

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bunkazai

Type: Wakizashi

Mei: Utsunomiya Daimyojin Sagami no kuni ju nin Hiromitsu
Hachiman Daibosatsu Bunwa 5 nen Uzuki hi

Length: 1 shaku 5 bu 9 rin (32.1 cm)

Sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 7 rin (2.65 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 1 bu (11.2 cm)

Nakago sori: almost none

Commentary:

This is a hirazukuri wakizashi with a mitsumune, a slight wide mihaba, a long length, a standard kasane, and a shallow sori. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, and is a refined hada. There are dense thick ji-nie, and frequent chikei. The hamon is choji style, mixed with ko-gunome with narrow bottoms which have an unusual shape, and togariba. Along the upper part, the hamon becomes wider. There are ashi, yo, even, thick, fine ha-nie, kinsuji, sunagshi, frequent tobiyaki, and yubashiri which extend to the edge of the mune, and the entire hamon has a hitatsura appearance. The boshi is midarekomi: the ura side has a slightly yaki-kuzure type hamon, and both sides have a komaru and a long return. The horimono on the omote and ura are katana-hi carved through the nakago, and there are traces of tsure-hi. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is kurijiri; the yasurime are shallow katte-sagari, and there are two mekugiana, and one is closed. Above the first mekugiana on the omote side there is an inscription saying "Utsunomiya Daimyojin", and the ura side has "Hachiman Daibosatsu" shingo (a god's name) kanji, and under the mekugiana almost on the center, on the omote side there is a long signature, and the ura side has a date.

At the end of the Kamakura period, Soshu-den was established and reached its peak with Masamune and his successor Sadamune. In Nanbokucho times,

Hiromitsu and Akihiro lead the school. Hiromitsu's dated blades are around Kan-o (1350-52) to Teiji 3 (1364). Akihiro's dated works are Enbun 2 (1357) to Shitoku 4 (1387). From this evidence, it is thought that Hiromitsu was the senior smith rather than Akihiro. His hamon are not mainly notare hamon, but are mainly what is called "dango choji" where the top of the choji are wider, and this is a unique hamon. There are tobiyaki, yubashiri, and muneyaki, and the hitatsura hamon are well controlled. Some of Masamune and Sadamune's blades have tobiyaki and yubashiri, but they are not planned. As a mainstream Soshu Den smith, Hiromitsu is supposed to have established the hitatsura style hamon. After Muromachi times, this influenced, not only Sue-Soshu smiths, but also other school's smiths. It influenced Shinto and Shinshinto smiths, as well as Gendaito smiths. It could be said that this type of hamon is revolutionary during the history of Japanese swords. In looking at later smiths, their hitatsura hamon are different: their tobiyaki and yubashiri are not smooth, but rather stiff; and the entire hamon appears to be lower class work. However, Hiromitsu's hamon are natural, and shows a distinctive style, and maintains a high level of work, and exhibits his very high level of technical skill. Hiromitsu has two Juyo Bijutsu Hin blades with two kanji signatures besides his usual long signatures (one is hitatsura, and other is suguha). These are considered an older style, and older period work, but today we do not know if the long signatures are Hiromitsu's early work or later work.

This wakizashi has a large shape which shows its period, with a very active hamon. There are even fine thick ha-nie, sunagashi, nie-suji, and the entire hamon has all kinds of variations and activity, and this is a one of his best works. Also, on the nakago ura side, there are kanji for "Utsunomiya Daimyoin", and this is located at the center of Utsunomiya City in Tochigi today and is called "Utsunomiya Futarayama Jinja (shrine)". The shrine is listed in the "Azumakagami" (a Kamakura period Japanese history book), and it says that Minamoto Yoritomo stopped there to pray on the way to conquer O-shu. The omote side kanji are for the god of war, "Hachiman Daibosatsu", and he is known as a warrior's god, and as able to protect warriors all over Japan. This shows not only the owner's faith, but also shows the Dando bushi's (a powerful bushi class started during the mid-Heian era) religion. This is a historically important piece. This is listed in the "Kozan oshigata" and in Edo times, belonged to the Owari Kuni Inuyama Naruse family and to its descendants.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira)

Meitan kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba & kodogu

Kuramayama-zu fuchi-kashira
Mei: Shirominetei Iwamoto Konkan (kao)

This spring, I feel a little lonely. My teacher retired, and I had learned about everything in the museum from him since I was a college student. A little later, my master who had taught me about tosogu moved. From this work, possibly many people recognized the master's name, because he was important and influenced people in the tosogu world. He studied iron, and irogane intensively, and also gokebori and machibori work, and I heard that he especially loved the work of Konkan. This is his favorite Konkan fuchi-kashira work. A tengu lived on Kurama Mountain which was known as Yoshitsune's training place, and a tale said that a tengu was his sword teacher. Many tengu are drawn in a pair just like this one: there is an o-tengu (big tengu with a high nose) and a sho-tengu (a small tengu, or bird tengu). Sometimes, o-tengu wear Chinese style clothes, but usually tengu wear Yamabushi (mountain ascetic) style clothes, which are a symbol of mountain asceticism. What is a tengu? Interpretations are different in different books. Because he is a bird person living in the mountain, an answer could be that he is a mountain ghost, or god, and the spirit of a god. Because of Konkan's highly skilled work, these tengu look like they might exist in the real world, and it feels like we can hear their conversations. This is on a brass background with takabori, an example of the Nara school's profound style. The shape is dignified, and even small details are shown using strong tagane (chisel) strokes. There is a well controlled irogane, and it has an amazing powerful feeling. This is an especially well done masterpiece among Konkan's work, and I was attracted to it for a long time. The tosogu book "Soken-kisho" showed admiration for Konkan's work. It said that he carved very well, and the beauty of his work reminds one of fallen leaves with blooming daffodils, and this is very graceful work. My master was not only a researcher, but also was a skilled craftsman. As an example of beautiful workmanship, both of them are similar. Not only craftsmen, old and young, or male and female, but people who do beautiful work, I am impressed with their styles. Maybe their attitude for their subjects is revealed in their work. Looking at this work, I am strengthening my attitude.

Explanation by Kubo Yasuko

Shijo Kantei To 664

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 663 issue Shijo Kantei To is June, 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 June 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: tanto

Length: 9 sun 6 bu (29.9 cm)

Sori: none

Motohaba: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 2 bu (12.73 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a hirazukuri tanto with an ihorimune, a slightly wide mihaba, somewhat long, with a large kasane, and no sori. The jihada is a tight ko-itame and there are dense thick ji-nie, fine chikei, and this is a unique jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The habuchi is mixed with kuichigaiba, and there are ko-ashi, a wide nioiguchi, thick nie, and a bright nioiguchi. The horimono on the omote side is a Sankotsuka-ken, and on the ura side is a Shinno-kurikara. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago jiri is iriyamagata. The yasurime are kiri 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.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For April

The swords discussed below were shown in the April, 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 April 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: Tachi

Mei: Masatsune

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 7.5 bu

Sori: 4.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada mixed with some ohada; there are ji-nie, chikei, and jifu utsuri.

Hamon: suguha style ko-gunome midare hamon mixed with ko-midare; some places have clusters of choji, and there are square shaped gunome. There are ashi and yo, nioi type kinsuji and sunagashi..

Boshi: notarekomi and yakizume.

This is a Juyo Bijutsu Hin classified Ko-Bizen Masatsune tachi. The jihada is a refined tight ko-itame, and the hamon has prominent ko-choji. Among the Ko-Bizen smiths, contemporary hamon show the usual Masatsune characteristics. But on the ura side's upper half, there are prominent larger clusters of choji, and these are mixed with wide top gunome, so this feels like an active beautiful Ko-Bizen hamon. Maybe because of these characteristics, many people voted for later smiths, such as Nagamitsu and Motoshige. This blade has a shallow sori like a Ko-Bizen tachi, and a narrow shape with a small kissaki. Because of this, at first glance, it looks like a later Kamakura tachi. However, the sori at the tip is very small, and is almost uchizori, and there are dark areas with jifu-utsuri which extend over the high shinogi. The mune has dark areas, and these are early Kamakura period work's characteristic points. At the habaki moto, the first three to four sun of the hamon has a very low yakiba compared with other parts. Also, there are abundant nie inside of the hamon, and frequent kinsuji. These characteristics around the koshimoto are seen at the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura periods, in Ko-Bizen, Ko-Hoki and Ko-Aoe work. In early Kamakura period work, these details help to judge the era. If it were from the latter half of Kamakura period and a Bizen tachi, the tip would have more sori, and most of utsuri would be midare utsuri. In this case, if there were jifu utsuri, the dark parts would be under the shinogi. Also, in the case a gorgeous choji hamon, there are often round top gunome present inside of the midare hamon.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: □ shu Osafune Kanemitsu

Length: 2 shaku 4.5 sun

Sori: 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; the entire hamon is tight and refined; there are ji-nie, chikei, and clear midare utsuri.

Hamon: based on kataochi-gunome, mixed with square gunome, and ko-gunome. There are ashi and yo, and the entire hamon is saka-ashi; some parts of the kataochi-gunome continue to extend and join the nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi with komaru.

This tachi shows some funbari at the koshimoto, and seems to be suriage. The original shape has a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is sori at the koshimoto and tip, and this has a late Kamakura period tachi shape. This hamon is mainly kataochi-gunome with midare utsuri, and this is Osafune Kanemitsu's early work. Among the Osafune smiths, Nagamitsu was the first smith who worked with square shaped gunome, which was an original form of the kataochi gunome hamon, and we can see two tanto examples, dated in Koan 8, and Einin 3. His square gunome work is only seen on tanto and naginata, and usually we never see a tachi with a kataochi-gunome hamon from Nagamitsu. Nagamitsu's son Kagemitsu's tachi are seen with kataochi-gunome hamon. Many of Kagemitsu's tachi hamon have square ko-gunome, ko-choji, and ko-gunome mixed with kataochi-gunome. Examples continuous regular kataochi-gunome hamon from the moto to saki are only seen in tanto. But Kagemitsu's son Kanemitsu's hamon are seen not only on tanto, but also on tachi: there are square gunome, or kataochi-gunome from the moto to saki, or a midare hamon mixed with long sections of continuous regular kataochi gunome just like this sword. From this, it would be better to answer Kanemitsu instead of Kagemitsu. In this kind of work, Kanemitsu's boshi is not like Kagemitsu's Sansaku boshi. His boshi are often midarekomi, and tip is round with a return, and this characteristic is different between the two of them. In voting some people voted for the Yoshii school. Because this tachi was polished many times, the jihada is not as refined as it was originally. Also, in Kanemitsu's work, the hamon are smaller, and the first impression is quiet, and maybe these details lead to an answer. But if this were Yoshii work, the utsuri on the jihada is the Yoshii school's shape which is a continuous gunome pattern. Also, Yoshii's ko-gunome hamon have round tops and square gunome, but usually we never see a saka-ashi type kataochi-gunome.

Kantei To No 3: wakizashi

Mei: kinzogan mei Morikage

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun

Sori: 5 bu

Design: shobu-zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; the entire jihada is visible; there are ji-nie, chikei, jifu and pale midare utsuri.

Hamon: based on ko-notare, mixed with square shape ko-gunome, ko-gunome and ko-choji, and the entire hamon is small: there is a worn down nioiguchi, the habuchi is mainly nioiguchi, and there are ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is sharp with a return, and there are hakikake.

Horimono: omote and ura side have bohi cut through to the nakago.

This is a tachi attribute to Omori Morikage, and name is written in kinzogan (gold line inlay). The shape is an Enbun-Joji type which is o-suriage; the jihada has pale utsuri; and the hamon is based on a notare midare pattern. The boshi is midarekomi, the tip is sharp, and from these characteristics, very few people missed the Soden Bizen answer. People voted for Morikage, Kanemitsu and Nagayoshi. If this were Kanemitsu's work, many of his jihada are a tight itame, the entire hada is visible, and the color of the jihada is bright and refined. This itame jihada is visible, and some parts have a different color jifu type hada, and this is mixed with some slightly loose ohada, and the utsuri is pale. These are Omiya school characteristics. Morikage's notare hamon have higher bottoms and short valleys when compared with Kagemitsu's. This hamon bottom is not too high, but the valleys are short, and this is one of his characteristics. Also, his notare hamon tops are square shaped and sharp, and the nioiguchi is worn down, and these are his distinctive characteristics. From these details, the Morikage answer would be apparent. Nagayoshi's jihada is very visible and there is a worn down nioiguchi, and from these details, an answer with his name is understandable. But many of his notare hamon are bigger, the up and down variations are larger, and there are more dense nie, and more frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Kantei To No. 4: tachi

Mei: Bizen Osafune Tsuguyuki

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 6 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with moku and nagare hada, and the entire hada is visible; there are ji-nie, and the thick chikei look like they are made from a different iron; there are jifu and pale midare utsuri.

Hamon: square gunome, mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji, and kataochi-gunome, and the entire hamon has noticeable saka-ashi; there are small ashi and yo, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi, and tip is sharp.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi; the omote is marudome, and the ura is a bo-hi carved through the nakago.

This is a tachi by a Kosori school smith Tsuguyuki, who was active during the late Nanbokucho period. The funbari at the koshimoto is small, and shows that this is a suriage tachi. The original shape had a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a large koshizori and the tip has a strong sori. Around the end of the Nanbokucho period, some Kosori swords show a noticeable strong sori at the tip, just like this tachi. This tachi's motohaba is 9 bu 2 rin, and the motokasane is 2 bu 8 rin, which is a noticeably thick kasane for the mihaba. This is a characteristic shape, seen often at the end of the Nanbokucho to early Muromachi times. The Kosori jihada, like this one, is itame mixed with mokume and nagare-hada, and the entire hada is visible. There are thick chikei which often look like they were formed from a different appearing iron, and there are jifu. This is not a refine hada, and the utsuri is pale along with the jihada. The hamon are based on ko-notare and ko-gunome patterns, and continuous round top ko-gunome, just like the Yoshii school's work, and there are all kinds of hamon. But many of these hamon contain all kinds of hamon patterns, and are irregular midare hamon, just like this tachi. The entire hamon have a smaller size, and this is a characteristic of Kosori work. In later times, many Oei-Bizen hamon have higher yakiba for their mihaba, and there are midare hamon based on open bottom gunome and choji. Much of the late Nanbokucho to early Muromachi Kosori work have narrow hamon for their mihaba. This hamon is small, square shaped gunome are prominent, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi, and from these details, many people voted for Motoshige.

At this time, after we revealed the nakago, we displayed several swords for comparison, such as a Nagamitsu tachi, an Izumo Doei Masanori tachi, a Kanemitsu wakizashi, and a Motoshige tachi.

The Motoshige answer is understandable from the hamon, and this characteristic Bizen branch school's jihada. But if this were Motoshige's work, his square gunome hamon have longer distances from the top to the valley bottoms, and in the valleys of the hamon there are spike shaped togariba. Even when he does not use this hamon all the way from the moto to the saki, usually this shape of hamon is visible somewhere. Even when based on ko-choji or ko-gunome hamon, seen often around the end of the Kamakura period in the Osafune school, most of the time this kind of hamon is mixed. Motoshige's hamon are different from this kind of intricate small size hamon, and usually we never see this kind of tachi shape.

Kantei To No. 5: tachi

Mei: tame Murakami Shige kun Ishido Unju Korekazu seitan tsukuru kore

Kaei 7 nen Kinoe Tora toshi 2 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4. 5 bu

Sori: 6.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with some nagare hada; the entire jihada is tight, and almost a muji type hada; there are ji-nie.

Hamon: mainly a choji hamon, mixed with gunome, ko-notare, togariba, and the entire hamon has little up and down variation; there are long ashi, a wide nioi guchi, dense nie; the habuchi is bright and clear; and there are kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: notarekomi with a ko-maru and a slightly long return.

Horimono: the omote and ura side have bo-hi carved through the nakago.

During the late Shinshinto era, during periods such as Kaei, Ansei, Manei, Bunkyu, Ganji, and Keio, a katana would have a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki were not different. There would be a thick kasane, o-kissaki, and a heavy feeling in the hand, which is a typical Shinshinto shape which was popular all over Japan. But at that time, many of Unju Korekazu's katana had a somewhat wide wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki were not much different. There was a thick kasane for the mihaba, and a chu-kissaki, which is a standard shape for a katana, just like this one. Often Korekazu's katana have the same mihaba along the full length with a long length of 2 shaku 5 sun to 2 shaku 6 sun.

The Bizen Den work is supposed to have a choji hamon with a nioiguchi, but as people say, Unju Korekazu hamon are Bizen Den choji hamon with nie. A choji hamon with frequent nie is his characteristic style. Shinshinto time Bizen Den are different from the Shinto period's Ishido school's typical choji midare hamon; many of their hamon are gunome-choji or similar to this. Among these, Unju's choji are clustered with a wide, round top and long ashi, which is between a choji and gunome shape, and these are often mixed with gunome, ko-notare, and togariba. His nioiguchi have wide, thick nie, and frequent long kinsuji and sunagashi and this is typical of his style.

In voting, many people voted for Taikei Naotane. Naotane made Bizen Den style katana, and some of them have frequent ha-nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi, and these are between Bizen Den and Soden Bizen styles, so the answer is understandable. But Naotane's jihada are a muji type tight ko-itame, there are midare utsuri, and the itame can have prominent chikei which is a Soden Bizen style jihada, and this is often mixed with uzumaki hada. Also, Naotane's Bizen Den use mainly the Osafune smiths Kagemitsu and Kanemitsu's square hamon, and the top of the hamon are square shaped and have saka-ashi, and frequent nie. Often, the hotsure along the habuchi are prominent.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

Shijo Kantei No 662 (in the March, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 662 in the March issue is a tachi by Osafune Motomitsu.

This tachi has a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are almost the same. It is koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is an o-kissaki. From this shape, you can judge this as being a peak Nanbokucho era tachi. From the jihada which has pale utsuri, it is possible to judge this as Bizen work. During this part of the Nanbokucho period this appears to be a Bizen blade. As seen in the oshigata, the hamon is based on a kataochi-gunome and kaku-gunome pattern. The boshi is midarekomi and the tip is sharp. From these details, initially, Osafune Kanemitsu and his school is a good possibility. Among the Kanemitsu school work, many of Motomitsu's jihada are seen, and we can say this is one of his characteristic points here. Motomitsu's teacher, Kanemitsu's used three different hamon: a suguha type, a kataochi-gunome type, and a notare type. Among his followers, Tomomitsu used notare hamon and Motomitsu used kataochi-gunome, and this is his strongly preferred hamon. Motomitsu's kataochi-gunome type hamon in tanto and hira-zukuri wakizashi have a good continuous shaped gunome hamon, but most of the time, they are kataochi-gunome mixed with all kind of details, such as saka-ashi gunome, gunome, square shaped gunome, and notare, and they are a varied group of hamon. Among his signed tachi, like this one, the hamon are kataochi-gunome mixed with several different types of hamon structures; kaku-gunome, ko-gunome and togariba, and these are varied hamon just like on his tanto and hira-zukura wakizashi. For example, his hamon can show: an upper half with kataochi-gunome and kaku-gunome; in the center with ko-notare; and the lower half a midare hamon based on gunome. Motomitsu's nakago tips are hagari type kuri-jiri, and the yasurime are kattesagari. His mei on tachi are long signatures on the omote mune side, and we never see a date on tachi. In voting, most people voted for Motomitsu, Kanemitsu, Tomomitsu, and Masamitsu. All of these smiths are from the same school, and they have similar styles. It is difficult to judge individual names, so all of these names are treated as almost correct answers. To me the differences between them can be stated as: in Kamemitsu's kataochi-gunome work, the jihada is a tight itame, and there is a bright and refined hada; many of his hamon are well shaped, regular continuous kataochi-gunome. Tomomitsu's work often shows notare hamon. Masamitsu's works have a slightly narrow tachi shape when compared with other two; and his hamon are mixed with several different structures, such as ko-notare, ko-gunome, ko-choji, and ko-togariba, and the entire hamon are small, and they are similar to Kosori work. Beside these names, some voted for Motoshige. From this visible jihada and the narrow shape of the hamon for Kanemitsu school work, people seemed to vote for

Motoshige, but a varied type hamon is one of Motomitsu's characteristics. If this were Motoshige's work, the jihada often has nagarehada and jifu, and his kaku-gunome have a longer shape; in some places there are midare hamon with valleys with a sharp spike shaped gunome; and there are strong ha-nie and prominent kinsuji and sunagashi. Because during the Nanbokucho period, Enbun-Joji style tachi were long, in later eras these become suriage, and many of them are mumei. This is suriage, but even though it is an Enbun-Joji tachi, it has a signature, and from this point of view, this is a valuable example. It still has a clear strong koshizori at the koshimoto. We do have much opportunity to look at Enbun-Joji style long tachi with a signature. So it is hard to say, but in the majority of the swords, the shape often has a large koshizori with sori at the tip. Another example is a Kosetsu Samonji classified as Koku Ho, and dated Enbun 4; there is a Kanemitsu clasified as Juyo Bunkazai, dated Enbun 5; a Kanemitsu classified as Tokubetsu Juyo and dated Joji 7; and an Unju classified as Juyo Token.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.