

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bijutsu Hin

Type: Katana

Mei: Keicho hachi nen hachi Gatsu Hi, Kunihiro
Hayashi Denuemonjo Tokuyuki shoji kore

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 2 sun 6 bu 4 bu (68.06 cm)

Sori: slightly over 4 bu (1.3cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 3 rin (3.14 cm)

Sakihaba: 8 bu 3 rin (2.51cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 2 bu (0.63 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly over 1 bu 6 rin (0.49cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 2 sun (6.1 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight (0.1 cm)

Commentary:

On this katana, the omote is kiriha zukuri style, and the ura is shinogi zukuri style and the mune is marumune. There is a standard kasane, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a shallow sori and a large kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and o-itame, and the entire hada is visible. There are dense ji-nie and frequent fine chikei. There is mizukage going forward from the machi, and the hamon is a suguha style with a shallow notare. In places there are some ko-gunome. The nioiguchi shows hotsure in places, and there are fine kinsuji and sunagashi, frequent ko-nie, and a clear and tight nioiguchi. The boshi is a shallow notare, the tip is sharp with hakikake, and there is a shallow return. The horimono on the omote and ura side are wide bo-hi with marudome. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is narrow, the tip is ha-agari kurijiri; the yasurimeji are osuji chigai, and there is one mekugiana; on the omote there is a large sized finely inscribed signature and a date, and the ura has the owner's name.

Kunihiro is supposed to have been in the service of a locality in Hyuga. The Ito family were the local lords and this province was also home to the Aya school swordsmiths. In Tensho 5, Ito Yoshisuke and Suketaka (or Suketake) lost a war

with the Shimazu family, and after the Ito family fell, Kunihiro traveled and tried to improve his sword making techniques, and he made swords in many places. His oldest dated sword is from Tensho 4, and from Tensho 5 to 14 there are swords signed "Nishu Furuyanoju", and in Tensho 17, one is signed "Nishuju", and people call these swords Furuya and Nishu uchi. There is a sword dated in February of Tensho 12 signed "Yamafushi toki kore" and from this, it is supposed that Kunihiro was in Yamafushi at that time. From Tensho 18 nen 2 gatsu (February), there is a chumon uchi (a custom order) sword (classified as Juyo Bunkazai with the meibutsu or name of Yamabagiri), ordered by the Ashikaga castle owner Nagao Akinaga. In May of the same year, Kunihiro signed a suriage mei for a Chogi sword (classified as Juyo Bunkazai and owned by the Tokugawa Museum). In same year, in August, he made a sword (with the early Shinano no kami title) at the Shimotsuke Ashikaga school or academy (in early Muromachi times, the Ashikaga family established a kangaku or school for Chinese studies). In August of Tensho 19 there is a sword signed "zai Kyo no toki" (Kyoto). In August of Keicho 4, Kunihiro donated a sword to Hatae Hachiman gu (a shrine) which is classified as Juyo Bijutsu Hin. From that year, he seems to have moved to Kyoto. Around Keicho 15, he signed "Rakuyo Ichijo ju" and "Rakuyo Horikawa ju" and he established himself in Ichijo Horikawa in Kyoto, and trained many good students.

Kunihiro's work shows two different styles, and these are from before and after he moved to Horikawa. Before he lived in Horikawa, his styles of work was Sue Soshu or Sue Seki; and after he moved to Horikawa, many of works are in the style of good Soshu Den smiths. Mr. Kawaguchi Wataru in the "Token kenkyu" magazine said that according to the Edo period book "Kintai roku", written by Tamoru Nobunari, Kunihiro passed away in Keicho 19 nen, at age 81. There are no clear records about the year of his death and active period, but we have never seen a sword dated after November of Keicho 11. Kunihiro's active period was from Tensho 4 (1576) to Keicho 18 (1613), and he was known to have had a long career making swords, and had a long life. This sword is an example of his peak work. The jihada is itame and mixed with mokume, and shows a distinctive oitame, and the original rough Horikawa hada. There are dense thick ji-nie, and fine frequent chikei. The hamon is a suguha style with a tight nioiguchi, and there are uneven ko-nie. The habuchi has small hotsure, fine kinsuji, sunagashi, and is bright and clear. In addition, there are mizukage on the jihada at the machi, and this is characteristic of his style. Also, the omote is kiriha zukuri and the ura is a shinogi zukuri style, and this is supposed to be a copy of a tachi mei Kaneuji katana (classified as Juyo Bunkazai). This work contains a Nambokucho feeling, shape and style. The person who ordered this, Hayashi Denuemonjo Tokiyuki was from a powerful family in Musashi kuni, and in Showa 20, when this work was classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, his descendants still owned it.

Explanation and oshigata by Hiyama Masanori.

Meitan Kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba & kodogu

Washi zu tsuba (an image incorporating an eagle)
Mumei: Shodai Jingo

Shimizu Jingo was a Higo Kumamoto han okakae smith (someone who worked for a Daimyo). He was a Higo kinko smith, but was different from the Hosokawa Sansai Tadaoki's okakae smiths, such as Hayashi, Hirata, and Nishigaki. In Kanei 9, Hosokawa Sansai's son Tadatoshi became the lord of Kumamoto han, and Sansai retired and moved to Yashiro. At the same time, the Shodai Jingo moved to Yashiro. The design of the washi (eagle) is bold and elegant, and since historical times, all over the world, people have used eagles in monsho (crest) designs. In Japan, in the book "Nihon Rei ki", about the Todaiji monk Ryoben's life, the washi (eagles) are prominent, and the Shodai Jingo seems to have been attracted by their brave behavior, and he liked to use washi or eagles as subjects or themes for tsuba. On the tsuba omote, he designed the washi using brass suemon zogan (inlay with a mon design), and on the ura, the design is the top of a pine branch with a brass suemon zogan (inlay with a mon design). The eagle is gripping the pine tree branch with his strong claws. He has a majestic appearance, and is looking forward with his sharp eyes, and showing a king's or ruler's majesty. The ura design shows the top of a pine branch with well proportioned spaces. From the Shodai Jingo's original interesting jitetsu, we can feel his strong interest and understanding of iron. We can feel a warrior's spirit and thought compressed in a small space in this tsuba. This tsuba has existed for a long time, and we can feel the historical importance of this work. In the Sengoku period, Hosokawa Sansai was a dignified warrior, and at the same time, a cultured person, and this tsuba shows clearly this personality. The tsuba expresses Hosokawa's personality very well, and shows the Shodai Jingo's sophisticated techniques, and we can appreciate this tsuba as a great work of art.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya.

Shijo Kantei To No. 663

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 663 issue Shijo Kantei To is May 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 May 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: katana

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 1 sun 2 bu (64.3 cm)

Sori: slightly over 7 bu (2.22 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 bu 2 rin (3.7 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 2.5 bu (15.9 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, a slightly wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. This sword has a slightly large kasane (it is slightly thicker than usual), the upper half has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight itame and there are fine ji-nie, and midare utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are frequent ashi and yo, frequent nie, some kinsuji, and sunagashi. The horimono on the omote and ura are bonji at the koshimoto. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago jiri style is kurijiri-hari (the nakago is very wide at the tip and has a kurijiri style tip). The yasurime are katte sagari, and there is a one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature located towards the mune edge of the nakago, and on the ura side, in a slightly lower location there is a date.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For March

The swords discussed below were shown in the March, 2012 meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents the 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 March 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: katana

Mei: (Kikumon) Dewa no kami Hokyo Minamoto Mitsuhiro

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 5 sun

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada; there are jinie, and the upper part has utsuri

Hamon: mainly choji mixed with gunome, with vertical variations along the hamon. There is an active beautiful midare hamon, and there are tobiyaki, ko-ashi, yo, and a slightly wide nioiguchi; the habuchi (hamon boundary) is somewhat dense, and there are some ko-nie.

Boshi: straight with a round return.

This is an Edo Ishido Mitsuhiro katana. The Ishido school in Shinshinto times revived the old Bizen Ichimonji school's gorgeous jukachoji hamon; this style had not been used for a long time. Mitsuhiro was the most skillful smith in the school, and he left many beautiful swords. This is as good as an older koto sword, but if you compare this with an old sword, the shape at the moto and saki are different, and there is a shallow sori and chu-kissaki which is a typical Kanbun shinto shape. The jihada is tighter, and chikei do not stand out when compared to the older swords, and the shinogi-ji is masamehada, which is a characteristic Shinto style. The hamon shows up and down variations in the midare hamon, but the edge of the hamon is tight and hard, and there is not much hataraki. The boshi is straight with a komaru and a return, and the entire hamon does not have an old look. In voting, it appeared that people observed these characteristics, and most of the people voted for Mitsuhiro and other Ishido school smiths. As I explained before, Mitsuhiro was the most skilled smith in the Ishido school, and this kind of beautiful work is supposed to be Mitsuhiro's. Among the same Edo Ishido smiths, Tsunemitsu has a high level of skill, almost as good as Mitsuhiro's, but the degree

of activity in the midare hamon is less. The other Ishido smiths do not have as much vertical variation in their hamon, and if this were work by Korekazu, Fukuoka Ishido Koretsugu, or Moritsugu, the masame jihada would be prominent, and many of them have saka-ashi hamon. If this were Kishu Ishido school work such as Yasuhiro's, it would have a yakidashi, and the midare hamon would be smaller. If it were an Osaka Ishido Nagayuki sword, remember that his boshi are usually midarekomi, the tip is sharp, and there is a long return.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mei: Izumi no kami Fujiwara Kunisada

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu

Sori: 5.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada; there are jinie.

Hamon: there is a straight yakidashi; above this, there is a gunome hamon mixed with choji; between the midare hamon waves, the spaces between elements are tight; there are ashi and fine tobiyaki; around the monouchi there is muneyaki, a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with round tip and wide return; there are yubashiri.

This katana has a tight ko-itame hada; there is a straight yakidashi at the moto, and from these characteristics, people can judge this as Osaka Shinto work. The hamon is gunome mixed with choji, and between the midare hamon waves, spaces are tight. The boshi has a wide yakiba and komaru and return. Around the monouchi area there are muneyaki, and from these unique features, many people voted for Shin Kunisada and the Shodai Kunisuke. Both smiths are among the Horikawa Kunihiro school's last students (Echigo no kami Kunitoshi was a founder of the school), and they are pioneers of the Osaka Shinto smiths. Both smiths made the Keicho Shinto period's typical large sized swords, but most of them have a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different and stand out. There is a large sori and short chu-kissaki, and this kind of shape is seen in the work of both smiths. Dewa Daijo Kunimichi and Izumi no kami Kanesada, shared a common shape and were active from the Kanei to Shoho eras. Shin Kunisada and the Shodai Kunisuke both have a similar style. Kunisuke's yakidashi is different from Kunisada's yakidashi, which is a very shallow notare, with straight hamon just like on this sword. His yakidashi, in the upper part, becomes wider than the hamon, and his midare hamon are wide when compared with Kunisada's, and he has more choji hamon. So voting for the Kunisuke name is understandable, but a straight

yakidashi is characteristic of Kunisada. The yubashiri type tobiyaki and muneyaki around the boshi are seen more in Kunisada's work than in Kunisuke's work.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Kanesada

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Design: shobu zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with nagare hada and mokume; there are ji-nie, chikei, and slightly whitish utsuri.

Hamon: gunome mixed with togariba and choji; there are ko-ashi, fine tobiyaki, and a tight nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi which becomes narrow; there is a komaru and return.

Horimono: both the omote and ura have bo-hi with marudome.

This is a midare hamon which is mainly gunome mixed with togariba and choji; there is a tight dense nioiguchi. The jihada is itame mixed with nagare hada, and there is some whitish utsuri. The boshi tip leans toward the ha side, and is called a Jizo boshi. These are characteristic features for late Muromachi period Mino swords. In voting, many people voted for Mino smiths such as Kanesada, Kanemoto, Kanefusa, Ujifusa, and Daido.

This is a Kanesada katana. Izumi no kami Kanesada is representative of Sue Seki smiths along with Kanemoto. He had the highest level of skill among the Sue Seki smiths. When compared with Kanemoto and Kanefusa who were other Sue Seki smiths, his distinguishing point is the hamon which is gunome mixed with togariba and choji, and these features vary along his midareba hamon just like on this katana. In particular, his jihada is refined and clear among the Sue Seki smiths, and this is a characteristic of his work and this katana shows it. Kanesada's active period was during the Muromachi era around the Eisho to Daei eras. In general, in his work, the swords have a standard mihaba with saki sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. Other smiths such as Ujifusa and Daido, who were active from the Eiroku to Tensho eras, worked in a Keicho Shinto style and usually have a wider mihaba. This katana has mizukage at the machi, and this is sometimes seen Kanesada's work, and this is one of the characteristic points seen in his work.

Kantei To No. 4: katana

Mei: Suishinshi Masahide (kao)
Bunka 5 nen 8 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight fine ko-itame hada; there are ji-nie, and in places, there are dense groups of nie or mura-nie.

Hamon: straight yakidashi, and above it there are o-gunome and a toranba style midare hamon; there is a wide nioiguchi, frequent nie, and some places have rough nie.

Boshi: straight with a komaru and a long return.

Suishinshi Masahide is known as theoretician who published many sword books. Early in his career, he published "Shinto Bengi," and his hamon were made as favored by Kamada Gyomyo (a sword appraiser): a toranba style with o-gunome which was a copy of a Sukesada hamon. Later in his career, he advocated returning to older ideas and practical thoughts about swords, and he changed his style. He made narrower yakiba in nioi, and these smaller midare hamon were mainly in a Bizen style. This sword shows his toranba style work. This is a well made gorgeous o-midare hamon, and almost as good as Kanbun time Sukehiro work. But the jihada is ko-itame, and is too fine and too tight with a mirror-like surface. This sword also shows a Shinshinto original muji type jihada. This is different from Sukehiro's tight ko-itame hada which has fine chikei and is refined. The hamon nie are different from Sukero's fine bright even nie: this work has rough uneven nie, and in some places, the rough nie appear to fall onto the jihada. The shape has a narrow shinogi-haba for its overall mihaba (width), and there is a poor hiraniku which is a typical Shinshinto shape. Also looking at the yakidashi, notice that the upper part does not change in width, and is straight. In contrast, Sukehiro's yakidashi become wider towards the upper part, which is an Osaka style yakidashi. Also, in looking at Suishinshi's toranba carefully, the right and left slopes have the same angle or are the same. Sukehiro's toranba midare waves are different: the angles or slopes on the right and left sides of the toran waves are slightly different. In Shinshinto times, besides Suishinshi, there are other smiths working in a toranba midare style such as Tegarayama Masashige, Ichige Tokurin, Ozaki Suketaka, Kato Tsunahide, and Chounsai Tsunatoshi. Looking at the left and right midare hamon characteristics, Suketaka, Tsunahide and Tsunatoshi follow Sukehiro' style, and Masashige, and Tokurin follow Suishinshi's style.

Kantei To No. 5: tanto

Mei: Masakiyo

Oan Gan (1 nen)

Length: 9 sun 4.5 bu

Sori: 1.5 bu

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and the hada is barely visible; there is a slightly wide and straight whitish utsuri in the machi area.

Hamon: suguha with a shallow notare; there is a tight dense nioiguchi, ko-nie, some hotsure, and a kuichigaiba type hamon.

Boshi: straight; the omote has a sharp tip with a komaru, and the ura has a komaru with hakikake.

This is a Ko-Mihara tanto dated during the Oan era. This is hirazukuri, has a wide mihaba, and noticeably, the kasane is small (i.e. the blade is thin). The tip has a slight sori, and this is a typical Nanbokucho Enbun-Joji era shape. The hamon is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and there is utsuri. The hamon is a suguha with a tight dense nioiguchi. This style was used in the neighboring province's Bichu Aoe school and by Kyoto smiths, such as Nobukuni and Rai Kunitoshi. But in looking at the jihada, the Aoe work is mixed with nagarehada, the entire jihada is not clear, there are frequent ji-nie and jifu. In contrast, the Kyoto jihada is a fine tight ko-itame. This work is different from these schools because the utsuri is straight and whitish, where the Aoe utsuri is a suji-utsuri and bo-utsuri, and Kyoto's utsuri is a nie utsuri. Also, the hamon is worn down, and the nioiguchi is not clear enough when compared with Aoe and Kyoto swords. Ko-Mihara is supposed to have started from the Yamato Den school, and there are many blades which have Yamato characteristics. At the same time, they made swords influenced by work from the neighboring province of Aoe: an Aoe style mixed with a Yamato Den style. This sword is an example of a mixture of Aoe and Yamato Den features; the jihada is nagarehada, the hamon has fine hotsure and is mixed with kuichigaiba, and the boshi has hakikake, which are Yamato style features. Also, the nioiguchi is noticeably tight and dense, there are ko-nie, and the omote side boshi tip is sharp which is an Aoe type boshi. These characteristics are from Ko-Mihara.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei No 661 (in the February, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 661 in the February issue is a tachi by Osafune Nagamitsu.

This tachi has a small mihaba (i.e. it is slightly narrow), and the widths at the moto and saki are different. It is suriage, there is a large koshizori, and the chu-kissaki tip has sori, and from this shape, you can judge this as being a late Kamakura tachi. Nagamitsu's jitetsu is a tight ko-itame, there is midare utsuri, and a main-stream Osafune school refined jihada. The hamon is a suguha style notare, and there are ko-ashi, a dense nioiguchi, and nioiguchi ko-nie. There are kataochi gunome and saka-ashi areas inside of the hamon which are prominent. The boshi is a sansaku boshi, and from these characteristics, most people voted for Nagamitsu.

Nagamitsu's early work resembles the Koku Ho sword Daihannya Nagamitsu and the Tsuda Totomi Nagamitsu. The shape of these show a wide mihaba, the kissaki is an inokubi shape, and the hamon are mainly o-choji mixed with kawazoko choji which is similar to his father Mitsutada's beautiful work. Later, as he became older, Nagamitsu's hamon became more gentle, and the vertical variations in the hamon are not so prominent; we see primarily round top choji and gunome mixed with togariba, which is the original style he established, and today, most of his work which we see shows this kind of style. Later, his swords had narrow tachi shapes, the hamon are a suguha style mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, or a suguha with a tight dense nioiguchi. These features show how Nagamitsu's style changed with age. Many of Nagamitsu's boshi (when accompanying an active midare hamon) are midarekomi with a sharp tip (or a midarekomi with a komaru and return). With a Sansaku boshi, there is a suguha type hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, or a suguha hamon just like on this tachi. Nagamitsu's nakago are kurijiri, and the yasurime are katte sagari. With a 2 kanji signature, the location of the mei is usually on the omote side above the mekugi-ana towards the mune edge.

Some people voted for Sanenaga. Sanenaga's suguha style work is very similar to this tachi, and it is difficult to judge the differences, so his name was treated as an almost correct answer. In the case of Sanenaga this kind of work often has a prominent tight nioiguchi, and the hamon is a continuous shallow ko-notare hamon. As an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Kagemitsu and Chikakage. Both smiths have suguha style tachi with tight nioiguchi. Nagamitsu and Sanenaga's work have saka-ashi type midare hamon which are not prominent, and the ashi are straight for the hamon. One generation later, the smiths Kagemitsu and Chikakage's work is in a suguha style with prominent saka-ashi gunome, ko-choji, and kataochi gunome, and many of their ashi are saka-ashi. But their work is different. Chikakage's jihada is visible and often mixed with ohada, and his hamon have ko-nie. Also, in Nagamitsu's work dated in the Einin, Shoan, and Kagen eras, and Sanenaga's work dated in the Shoan, Kagen, and Tokuji eras, the saka-ashi hamon do not stand out. For Kagemitsu's work dated in the Genkyo era and Chikakage's work dated in the Kareki and Kenbu eras, their hamon have saka-ashi and this kind of characteristic is seen in later times. A characteristic

saka-ashi hamon is seen in the late Kamakura period in Bizen work in general. In the case of Nagamitsu, his tachi do not have saka-ashi gunome hamon. Kaku-gunome (square shaped gunome) are supposed to be the origin of kataochi gunome hamon, and are seen often in his tanto and naginata. But his kaku-gunome are not in his later work which is the time when Kagemitsu and Chikakage worked. Kaku-gunome are seen in his early work, in two tanto which are dated in Koan 8 and Einin 3, so this hamon was made in early times.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.