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Heisei 24 (2012) Shinsaku Meito Ten

Group: Tachi, katana, wakizashi, naginata, and yari section

Prize: NBTHK Chairman's prize

Type: Katana

Mei: Nishu kuni Kunimasa saku
Heisei 24 nen haru (spring)

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 6 bu 4 rin (74.65 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 1 bu 2 rin (3.4 cm)

Sakihaba: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 4 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 9 rin (0.55 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 8 bu 2 rin (5.5 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 1 bu 6 rin (21.7 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight (0.1 cm)

Commentary:

This is a shobuzukuri katana with an ihorimune, wide mihaba, thick kasane and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a slightly large sori and an okissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame. There are dense thick jinnie, and frequent fine chikei. The entire hamon has a high yakiba with up and downwaves or variations. There is a choji type hamon mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, square shaped gunome, and togariba. There are frequent ashi and yo, and it is mostly in nioi. In some places there are small tobuyaki. The boshi is midarekomi, and the omote side is komaru and the ura side is a togariba type hamon with a komaru and return. The horimono on the omote and ura sides are have bo-hi which stop in the nakago and hi extends slightly into the ko-shinogi. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is kurijiri; the yasurimei are suji-chigai, and there is one mekugiana. On the omote side, under the mekugiana, on the shinoji-ji, there is a long signature with large kanji cut with a thick tagane. On the ura side there is a date inscribed close to the mune edge.

The swordsmith, Matsuba Kunimasa, was born in Showa 34 (1959). In Showa 58 (1978) he became a student of the smith Kobayashi Yasuhiro. However,

Kobayashi passed away at an early age, so Kunimasa then became a student of Kobayashi's senior student Ando Yukio. In Heisei 1, Kunimasa received his swordsmith's license. After this, he submitted a blade every year to the Shinsaku Meito Ten. Since then, he has received many prizes, such as the NBTHK Chairman's prize, the Kunzan and Kanzan prizes, and he has been working enthusiastically on making swords. Besides being a swordsmith, Kunimasa has been giving lectures and demonstrations of Aikido and sword fighting which is his hobby. His lectures have been delivered, not only in Japan, but also in America and Europe. This is an ideal piece for him, which is in the Bizen Chogi style of work, and this time he received the first prize, which he also did last year. This is a long sword, about 2 shaku 5 sun long, with a wide mihaba. The okissaki is strong looking and dynamic. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame, and there are dense ji-nie, and fine chikei, and the slightly strong jihada fits with this style. There up and down waves or variations in the height of the hamon, and also the ashi and yo are soft looking. The nie are worn down and the nioiguchi is well controlled and smooth, and there is no exaggerated look or appearance which is often seen in this kind of sword. This is a well made and dynamic work. This katana shows Matsubara's high level of skill and success in his work.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira)

Heisei 24 nen Shinsaku Meito Ten NBTHK Chairman's Prize

**Nozarashi-zu (skull and pagoda image) tsuba
Mei: Mo(copy) of Kaneie Hidari Tadamitsu
Mizunoe Tatsu Haru (2012 spring)**

Hagawa Yasuho used the Hidari Tadamitsu kinko mei, and he was born in Showa 18 (1943). Today he is working at Tagajo City in Miyagi prefecture. Since early in his career, he was deeply interested in tosogu and kinko work. He wanted become a shirogane kinko smith and he joined the NBTHK workshop as a student. After that, even though he was handicapped by the fact that he lives a long distance from Tokyo, he often visited to Tokyo to study under master smiths, such as Toyota Katsuyoshi, Akano Eiichi, and Yanagawa Morihei and he tried to improve his techniques. He worked on the hada for his tsuba Hagawa works not only on tsuba, but also on tosogu and habaki, and sometimes he repairs old tosogu. This work is a copy of the Momoyama era master smith Kaneie's famous Nozarashi-zu tsuba. This has an uneven fist shape, and there are chisel marks on a thin refined iron ground.

His work with the volume of his relief in his carving is just right, and the chisel marks are not too prominent and are well balanced. The twisted uchikaeri-mimi (rim) has a slightly irregular, interesting look. Old iron was used to make the jihada, and it has an old elegant look which doesn't appear like today's work. Usually Hagawa's strong points are colored metal work, but this iron tsuba opens a new style for him, and it is a great accomplishment.
(Explanation by Iida Toshihisa)

Shijo Kantei To No. 665

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 665 issue Shijo Kantei To is July 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 July 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: wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 9 sun 2.5 bu (58.33 cm)

Sori: 5 bu (1.52 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)

Kissaki length: 2 sun 4 bu (7.4 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 7 bu (14.24 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri wakizashi with a marumune, a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are somewhat different. The shinogi-ji kasane is slightly thin, and there is sakisori in the upper part of the blade and an okissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with large nagare hada, and in some places, the nagare hada is undulating which is this school's unique jihada. The hada is visible, and there are ji-nie, chikei, a dark color jihada and whitish utsuri. The hamon and boshi

are as seen in the picture. The yakiba is noticeably low for the mihaba. There are nijuba, yubashiri, ko-ashi, a tight nioiguchi, ko-nie, and a bright nioiguchi. The nakago is a ubu, and the nakago jiri is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari, and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side of the the nakago, there is a long kanji signature located towards the mune edge of the nakago, and on the ura side there is a date in a slightly lower location (note: this swordsmith's school's hamon contain many works with with a soft nioiguchi).

Teirei Kanshou Kai For May

The swords discussed below were shown in the May, 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 Kurotaki Tetsuya.

Kantei To No. 1: Tanto

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Motoshige
Showa 5 nen 6 gatsu hi

Length: slightly less than 8 sun 2 bu

Sori: uchizori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: visible itame hada; the entire hada shows a strong wave pattern; some places have masame hada; there are ji-nie, jifu and midare utsuri.

Hamon: primarily square gunome mixed with gunome and kataochi type gunome; there are ashi, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi; there is a intense nioiguchi and ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi, the tip is komaru, and there is a long return.

This tanto has many characteristic points. This is a standard size with uchizori, and is thick (there is a large kasane). From these characteristics, this is from the end of the Kamakura period. This is dated Showa 5, and about ten years later, the Shochu-no-ran rebellion occurred in 1324, and the Kamakura Bakufu crisis began, so this was an unstable time. Let's look at the jitetsu, and consider the background of the time. Motoshige's jitetsu are often itame mixed with nagare-hada, a visible hada, and a different colored jifu type hada. This tanto has exactly this kind of hada. The hamon has long spaces between high vertical kaku-gunome valleys, and there are tusk shaped togariba too, which is Motoshige's distinctive hamon style. From these characteristics, it is not too difficult to come up with the Motoshige name. In voting, some people voted for Kanemitsu. If this were a Kanemitsu hamon, there would be more kataochi-gunome, and we never see this kind of long vertical gunome. These characteristics are also seen in the No.3 Kantei To Kanemitsu tanto. Also, if this were by Kanemitsu, the jihada would be more refined, and we would never see this type of visible strong jihada. This is Motoshige's oldest work which we have today. His active period continued into the Nanbokucho period to around the Teiji era.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mei: Nakasone Okisato Kotetsu Nyudo
Kinzogan Mei: Banji 4 nen Uzuki 19 nich
Yamano Kanjuro Narihisa (kao)
Mitsudo saidan

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: there is a tight ko-itame at the koshimoto which is mixed with ohada, and there is ko-itame along the rest of the ji; there are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a clear jigane.

Hamon: straight long yakidashi; above this, there are gunome mixed with ogunome, konotare, and togariba; there are ashi and yo, a thick nioiguchi, dense nie, and some places have coarse or rough nie; there is a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: above the yokote the boshi is yakikomi; there is a shallow notare; the tip is komaru and there is a long return.

There is a standard mihaba for this katana, and the widths at the moto and saki are different; there is not much sori, and there is a chu-kissaki, From this shape, you could judge this as being a Kanbun era katana. Also, the shinogi-ji has a rough, masame hada, and from this, you could think about an Edo area katana. The jihada is refined, and we see teko-tetsu (i.e. between the nakago and polished

blade some shingane is visible). The hamon has a straight long yakidashi, and has gunome mixed with ko-notare, togariba, and distinctive hyotanba; also, there are rough nie. Koytetsu's special characteristic is having a very clear ji. Also, look at the boshi, this is a jizo Mino style Mino boshi. From this feature, looking at hamon again, the entire hamon appears to be a Mino style. There are teko-tetsu, a long yakidashi, hyotanba, and a Mino style hamon. The boshi is not a Kotetsu style boshi, but more of a Mino style boshi. From these characteristics, it is possible to judge this as a Kotetsu's Hanetora period katana.

Kantei To No 3: tanto

Mei: Bizen Osafune Kanemitsu
Enbun 5 nen 3 gatsu hi

Length: 8 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: slightly less than 1 bu

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame; there are dense ji-nie, chikei and pale bo-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha type hamon, mixed with square shape gunome, kataochi gunome, and ko-gunome: the upper part is a continuous wide yakiba with saka-ashi; there are kinsuji, sunagashi, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: on the omote, midarekomi with a komaru; on the ura, it is notare, straight, and the tip is sharp.

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

On this tanto, please look at the shape carefully. This is not a large tanto. But if you look at it carefully, it has a small sori, and a thin kasane, and from this shape, you can judge this as a Nanbokucho period tanto. Looking at the jitetsu and hamon, the jitetsu is tight itame, refined, and bright. The hamon has saka-ashi kakugunome, and kataochi-gunome. From these characteristics, Kagemitsu and Kanemitsu names come out in voting. If we understand the shape, this is a Nanbokucho period tanto, and it is not too difficult to come up with Kanemitsu's name for the vote. In voting, some people voted for Sa. Except the shape and the era, if this were work by Sa, his jihada are bright and clear, and there are bo-utsuri. His kataochi-gunome hamon are not prominent like this, and his hamon are notare with frequent nie. In particular, his boshi are tsukiage. We put this tanto here for for a comparison with Kantei To No1. From this tanto, we can see the difference between Osafune mainstream tanto, and branch school tanto by Motoshige. Most notably, the jihada and hamon are different: see Kanemitsu's refined jihada and Motoshige's visible jihada. We can see Kanemitsu's kataochi-gunome hamon and Motoshige's long vertical gunome. From these two smiths, please look at the differences between mainstream work and branch school work.

Kantei To No. 4: katana

Mei: Nakasone Okimasa

Kinzogan mei: Enpo 2 nen 8 gatsu 29 nichi

Yamano Kanjuro Hisahide (kao)

Futatsu-do saidan

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu

Sori: 4.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, and the bottom half is mixed with ohada, there are ji-nie, chikei; the shinogi-ji has a masame type jihda.

Hamon: straight yakidashi; above this there is a gunome midare hamon which becomes a juzuba style hamon; there are yubashiri, frequent ashi, and a dense nioi-guchi; some places have a loose hamon; there are kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: on the omote and ura it is straight with a komaru; there is a slightly long return, and there hakikake.

This katana is here for a comparison with the Kantei To No.2 Kotetsu katana. The shape has a standard mihaba, the widths at the moto and saki are different; and there is a chu-kissaki. This is a typical Kanbun Shinto shape. The era is the same as for the No.2 Kantei To. The jitetsu on the shinogi-ji is masame, and the hamon is a juzuba style. From these characteristics, you can imagine a smith's name like Kotetsu. Maybe judging from this hamon, some people voted for Kazusa no suke Kaneshige, But compared with Kantei To No.2 and Kotetsu's juzuba, around the monouchi area we can see the hamon is loose, Kotetsu style juzuba towards the top of hamon are prominent and vary in the up and down direction: Okimasa's hamon are a more variable hamon. Okimasa's boshi are straight and have komaru, but the return is tight. His entire blade gives an impression of boldness and dynamism. Also, the gunome pattern used by Kazusa no suke has a one, two and one, two rhythm, but Okimasa's gunome do not have such a regular rhythm. Judging from the difference of the hamon rhythm, this is not Kaneshige's katana. From the boldness of the jihada and hamon work, this is not Kotetsu's work, and it is possible his student Okimasa's name could come out in voting. Okimasa is known for his productivity among Kotetsu's students. From the signature and the shape, this katana was made around the Enpo era, and on the ura side, there is a kinzogan kanji dated Enpo 2 nen. We put this katana here to compare it with a typical Kotetsu juzuba work, and to recognize Okimasa's bold jihada and hamon, and see that his work is almost good as Kotetsu's.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Inoue Shinkai, kiku mon Enpo 8 nen 8gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame; there are dense thick ji-nie, fine chikei and a clear jigane.

Hamon: suguha shape with shallow notare mixed with gunome : there are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie, rough nie, kinsuiji, sunagashi, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi with marudome.

Inoue Shinkai's katana shapes in Banji and the early half of the Kanbun era have a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a short chu-kissaki and a very shallow sori. But compared with these features, this katana has a sori centered in a slightly high location, and the kissaki is long. This kind of shape is often seen in his work in the latter half of the Kanbun and Enpo eras. Considering the era, in examining the jihada and hamon, we see the jihada is a tight ko-itame and refined. The hamon is a suguha style; there is a dense nioiguchi and dense nie, and the jihada and hamon are very clear. Considering these characteristics, you can vote for Inoue Shinkai. In voting, some people voted for Sukehiro. But Sukehiro has very few swords with this wide a yakiba, and the nie in the jihada and hamon are finer when compared with Shinkai's. There were many swordsmiths who lived in Osaka in Shinto times. Both Shinkai and Sukehiro lived in the Osaka castle town with other master smiths and in the neighborhood there were iron wholesalers. As you can imagine, there was a sword making network there. We put this katana here to consider this kind of background.

Shijo Kantei No 663 (in the April, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 663 in the April issue is a katana by Osafune Yososaemonjo Sukesada (Shodai, dated Tenbun 3 nen).

This katana has a length of 2 shaku 1 sun, which is a short length. It has a slightly wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. The upper half of the blade has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. This kind of shape is often seen in the latter half of the Muromachi period around the Eisho and Taiei eras for katate-uchi uchigatana. Some of the Sue-Bizen special order blades' jihada are itame with a visible hada. But most of them are a tight itame, and are bright, and a refined original jihada like mainstream Osafune work; there are two types, with midare utsuri and without utsuri. Basically many of the hamon have high yakiba with open bottom gunome, and at the top, the hamon are a mix of ko-gunome, ko-choji, and ko-togariba; there are frequent ashi and yo; and we also see what are called fukushiki(double)-gunome. Other hamon are notare, suguha and hitatsura, and most of them have nie. Also, many of the sue-Bizen works have yakiba which are quenched under the machi. Usually, sue-Bizen boshi are midarekomi on both the omote and ura. There are many horimono: bo-hi with soe-hi, bo-hi with tsure-hi, bonji, suken, tsumetsuki-ken, hoju-bo, shino-no-kurikara, gyo-no-kurikara, and gods or dieties named with kanji such as hachiman-daibosatsu, and kasuga-daimyoin. Sue-Bizen nakago tips are a wide kurijiri, and the yasurime are katte-sagari. On katana, usually on the omote side there is a long signature located close to the mune edge, and many of them have a date. This school has produced large numbers of this kind of sword. Just like this katana, there is a typical fukushiki-gunome hamon from the moto to the saki, and the jihada and hamon are well made which is often seen in the Sukesada school. In particular, Yosozaemonjo Sukesada's techniques are among the best. In voting, most people voted for Yosozaemonjo Sukesada. Beside this name, people voted for Katsumitsu, Tadamitsu and Harumitsu. Their works are similar to this, and often it is difficult to judge the differences, and at this time we treated all these names as correct answers. Usually, Katsumitsu's work has open bottom gunome hamon, with the top of the hamon mixed with choji, and many of them are more spectacular hamon than Sukesada's with frequent ashi and yo hataraki. Tadamitsu's favorite hamon is suguha. Harumitsu's jihada are visible when compared with the other smiths, his habuchi have nie-kuzure, and often his work is a little behind that of the other smiths. The size of the blades depend on the owner's orders, but this is not true for every blade. But looking at the movement of shapes with the eras, in general, during the latter half of the Muromachi period, the uchigatana shapes can be described as follows. Around the Eisho and Taiei eras the swords are usually 2 shaku or about 2 shaku 1sun, just like this katana. There is a short length with a chu-kissaki, and a uchigatana shape. During the Kyoho and Tenbun eras, the swords have a longer size, about 2 shaku 2 sun, with a slightly wide mihaba and a longer chu-kissaki. At the end of the Muromachi period during the Genki and Tensho eras, the size is over 2 shaku 3 sun, there is a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are almost the same. There is an o-kissaki and there is saki-sori, which are features of the Genki and Tensho period's strong uchigatana shape. In the next generation, during the Keicho era, there is less saki-sori, and swords change to a Keicho-Shinto shape.

Explonation by Hinohara Dai