

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bijutsu Hin
Type: Tanto
Mumei: Sagami no kami Fujiwara Masatsune
Owner: NBTHK

Length: 9 sun 2 bu 1 rin (slightly over 27.9 cm)
Sori: very slight
Motohaba: slightly over 8 bu 4 rin (2.57 cm)
Motokasane: slightly over 1 bu 9 rin (0.58 cm)
Nakago length: slightly over 3 sun 8 bu (11.6 cm)
Nakago sori: almost none

Commentary:

This is a hira zukuri tanto with a mitsumune, and the mihaba and kasane are standard or usual proportions for a tanto. There is a slight sori, and it is slightly long. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with ko-mokume, and there is some nagare hada and ji-nie. The hamon is yakikomi (wide) around the machi, and is a narrow suguha with a very shallow notare. In some places, there is a fine nioiguchi with hotsure, and in places, small tobiyaki, uchinoke, some nijuba, a tight nioiguchi, and frequent ko-nie. The boshi on both the omote and ura are komaru with a return, and a long yakisage (return or kaeri) which becomes muneyaki. The horimono is a kurikara with a ranma-sukashi (a specific type of pattern). The nakago is almost ubu: the nakago tip is kurijiri, and the yasurime are katte-sagari. There are two mekugi ana, and on the omote side there is a seven kanji signature under the mekugiana along the center made with a thick tagane.

The shodai Sagami no kami Masatsune is called an Owari sansaku smith along with Hida no kami Ujifusa and Hoki no kami Nobutaka and they were from Mino. The shodai Masatsune was Narataro Kanetsune's descendant, and he was born in Mino and was called Nando or Nodo, and was the 8th generation Nando no suke Saemon Kanetsune's second son. His early name was Sasuke, and after he moved to Owari Komaki in Eiroku 10 (1567), he changed his name to Taronosuke, and his sword name was Kanetsune. There is a story, that in Tensho 12 (1584),

during the “Komaki Nagakute tatakai (war)”, he donated 100 yari to Tokugawa Ieyasu, and he received some silver from Ieyasu. There are differing opinions concerning his changing his name from Kanetsune to Masatsune. The Kanefusa keizu (pedigree) listing in Tensho 19 (1591), and the Ujifusa kafu (family history) listing in Tensho 20 suggest that possibly that in Tensho 20, on May 11, when the Kampaku Hidetsugu became lord of Kiyosu castle, Ikeda Tadamasu who was the Komaki lord received the Sagami no kami title. Terumasa gave the first kanji in his name or “Masa”, to Kanetsune who then changed his name to Masatsune. According to the sword book “Shunjhu Zatsusan”, after November, Keicho 5 (1600), he moved to Kiyosu, he followed Ieyasu’s fourth son Matsudaira Tadayoshi, and later became the okakae (daimyo’s) sword smith. After Tadayoshi died in March of Keicho 12 (1607), he gave the leadership of the family business to his son the Nidai Masatsune who subsequently died in Keicho 12 at an early age. Consequently, Masatsune changed his name to Nyudo, and started working again. He adopted Daido’s son in Gifu who became the third generation Masatsune (Mino-no kami). Because of this, we never see any Nidai Masatsune work today. In Keicho 12, the Shodai Masatsune moved to the Nagoya castle Kaifu area, or Nagoya Toda-cho (around Nagoya-shi, Naka-ku, Sakura dori, Honcho) and received 100 koku. He passed away on February 28th of Genna 5 (1619). The shodai Masatsune is supposed to have been born in Tensho 4, and this story comes from the sword book “Token Tansakusho “. It says that Masatsune died in February 28th of Genna 5 at the age of 84. Another opinion expressed in the sword book “Kokon kaji biko “ says he died at the same time, but was about age 70. From this, he is supposed to have been born around Tenbun 17 to 18. His works include wakizashi, hira zukuri ko-wakizashi, tanto, naginata, ken, and yari, and all kinds of items, but the strange thing is that there are very few swords. His work includes suguha, notare, notare mixed with ko-midare, and his midare hamon include some togariba shapes. This boshi’s tips are komaru and a togari type, and especially around the monouchi area the yakiba becomes wider and then the yakiba become narrower. Today, Masatsune’s Juyo Bijutsu Hin classified works include this tanto with a ranma sukashi horimono which is not often seen in his work, and an Owari Tokugawa Reimeikai sword, so there are only two of these. This tanto is a donation from Mr. Kimura Tokutaro, who started working as a lawyer, and after the war, was the top prosecutor in the Shitahara cabinet. He was the Yoshida cabinet justice minister, a top constable, and later, secretary of defense. He donated this to the NBTHK in Showa 47 along with other swords. The other donated swords are the Kokuho Ryumon Nobuyoshi, the Juyo Bunkazai Gojo Kanenaga, and the Juyo Bijutsuhin Ko-Ichimonji Muneyoshi.

(Explanation and oshigata by Hiyama Masanori)

Shijo Kantei To No. 670

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 670 issue Shijo Kantei To is December 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 December 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: 2 shaku 4 sun 9.5 bu (75.6 cm)

Sori: 5.5 bu (1.67 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 7 rin (1.67 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 bu 5 rin (3.8 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 6.5 bu (23.18 cm)

Nakago sori: very little

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. It is long with a very shallow sori, a low shinogi, and a short chu-kissaki katana shape. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, but the hada is visible, there are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and the shinogi-ji has a prominent masame hada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are nijuba in places, and the entire hamon is small (narrow) with frequent gunome, ashi, a wide nioiguchi, dense nie, a bright nioiguchi, fine kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is a shallow iriyamagata. The yasurime are sujichigai, and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long signature located under the mekugi ana towards the mune edge.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For October

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

Date: October 13, 2012 (2nd Saturday of October)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

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 sword smith's name.

Kantei To No. 1: katana

Mei: Kane □

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 7.5 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame hada, some parts are mixed with itame and mokume; the entire hada is just visible; there are ji-nie, fine chikei, and pale whitish utsuri.

Hamon: gunome midare hamon mixed with square gunome, togariba, and the entire hamon is wide; the midare hamon has prominent up and down variations; there are ashi, and the hamon is almost nioi-deki; on the omote side, the valleys in the hamon have small tobiyaki.

Boshi: wide yakiba, variable midarekomi with a round return.

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

This katana's hamon is obviously composed mainly of gunome. The gunome tops are round, individual, and mixed with togariba, and the entire hamon is wide, and the vertical variations are prominent. The boshi is called a "Jizo boshi" which is like side of a jizo figure's shape. This kind of hamon was common at the end of the Muromachi period among Sue-Seki smiths, and their work is similar. But among these swords, this has a bright nioiguchi, a refined jigane, the ji and ha are clear, and you can see the excellent work. Among the Sue-Seki smiths with excellent technique are the "Nosada," and the famous Izumi no kami Kanesada name comes to mind. In voting, many people voted for his name, but some people voted for Kanefusa and Kanemoto. If this were Kanefusa's work, his gunome hamon with round tops and narrow bottoms stand out, there are not too many signed swords, and many of his works are either hirazukuri tanto or sunnobi wakizashi. Kanemoto's work as you know contain sanbonsugi-ha, which are groups of togari

in a midare hamon with groups of three, four or five togari, and intermittently continuous from the moto to saki, and most of hamon is low or narrow. Kanesada has many suguha hamon besides this kind of hamon. Another smith whose name come to mind is a later smith such as Echigo no kami Kunitoshi whose favorite style is primarily a notare Sengo style hamon (like the Muramasa school).

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Naminohira Yasutsugu

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 8. 5 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada and the entire hamon shows a strong nagare masame; in some places there is mokume hada; there are ji-nie, chikei, and whitish utsuri.

Hamon: narrow suguha with some ko-gunome, and this is a ko-notare type hamon; there are ko-nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi; the habuchi has hotsure, and the entire hamon appears soft, and worn down.

Boshi: straight and yakizume; the omote is yakikuzure.

This is a Ko-Naminohira Yasutsugu tachi. The shinogi ji is not too wide, but there is a high shinogi, large kasane (the sword is thick), and from this shape you can guess it is a Yamato school style. There is a narrow shape, the itame hada shows a strong nagare hada, and there is a soft appearing jihada. The hamon is a narrow suguha, with a noticeable softness, and a worn down nioiguchi, and these characteristics are typical Ko-Kyushu work. In Ko-Naminohira work it is difficult to determine individual smiths, so all Ko-Naminohira smiths' names are treated as almost correct answers. Among the Kyushu smiths, there are similar works for Chikuzen Sairen and Jitsua, Bungo Yukihiro, and I treated these as almost correct answers. Note that Jitsua's mihaba are wide for Kyushu smith work, and many of his jihada are a fine ko-itame hada, so among these three smiths, Sairen is the most nearly correct smith for an answer. There are other Yamato smiths, such as Kanenaga, Taima, Hosho, and Shikkake which can come to mind. If this were Kanenaga's work, both the jihada and hamon would be much more refined and sophisticated, and there would be very little visible jihada. If this were Taima work, there would be more prominent nie and a Soshu Den style. If this were Hosho work, the jihada would be a more prominent masame hada, and the hotsure hamon would be prominent. If this were Shikkake work, the hamon styles are different and usually a continuous ko-gunome.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Yamato no kami Yasusada

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 8 bu

Sori: 2.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: Ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; there are dense thick ji-nie and frequent fine chikei.

Hamon: notare mixed with gunome; some places have a square shaped gunome midare hamon; the entire hamon is a high midare hamon; there are ashi, frequent nie, and some places have a rough and soft nioiguchi; the ura side has small yubashiri.

Boshi: the omote side is yaki-kuzure; there is a straight boshi and a komaru; the tip has hakikake; the ura side is straight and round.

Horimono: on the omote side there are carved kanji (inkoku) writing "Hachiman Daibosatsu"; the ura has a tsure (multiple or more than one) bonji, and under this, a suken kasanebori.

This katana has a shallow sori, a coarse or rough shape, and on the shinogi ji, the masame hada is fine and dense and prominent, and from these characteristics, you can guess this is from the Kanbun period, and specifically an Edo shinto katana. The hamon is high and is a notare mixed with gunome. Some places in the hamon notare hamon show square shaped gunome, especially on the omote side. The nioiguchi is not too bright and clear, but rather a little worn down. The mune angle is little sharp, the sori is very shallow and the blade is almost straight, and these characteristic details of the shape shows Yasusada's characteristics. This is over 2 shaku and is categorized as a katana. But Yasusada has many long wakizashi. Again, from this, you can guess this is Yasusada's work. From the hamon, some people voted for "Hanetora" period Kotetsu work. If it were Kotetsu, there would be a straight long yakidashi at the moto mixed with a Hyotanba in which large and small gunome become bunched together. In addition, this katana does not have as clear a hamon as Kotetsu. There were some votes for Miyoshi Nagamichi, and this is acceptable as far as ranking the quality of the workmanship; however his shape's characteristics are similar, but his hamon are not wide as this, and his hamon are primarily gunome instead of notare.

Kantei To No 4: katana

Mumei: den Aoe Tsunetsugu

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun

Sori: 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume, some places have a jifu type hada; the entire jihada is fine and visible; there are ji-nie, jifu utsuri, and on the omote side in the center there is bo-utsuri.

Hamon: chu-suguha, and bottom half is mixed with a small midare hamon; on the omote at the koshimoto there are saka ashi; there are ashi, yo, mainly nioi, ko-nie, and on the omote side on the upper half there is dan utsuri.

Boshi: a slightly shallow notare and a komaru.

The jihada is a ko-itame hada mixed with mokume hada. The hada is fine and visible. There are also "sumihada" (clear), or "namazuhada" (bunches of dark spots). The hada is almost muji-hada, and there are jifu. There are clear dan utsuri (a pale straight line of midare utsuri), and these are characteristic points to judge this katana. The hamon is chu-suguha mixed with saka-ashi midare in places. The hamon and nioiguchi are bright and clear along the entire blade. From the shape of the sori at the tip, the different widths at the moto and saki, and the kissaki shape, you can judge this as work from the end of the Kamakura period and as Aoe school work. From the "sansaku boshi", some people voted for Bizen smiths such as Osafune Nagamitsu, Sanenaga, or Chikakage. But their utsuri are midare-utsuri, and usually there are no dan utsuri. Nagamitsu and Sanenaga's ashi are not saka-ashi, but their ashi go straight to the the hasaki (edge). Chikakage's jihada are a slightly visible itame hada, and are not too refined; he also has more strong nie. From the fine suguha and komaru and kaeri on the boshi, some people voted for the Rai school. The Rai school utsuri are a bright reflection type bo-utsuri, and different from this. According to Kanzan's sayagaki, this katana belonged to the descendants of the Banshu Himeji Sakai family.

Kantei To No. 5: tachi

Mei: Sadazane

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu

Sori: slightly over 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; there are ji-nie and jifu utsuri.

Hamon: mainly ko-choji mixed with ko-gunome and this is a komidare type hamon; there are frequent ashi and yo, a nioiguchi, some ko-nie, and inside of the ha there are pale niesuji and kinsuji.

Boshi: straight; on the omote, the tip is a small yakikuzure yakizume; on the ura there is a small return.

This is a Ko-Ichimonji Sadazane tachi. There were many votes for mid- to late-Kamakura Bizen or Rai school work. Look at the jihada carefully, and you see there are clear jifu utsuri, which are dark areas extending over to the shinogi ji, especially the ura side. This kind of utsuri, as we explained many times in this magazine, is seen mainly at the end of the Heian to early or first half of the Kamakura period. This is an early example of unique dark utsuri, and this is a characteristic point in judging. The hamon does not have much up and down variation and is prominent. It is composed primarily of ko-choji mixed with ko-gunome, and is a ko-midare type hamon. There is a bright nioiguchi, and the entire hamon has a sophisticated look. From the jihada and hamon style, this is a different style of work when compared to that from other schools active at this time such as Ko-Aoe and Ko-Kyushu. Also, when compared with other Ko-Bizen work, the utsuri is much clearer, and there is a very technically sophisticated hamon and nioiguchi. From these details, the Ko-Ichimonji school comes to mind. Sadazane is somewhat famous, but not too many of his blades have a signature. It is understandable that not many people were able to come up with an individual smith's name, so a Ko-Ichimonji smith as an answer is sufficient. In the past, other Sadazane work with signatures were classified as Ko-Bizen work in the old sword books. But the style on this sword supports the idea that he was a Ko-Ichimonji smith and this is an important reference material.

Shijo Kantei No. 668 (in the September, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 668 in the September issue is a katana by Osafune Magoemon-no-jo Kiyomitsu dated Eiroku 9.

This is a wide katana, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. The blade is thick, has sakizori and a long kissaki, and a long strong shape. From these characteristics, you can judge this as work from the end of the Muromachi period. From the jigane which has pale midare utsuri, you can guess this is Bizen school work. The chu-suguha hamon contains ko-gunome, and there are ashi, yo, a bright nioiguchi, and frequent nie. This type of hamon is seen often at the end of the Muromachi period in Bizen work (Sue-Bizen). The Sue-Bizen suguha works have a tight and bright itame hada, and among the latter half of the Muromachi period, these are refined works. Generally, the suguha hamon have a nioiguchi line which is refined and not crumbled or compressed. Kiyomitsu's jihada are itame mixed with mokume, The hada are visible, there are hotsure along the

habuchi and nie-kuzure. This not a conspicuous or flashy hamon, and the ashi and yo look soft and weak and extend directly towards the edge: and these are his characteristic points. Kiyomitsu's boshi are, in swords with suguha hamon, straight with a komaru. Another style has a round large circle (omaru) with midarekomi, and there is a wide ichimai style yakiba. Sometimes the kaeri are described as a long yakisage, i.e. they have a long kaeri or return. The signature on this sword has no title, but from the signature style, we can guess this is Magozaemon no jo Kiyomitsu's work. His nakago sides are parallel for their full length (a Sue-Bizen style) and the tips are kurijiri. His yasurime are kattesagari. His signature on katana can be described as follows: on the omote side there is a long mei, starting a little above the mekugi ana towards the mune edge; the ura side has a date under the mekugi ana towards the mune side, but this signature is located a little bit lower than usual. Many people voted for the Sue-Bizen smiths such as Magoemon no jo Kiyomitsu, Gorozaemon no jo Kiyomitsu, Yosozaemon no jo Sukesada, and Minamoto Hyoe no jo Sukesada. Beside these four smiths, work from the end of the Muromachi era's Sue-Bizen smiths works often have similar suguha hamon, so it is difficult to judge the differences in this way, so these smiths are treated as almost correct answers. Among these four smiths, Magoemon no jo Kiyomitsu and Minamoto Hyoe no jo Sukesada were mainly active around the Eiroku and Tensho periods. Because this, many of their swords have a wide mihaba, a long kissaki, and a dynamic shape. But Gorozaemon no jo Kiyomitsu and Yosozaemon Sukesada were mainly active a little earlier, and their characteristic work show a more usual mihaba, and the kissaki are smaller. As an almost correct answer, some people voted for Katsumitsu and Tadamitsu. These smiths have suguha work with a bright nioiguchi, but their active period was around the Bunmei and Daiei periods. Because they were active at a later time than Yosazaemon no jo Sukesada and Gorozaemon no jo Kiyomitsu, their swords are usually 2 shaku to 2 shaku 2 sun which is short, and both the mihaba and kissaki are standard, and there is a short nakago, which is a katateuchi uchigatana shape. This katana is much longer and wide, and the shape is from the second half of the Muromachi period, and it is characteristic late Muromachi work, so you should pay attention to this type of detail.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.

