

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 672
January, 2013

Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Token

Type: tachi

Mumei: Sadazane (Ko-Ichimonji)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu 2 rin (71.55 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 4 rin (2.22 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.22 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 9 rin (3.6 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 1 bu 3 rin (21.6 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin

Commentary:

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a standard kasane, it is suriage, the bottom half has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame. There are jinnie, a refined jihada, jifu-utsuri, and the dark areas are clear. The hamon is primarily a ko-choji pattern and is mixed with ko-gunome. The overall pattern is a ko-midare, and the hamon's up and down variations are not prominent. There are ashi, yo, and mostly nioi-deki. There are very small ko-nie, prominent nie-suji, kinsuji and sunagashi, except around the monouchi. The boshi is straight, and on the omote side it is a yaki-kuzure with hakikake. The ura is komaru with a small return. The nakago is suriage and saki-kiri. The original yasurime are not present and unknown. In the shinogi-ji area the yasurime are kattesagari, and in the other areas are sujichigai. There are three mekugi ana, and there is a slightly large two kanji mei made with a fine tagane (chisel), around the nakago jiri, towards the mune edge.

The Bizen Ichimonji school produced the most gorgeous work in the mid-Kamakura period, and their work was at a peak at this same time. Whether it is historically correct is not certain, but according to many historical sword books such as the "Kanchiin-hon Meizukushi", it is said that among the ex-emperor Gotoba's 12

goban-kaji (sword smiths), 7 of them were selected from this school. The school's prosperity started in the early Kamakura period when it was called Ko-Ichimonji, and they produced many great smiths.

Some of their styles are similar to Ko-Bizen work, but when compared to these, the Ichimonji ji-utsuri is more prominent, the hamon are mainly ko-midare, but some choji hamon are notable, their nie are gentle, and there are more nioiguchi in the hamon. In the Meikan, Sadazane is listed as the son of Munetada, and his active period was around the Hoji era (1247-49). Another opinion says his active period was during later eras of Kencho, Kogen, and Shogen (1249-61). His mei are all written with two kanji, the same as the other Ko-Ichimonji smiths. They are inscribed towards the mune edge with a fine tagane, and they are elegantly simple in appearance. The common points among Sadazane's signed blades are: many of the shapes are narrow and elegant; there are strong ha-nie; and there is no prominent utsuri. Based from this characteristic style, some historical sword books classified this sword as Ko-Bizen work. But this tachi, which was recently classified as Juyo Token, has clear jufu utsuri, a primarily ko-choji hamon, not much prominent vertical variation in the hamon, and there is a nioiguchi, and the nie are not prominent. Compared with Sadazane's other work, this sword is more technically accomplished and does not produce as much of a feeling of an old sword. Kunzan (one of the NBTHK founders) used to say that Sadazane's works were more classic looking than his teacher Munetada's, but some of his works have the ichi kanji, so he must be a Ko-Ichimonji smith. The tachi has clear dark jifu-utsuri, which extends up to the shinogi ji, and this not have a mid-Kamakura period gorgeous choji midare hamon like peak Ichimonji work. However, this is not work from the beginning of the Kamakura period, so we can say with assurance that Sadazane's active period was during the early half of the Kamakura period, and he was one of the Ko-Ichimonji smiths as the Meikan and other sword books say.

This tachi is an important reference material, and shows evidence that Sadazane was a Ko-Ichimonji smith. This has a wider mihaba than his usual work, a strong shape, and the excellent ko-itame hada is tight and refined. Also there are no defects or imperfections in the ko-choji based hamon, and the ji and hamon are perfect which is very unique. Even the suriage condition does not ruin its value, and it is still a refined tachi. This tachi shows Sadazane's high level of skill and is one of his best works.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira)

Meitan kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba and kodogu

Classification: Juyo tosogu

A Minogame (turtle with moss) zu (design) Mitokoromono
Kozuka and Kogai mei: Oomori Terumitsu (with kao)
Menuki warikibata mei (there is a visible mei on the side of the menuki):
signed Terumitsu (with kao)

In historical times, people used to say, for long living examples, that a “crane lives 1000 years and turtle lives 10,000 years”. Turtles are one of the longest living animals, and there are many reports that they live more than 100 years all over the world. In Japan, because the turtle comes up from the ocean to the shore, people used to believe that they were connected to different worlds rather than the human world, and there were children’s stories such as “Urashima Taro”. A Kitsho (a female buddha) wearing clothes decorated with a turtle pattern seems to look like a turtle when they wear a “mino” or a straw raincoat, and this is called a mino-kame (a turtle wearing a mino). People thought a long living turtle was supposed to have a long tail, just like old man’s beard which people used as a symbol of long life. Actually, this kind of turtle exists, and the material on the turtle’s back which looks like a mino is a type of green moss, and such a turtle is called a “Ryoku-mou kame” (a green haired turtle) or a “Ryoku-mo kame” (a green moss turtle) . People thought that this kind of turtle didn’t live in the ocean, but in fresh water. This is a mino-kame theme from Oomori Terumitsu’s work. The Oomori school was one of the Yokoya school’s important groups, along with the Yanagawa and Ishiguro schools. Hidemitsu was Oomori Teruhide’s 5th son, and he is supposed to have been the school’s successor along with his older brother Hidenaga. The kozuka, kogai, and menuki form a well balanced composition executed with a with fine carving technique. The two turtles on the beach could be a couple. They remind us of the Takasago story about old men and old woman, and entire theme has a warm and quiet feeling.

(Explanation by Iida Toshihisa)

Shijo Kantei To No. 672

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 672 issue Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2013. 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 February 5, 2013 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 2 sun 9 bu (69.4 cm)

Sori: 6 bu (1.82 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 4 rin (1.95 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 6 rin (3.5 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 9 bu (20.91 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, a standard mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are a little different. There is a slightly high sori, and a chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with nagarehada, and the entire jihada is tight, and there are ji-nie and chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture and some parts of the midare hamon have box shaped elements. There are frequent ashi, yo, sunagashi, a bright nioiguchi, frequent nie, and some places have nie-kuzure. The nakago is almost ubu (the machi is moved up a little), and the nakago tip was originally kurijiri. The yasurime are kattesagari, and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature taking up two lines, and which includes the smith's title. This is located on the flat part of the nakago near the mune edge. On the ura there is a date, and this starts a little lower than the omote signature and is also close to the mune edge. This smith often has clear box shaped features in his hamon on katana other than this one. This was made later in his career.

Shijo Kantei No 670 (in the November, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 670 in the November issue is a katana by the Nidai Hojoji Masahiro.

This katana has a standard mihaba and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a very shallow sori, and a short chu-kissaki. This kind of shape is seen in Kanbun-Shinto work, especially in work from the Edo schools. Among these, the Edo Hojoji school works often have examples where the widths at the

moto and saki are quite different, a very shallow sori, a stick shape, a low shinogi ji, and their unique shapes are quite prominent. We often see long katana with this kind of shape from this school. Prior to and during the later Kanbun period, the work of Edo Shinto smiths such as Kotetsu, Kazusanosuke Kaneshige, the Hojoji smiths, and Senjuin Morikuni work have characteristics in common. These include a very shallow sori which is a Kanbun Shinto shape, and a tight ko-itame hada with a continuous gunome Juzuba type hamon. The Hojoji smiths' characteristics include the same type of shape, and the hamon are small (narrow). Many of their hamon are a chu-suguha type hamon mixed with frequent ko-gunome, and the tops of the gunome waves form one line at the same height of the hamon. The gunome hamon also have frequent ashi. Others examples are like this katana where each gunome wave has a relatively clear shape, and they look like small sized juzuba waves (strings of beads). In addition, often we see gunome hamon in which some parts of the top of the hamon have niju-ba, and this is known as one of their characteristics. Most of the Hojoji school boshi are straight, with a komaru and return, and we sometimes see abundant hakikake. There are not seen in Kotetsu's boshi which above the yokote are yakikomi, with a komaru and return. Usually, Hojoji school work has no detailed horimono, except for occasional hi. The Hojoji school smiths work in this kind of common style, except for Yoshitugu, and it is hard to judge names of individuals in their work. But the Shijo Kanteito listed the nakago shape: the nakago tip is a shallow Iriyamagata, and from this, it is possible judge this as Omi no kami Masahiro's work. In voting, most of people voted for Masahiro and many people voted for the Shodai Masahiro. The traces of tagane work in the shodai's signature and the shapes of the kanji are not as smooth as the nidai's work, and this is known as a difference between the two of them. But this katana itself and the nakago are the same as the nidai's, so the shodai Masahiro name is treated as a correct answer. As an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Tajima no kami Sadakuni and Higo no kami Yoshitsugu. Sadakuni's work is similar to this, but his nakago tips are kurijiri, and this is an important point. Many of Yoshitsugu's works have a relatively high sori, and in his gunome hamon, each gunome stands out with a clear shape; they are primarily large sized juzuba and his nakago tip are kurijiri.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.