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Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bijutsu Hin
Type: Naginata naoshi
Mei: Sanetoshi
Owner: NBTHK

Length: 1 shaku 9 sun 8 bu 4 rin (60.1 cm)
Sori: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)
Motokasane: 8 rin (0.25 cm)
Nakago length: 5 sun 7 bu 8 rin (17.5 cm)
Nakago sori: None

Commentary:

This is a naginata naoshi-zukuri with an ihorimune, a standard mihaba, a tip which is not too wide, and a shallow sori. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame and the entire hada is visible. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, some areas with jifu type hada, and pale jifu utsuri. The hamon is chu-suguha, mixed with ko-gunome at the koshimoto area, and from the middle to the upper part, the hamon is a slightly shallow notare with a tight ense nioiguchi. In the bottom half, there are frequent yo and ashi, and on the omote side, the saka-ashi hamon is prominent. It is primarily nioi with a little bit of ko-nie. On the ura side at the koshimoto, there are kinsuji. The boshi is straight and yakizume. The horimono on the omote side close to shinogi-ji at the koshimoto are hoso-hi carved through the nakago. On the ura side the shinogi-ji has koshi-hi carved through. The nakago is suriage, the nakago tip is saki-kiri, the yasurime on the omote side (the old yasurime) are osuji-chigai, and on the ura (with a newer finish) the yasurime are a little bit katte-sagari. There are two mekugiana, and there is a slightly large sized two kanji signature.

The Kamakura era smith Sanetoshi's name is variously listed in Meikan (sword books) as a Ko-Bizen, Fukuoka-Ichimonji, Osafune, and Katayama-Ichimonji smith. In particular, the Katayama-Ichimonji Norifusa school Sanetoshi is well known, however, there is no definite confirmation of this because there is no existing work

from him. There are Sanetoshi works with signatures and which are classified as Juyo, Tokubetsu Juyo, and Jubun, and in the case of a blade with a two kanji signature, it is hard to judge what it is from the signature; these swords are judged by their style as being Ko-Bizen, Ko-Ichimonji, or Osafune.

This Sanetoshi is classified as being from the Bitchu Kuni Katayama school smith and is listed in the Nihonto Juyo Bijutsuhin Zenshu (a list of Juyo art works). But concerning the Katayama Ichimonji origin, there are many opinions. In historical times Katayama is supposed to have been Bitchu (today, this is the Okayama Prefecture's Sosa City Jito Katayama), but recently there is a strong opinion, that Katayama was around the Bizen Fukuoka area (today this is Okayama Prefecture's Setouchi City Oku-cho Shimogasaki) and this location is still uncertain. It is still questionable how the Bitchu Katayama area and the Katayama Ichimonji school are related to each other. Also, there are different signatures for the founder Norifusa's name, and judging from this, there might have been several smiths using the Norifusa name. For this school, we need more extensive studies in the future. This is a Bitchu Aoe work, a naginata-naoshi which is a style often typically seen in Katayama-Ichimonji work. The Norifusa school's Sanetoshi is well known, and this is a different signature from his, and for these reasons, in the past, this work was considered to be Katayama school work. This is not Ichimonji work at all, but strong Aoe style work: there is a tight ko-itame mixed with relatively prominent mokume hada, a saka-ashi type midare hamon and the saka-ashi hamon is prominent, a signature signed in a gyaku-tagane style (chiseled in the wrong direction), osujichigai yasurime, and usually in the case of a naginata, the signature is on the omote side, the same as a tachi, but this signature is on the ura side. Also, many recent sword books include this blade, and have decided that there is not a direct relationship between Sanetoshi and Katayama Ichimonji Norifusa. So, there seems to be no problem in looking at this as an Aoe smith's work. Whether it is or not, it is hard to judge whether the smith studied the Katayama Ichimonji style and later became an Aoe school smith, or he was just an Aoe school smith, because he has few signed works left and the Katayama Ichimonji school's history is not well documented. We need more new material to study these details in the future.

This was classified as a Juyo Bijutshin in Showa 10, and was owned by Honnami Koson who was well known as a polisher and connoisseur during the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa era, and who established today's polishing techniques and left a large influence on today's thoughts about sword appraisal. Later, this blade was donated to the NBTHK by Ms. Ozu Hisako.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira)

Meitan kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba and kodogu

Juyo tosogu

Moko-zu (wild tiger design) tsuba

Mei: Yasuchika zu (design) Iwamoto Konkan with kao

One time I was frightened when looking at this tiger. His sharp strong eyes, his ominous mouth, and particularly, his large prominent shoulders produced a scary image. A tiger looking backwards generates a wind and the "Kosho seifu zu" (a painting showing the roar of a tiger causing a wind) by Maruyama Okyo is well known. But a tosogu tiger is much more scary than his painting. This design is known as a Shonai kinko work by someone such as Yasuchika, his teacher Yoshihisa, and later his students Sekibun and Itkin. Konkan copied Yasuchika's work and there are two tsuba left today. This is one of them, and he copied Yasuchika's composition, but he put his original touch in this work. This work is described in the NBTHK journal issue 585. Yasuchika's tsuba ura's side shows a wave, but Konkan's a rock and bamboo. Possibly Yasuchika imagined a dragon and tiger, and Konkan imagined bamboo and a tiger, which may reflect different eras. For the jigane, Yasuchika use shibuichi which is unusual, and Konkan used shakudo. Konkan's carving technique and zogan colors are different from Yasuchika's, and this shows his experimental trials and efforts. The best part is the tiger's shape; his tiger's face is smaller than Yasuchika's, and his tiger's legs are longer, which shows a more modern appearance. Copying art is universal and efforts are numerous. We learn from our superiors and work hard to overtake their skill and results. This is not only true in the art world, but also basic in all kinds of work. For the future, we can learn from comparing our efforts with past work, and we appreciate the opportunities to be able to do this.

(Explanation by Kubo Yasuko)

Shijo Kantei To No. 668

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 668 issue Shijo Kantei To is October, 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 October 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 4 sun 2 bu (73.42 cm)

Sori: 6.5 bu (1.97 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 4 rin (2.25 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 8 rin (0.85 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 3 bu 2 rin (4.0 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 8 bu 7 rin (17.8 cm)

Nakago sori: very little

This is a shingi zukuri tanto with an ihorimune, a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are almost the same. There is a large kasane (the blade is thick), the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki.

The jihada is itame mixed with mokume; the hada is visible, and there are ji-nie, chikei, and pale midare utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture.

There are ashi and yo, a bright nioiguchi, frequent nie, and sunagashi.

The nakago is ubu, and the nakago jiri is a square shaped kurijiri. The yasurime are a katte sagari, and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature located towards the mune edge and the ura side has a date.

Shijo Kantei No 666 (in the July, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 666 in the July, 2012 issue is a tanto by Uda Kunimune.

This is Kunimune's work from around the mid-Muromachi period. The mihaba is a little narrow, it is short, there is a strong uchizori, and the fukura is poor. From this characteristic shape, we can judge this as a mid- to late-Muromachi tanto. The jitetsu is entirely itame hada which shows nagare hada and masame. The hamon is a shallow notare style suguha type hamon with hotsure at the habuchi, and mixed with frequent kuichigaiba. There are nie, kinsuji and sunagashi, which is seen in Yamato Den work. From the dark jihada, this is not derived to mainstream Yamato work, but possibly from a countryside or minor school. In the Muromachi

era, there were Yamato Den branches such as the Echu Uda school, the Bingo Mihara school, the Suo Nio school, and the Satsuma Naminohira school. Among these, this work has a shallow notare style suguha type hamon, there are unique ha-nie, strong and bright nie which can be counted individually. If you recognize these characteristics, you can judge this as Uda school work. The Uda school tanto boshi are just like this tanto's on the omote side, which is tsukiage. The tips have a sharp peak (or on the ura side, a sharp tip with a komaru and return) or often with a deep return with yakisage which looks like Samonji school work at first impression; this feature is a major point for judging the maker. The nakago tips are a square type kurijiri, the nakago-mune are round, and the yasurime are kattesagari. On tanto, the signatures are usually located on the omote side, under the mekugi-ana along the center. In the Uda school, the smiths who used the "kuni" kanji such as Kunimune and Kunifusa used four kanji characters often in their mei, such as "Uda Kunimune". Other smiths who used "tomo" kanji, such as Tomotsugu and Tomohisa often used two kanji characters in their mei. In voting, the majority of people voted for Uda school smiths such as Kunifusa, Kunihisa, and Kunitsugu. During the Muromachi period the school's smiths work were similar to each other, and the nakago finish work was also shared, so these smith's names are all treated as a correct answer. A very few people voted for the Shodai Uda Kunimitsu (called Ko-nyudo Kunimitsu). Ko-nyudo Kunimitsu lived in Yamato no kuni, Uda county and moved to the Etchu area and he is supposed to be a founder of the school. There is one tachi with a classification of Tokubetsu Juyo Token which is supposed to be Ko-nyudo Kunimitsu work. The tachi has a slightly narrow shape, the jihada is ko-itame mixed with nagare hada and masame. The hamon is a narrow suguha style with ko-ashi, the habuchi has hotsure, and there are frequent nie. This was made in a different era, the style is different from this tanto, and we have never seen a tanto with a definite Kunimitsu signature. So, for these reasons, this answer could not be treated as a correct answer. Besides the correct answer, a few people voted for Fujishima Tomoshige. In the Muromachi period, Fujishima sometimes made suguha blades, and the jihada are similar, and he signed "Fujishima Tomoshige" with four kanji, so from these details, the answer is understandable. But most of his school's hamon are open bottom midare hamon mixed with togariba, yahazu, and tsunoha (tsuno means horn), which is a varied midare hamon, or a Shikkake style continuous ko-gunome hamon, or are based on yahazu type hamon which remind us of Oei Nobukuni. He does not have much suguha work, and strong bright unique ha-nie are not seen. At the same time, a few of Tomoshige's nakago tips are kurijiri, but most of them are a pronounced deep ha-agari-kurijiri, which is a katayama shape, so please pay attention to this.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.

