimonji)

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 8.5 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with itame and mokume hada; there are jifu utsuri.

Hamon: chu-suguha style, mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome; there are frequent ashi and yo, th ehabuchi is nioi; there are uneven ko-nie, and some places have kinsuji.

Boshi: straight and round.

This tachi's funbari at the koshimoto is gone, and from this shape you can imagine that this is either suriage or o-suriage. Along the upper part, the sori becomes remarkably shallow, and some places shows an uneven dark jifu-utsuri which comes up to the shinjig ji, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as being a tachi from no later than the early Kamakura period. The jihada is refined, and relatively bright, and from this, it seems to a mainstream work, and in particular, a Bizen smith's work. At this time, of course, you can think about either the Ko-Bizen or Ichimonji schools. The hamon is mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome; some parts of the hamon have high and low variations in the width, and usually this kind of technique is not seen in Ko-Bizen work, and from this, an Ichimonji school work seems to be a proper answer. In voting, besides Ko-Ichimonoji smith's names, judging from the hamon and jifu-utsuri, some people voted for Bizen Nagamitsu, and Unrui. But during the second vote, people considered the sori and utsuri, and they corrected themselves and voted for the Ichimonji school.

Kantei To No 3: wakizashi

Mei: Izumi no kami Fujiwara Kunisada

Length: 1 shaku 3 sun 5. 5 bu

Sori: slightly less 5 bu

Design: shobu zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; on the omote side jifu type hada is visible; there are ji-nie and chikei.

Hamon: the moto has a straight yakidashi, and above this it is mainly notare mixed with ko-gunome; there are ashi, slightly uneven dense ko-nie, and in places, fine sunagashi; on the omote, the central area has muneyaki.

Boshi: on the omote, straight and the tip is mixed with a small midare hamon; the ura side is midarekomi; both sides have a komaru return and hakikake.

This is a Shin-Kunisada wakizashi. He was one of the Horikawa school's last students, the same as the Shodai Kunisuke. From this signature and the style, he is supposed to have been taught by an older student Echigo no kami Kunitoshi, and this work shows it. This has a wide mihaba, a long size, and a large sori which is a Keicho period shape. The hamon is similar to Kunitoshi's, which Kunitoshi is

supposed to have copied from Izumi no kami Kanesada's style: primarily a worn down notare hamon. The overall style is similar to Kunitoshi's and to early Shodai Kunisuke work, so both names are treated as almost correct answers. But if you look it at carefully, Kunitoshi's nioiguchi is little tighter than this, and in Kunisada's later work, there are mainly round top choji, and around the monouchi area or middle of the blade there are muneyaki, and you can see the same characteristics here. There are couple of visible hints. Because this is a typical Shin-Kunisada early work, most of the people voted for him.

Kantei To No. 4: naginata naoshi wakizashi

Mei: Sanetoshi

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 9 sun 8 bu

Sori: slightly over 2 bu

Design: naginata naoshi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame hada mixed with mokume and itame hada, and the entire hada is visible; there are ji-nie, fine chikei, and in some places there are jifu type hada and pale jifu type utsuri.

Hamon: chu-suguha mixed with ko-gunome and ko-midare, some parts become saka-ashi: in the middle to the bottom half there are frequent ashi and yo; on the omote side the saka-ashi are prominent; the habuchi is in nioi, and there are some ko-nie.

Boshi: straight and yakizume.

Horimono: on the omote at the koshimoto, close to the shinogisuji, and the ura side at the koshimoto on the shinogi ji, there are hoso-hi (narrow hi), and both sides have hi cut through the nakago. _

This is a originally a naginata which was later changed to a wakizashi. Because the fukura is a poor, this is not a Shinto period blade. The jihada is a visible fine ko-itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and some places have a jifu type hada which is different from the other areas of the jihada. The hamon is primarily chu-suguha, and some places there is a saka-ashi midare hamon. Primarily on the omote side, the ashi are saka-ashi and they are prominent. From these characteristics, most people considered this an Aoe blade. To decide the time in which it was made, notice that there are no dan-utsuri, a little bit of ha-nie, and the nioiguchi is not clear and bright, and from these characteristics, this is not work from the end of the Kamakura period. Ko-Aoe work, which is from the end of Heian period to the early Kamakura period, usually do not have a clear saka-ashi type midare hamon. Considering these facts, this seems likely to be work from after the mid-Kamakura period. A Kamakura period smith, Sanetoshi, is listed in the Meikan as being active in several schools: Ko-bizen, Fukuoka Ichimonji, Osafune

and Katayama Ichimonji. This sword is listed in the “Nihonto Juyo Bijutsu Zenshu” as being from the Bitchu Katayama school (today’s strong opinion is that the Katayama school was located near Fukuoka in Bizen). A common opinion is that naginata naoshi often originate from the Katayama Ichimonji school. In the past, people thought that Katayama was in Bitchu and this was the same area as Aoe. Also, in the Katayama Ichimonji Norifusa school, Sanetoshi was well known. However, the province where this was should be studied more in the future. This does not have all of the Ichimonji style characteristics. This should be looked as an Aoe school naginata naoshi. —

Kantei To No. 5: tachi

Mei: Kunimune (Bizen Saburo)

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 1.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 4.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; some parts of the hada are visible; in places there are ji-nie, and bright midare utsuri.

Hamon: mainly a choji type hamon, mixed with ko-gunome and square shaped gunome; the entire yakiba has a high midare hamon; some parts show a small midare hamon: there are frequent ashi and yo; on the omote, the upper part of the hamon has a whitish color.

Boshi: the omote is almost straight and yakizume, the ura is midarekome with a komaru and return.

This tachi does not have not much funbari, and from this, it appears to be suriage or o-suriage, the same as Kantei To No. 2. This has a slightly wide mihaba, the upper part has a continuous sori towards the chu-kissaki; there is a dynamic shape, and a clear midare utsuri; most of the hamon has a high yakiba and gorgeous choji hamon, and from these characteristics, this is definitely a mid-Kamakura, Bizen tachi. If you look at it carefully, some parts of the hada are visible and not too refined, and this does not look like peak period Ichimonji work with large and small clusters of choji, and high and low variations in the hamon. Many people thought this might be a Osafune Mitsutada, an early Nagamitsu, or a Hatakeyama Morie work with the narrow bottom kawazuko choji. This is a Bizen Saburo Kunimune tachi. Kunimune’s active period was the same as Mitsutada and Morie. He has a wide variety in his work: a wide mihaba dynamic tachi shape with a gorgeous midare hamon, just like this tachi. He also had swords with a standard mihaba or narrow mihaba, with a gentle shape, and with a gentle suguha style hamon. Among the midare hamon swords, there are small differences, but the

character is here and it becomes a smaller hamon mixed with square shape gunome; on the omote side, the upper part of the hamon has a prominent whitish color, just like this tachi. This tachi has his characteristics and important points, and Kunimune's name should come out along with the other smiths' names.

Explanation by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei No 660 (in the January, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 660 in the January issue is a katana by the Shodai Iyonojo Munetsugu.

This katana has a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not different; there is a large kasane with an o-kissaki, and from this shape, you can judge this as being a Keicho Shinto katana. Munetsugu's jitetsu is a larger than usual itame pattern and a Hizen to komenukahada, mixed with nagarehada; the hada is visible, and there are frequent chikei, jifu, and areas with a stronger kitae hada, and these are characteristics of his work. His hamon are like on this katana, often a notare hamon mixed with sharp tipped smaller size choji, gunome, and togariba, up and down the yakiba, and a sharpened appearing midare hamon. The valleys in the yakiba do not have too much nie, and there are frequent ashi, yo, very strong ha-nie, sometimes muneyaki and tobiyaki, and prominent kinsuji and sunagashi. This is a strong Soshu Den style, and has a strong character and this is Iyonojo Munetsugu's favorite style. His boshi are midarekomi with a round tip and a return, just like this katana. The midarekome tip is sharp, and has a kaen style, and either has hakikake, or is mixed with nie kuzure. There are all kinds of variations in his work. His strong characteristic work appears on the nakago too: the Iyonojo Munetsugu Shodai's nakago (the same as Nidai) are described as: the ha-side is narrow with a tanago-hara shape; the nakago tip is a ha-agari type kurijiri; the yasurime are kiri; and as a Hizen To, many of his blades are signed on the omote towards the mune edge, and they have long signatures, and the hints indicate this. During the first half of the Shodai Tadayoshi's career, when he used the 5 kanji Tadayoshi mei and the junin Tadayoshi mei, his hamon show all kinds of suguha, and not necessarily a belt type suguha, and he made copies (utsushimono) of old swords. But after Genna 10 nen, during his Musashi Daijo mei period, his jitetsu are a refined komenukahada, his hamon are the Hizen characteristic belt type suguha or primarily round top gunome and choji up and down a midare hamon, and in the valleys of the yakiba there are prominent nie groups, kinsuji and sunagashi. He established his original midare hamon, and produced them in large numbers, and this style was used by the Nidai Tadayoshi, the Sandai Tadayoshi,

Masahiro, and Yukihiro. But the Hizen To smith, Iyonojo Munetsugu did not follow Tadayoshi's change in style, and he maintained his own style, and works dated Kanei 7 and Kanei 11 work are the same style. A sword dated Kanei 11, a katana classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token shows the character very well, and is known as his best work. This style was followed by the Nidai and Sandai Munetsugu. Today, we are not sure about the relationship between the Shodai Tadayoshi and Iyonojo Munetsugu. Judging from this work, you can imagine their relationship seems to be not too close. In voting, many people voted for Munetsugu, and besides being an almost correct answer, some people voted for Soshu Tsunahiro. The mihaba is wide, the widths at the moto and saki are not different, the midare hamon with tobiyaki, muneyaki, frequent nie, and the narrow nakago tip, the ha-agari type kurijiri, and the kiri yasurime are all there, and from these characteristics, the Tsunahiro answer is understandable. But often his midare hamon are primarily gunome mixed with choji and yahazu type choji, and there are tobiyaki and very clear muneyaki, the upper part of the hamon becomes wider, and there are frequent crescent shaped tobiyaki.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.