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Meito Kanshou
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Tokubetsu Juyo Token

Type: tanto

Mumei: Norikuni (Awataguchi)

Length: 7 sun 9 bu 7 rin (24. 15 cm)

Sori: uchizori

Motohaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 7 bu 9 rin (11. 5 cm)

Nakago sori: none

Commentary

This is a hirazukuri tanto with a mitsumune, a large kasane (it is thick), and uchizori. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada. The entire jihada is smooth, and in some places the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, and in the lower part, towards the mune there is pale utsuri. The hamon is a suguha style mixed with ko-notare and kogunome. On the ura side around the fukura, the hamon is narrow. There are ashi, and the entire hamon has a wide nioiguchi. There are frequent ko-nie, and a bright nioiguchi. On the omote around the fukura, there are yubashiri, and the hamon becomes s nijuba style. On the omote and ura, around middle, there are nie suji. The boshi is almost straight and komaru. The horimono on the omote and ura and towards the mune are gomabashi carved through the nakago. The nakago is slightly suriage (this is called shiri-tsumaru). The nakago tip is ha-agari kurijiri and the yasurime are a shallow kate-sagari. There are two mekugi-ana. On the omote near the bottom, there is a large two kanji signature made with a slightly thick tagane.

In early Kamakura times in Yamashiro kuni, besides the Sanjo and Gojo sword smith schools, the Awataguchi school also appeared, and helped to make Kyoto swords more renowned (Awataguchi was one of the seven entrances to Kyoto which go toward the Eastern roads such as the Tokaido, and it was for the military and civilian traffic. Today, the location is Kyoto city, Higashiyama-ku, Awataguchi. The Awataguchi school produced many master smiths over one century, such as six brothers, the oldest who was Kunitomo, and the great smith Toshiro Yoshimitsu

in late Kamakura times. Norikuni, called "Toumanojo", was the son of the oldest brother Kunitomo. The oldest extant sword book, the "Kanchi-in Hon Meigukushi" listed two possible ancestry paths: one says Norikuni was the son of Kunitomo which is the conventional opinion; another opinion says he was the son of the third brother Kuniyasu; and on another page it says that "he is Kuniyasu's son" and became the chief of the next generation, and his style evolved to that of Kuniyoshi and to that of either his son or student Yoshimitsu. There are very few signed Norikuni blades. Among tachi there is one Koku Ho (which belonged to the Inshu Ikeda family descendant and is owned by the Kyoto National Museum) and there are two Juyo Bunkazai swords (at the Aichi Atsuda shrine and the Osaka Homada Hachimangu. There is also one Tokubetsu Juyo Token. Among tanto there is one Juyo Bijutsu Hin and this tanto. These all have two kanji signatures, and they are made with either a fine tagane (chisel) or a thick tagane. According to conventional opinion, the "kuni" kanji are similar to his son Kuniyoshi's. His shapes are elegant which reflect the era, his jihada are tight ko-itame with very fine dense ji-nie and a delicate and strong jihada, which is the school's unique jihada. The old sword book "Ganki Gannen Token Mekiki Sho" praised the school's jihada and has comments such as "it is hard to distinguish the masame hada and very refined jihada", "there is a dark but reflective surface", and there is a "very clear jihada". The hamon are a narrow suguha mixed with ko-midare and ko-choji and they are somewhat different, but as the book mentions there are "abundant nie", and compared with the later smiths Kuniyoshi and Yoshimitsu, more dense nie are characteristic. Among his work, this tanto has a somewhat more emphasized midare hamon, the hamon is a little wider, and this is his newer style. Possibly this reflects comments in the Ganki Gannen Token Mekiki book that "he also has notare hamon", and in another book, the "Kaifunki" which comments "Norikuni has small notare hamon." Also, the "Umetada Meikan" lists a tanto, and the shape of the nakago and the mei are similar to this one, and the mekugi ana and location of the signature are very similar to this one, and my personal opinion is that it is possible that the listed tanto is actually this tanto. Norikuni's active period is supposed to be during the early half of the Kamakura period, and this is an early tanto example. It is a little thick for the mihaba, which is different from the late Rai school's very uniform work, and he produced many kinds of style variations which are seen in the work of Kuniyoshi and Yoshimitsu. Also, on the omote around the fukura in the yubashiri area, there is a small region with a nijuba type hamon, and this is seen in Kuniyoshi's work. On the ura side, Yoshimitsu's type of narrow hamon is seen. This is a very valuable example, not only to see transitional work, but also to illustrate the school's style transition. In Edo times, this belonged to the Chikuzen Kuroda family.

(Explanation and oshigata by Ishi Akira)

Meitan Kansho

Appreciation of fine tsuba and kodogu

Juyo Tosogu

Hageito zu (tricolor amaranthus design) kozuka

Mei: 70 o (70 years old) Shomin koku (carved)

This is my personal opinion, but I have never seen such a beautiful kozuka. It was a while ago that I first saw this, and since then I haven't changed my mind. Originally Unno Shomin was known as a gold smith with an excellent technique, and my opinion is that if Natsuo is known as a sketch artist, Shomin is a realistic artist, but for artistic feelings, Natsuo is a little better. However, this kozuka has a different beauty from Natsuo's work. On the suaka (pure copper) ground, there is a glossy gold color, and many layers of gorgeous takabori. It produces a very fine impression, and the gold and shakudo work in the background helps produce a balance. It has a very comfortable tension, and was done with great technique. There is a very fine chiseled ishimoku ground, the takabori (high relief inlay) is present in mixed with three layers, and one part has gold katachi-bori (shaped carvings). The dew and vines are on the suaka ground in gold, or a gold ground on the suaka, and are executed in hirazogan (high relief), and over the zogan work there are amazingly strong kebori (deep carving). The obscured leaves and stalks show the shade on the flat area with technically excellent sukedashibori (carving technique). This shows an excellent carving technique, and it is a good example of carving. In the Meiji period, Shomin was forced to move his work away from sword mountings to arts and crafts work, the same as other gold smiths. Maybe due to the fashions of the period, many of his works use abundant irogane (color metals), with excellent carving techniques and a very dynamic style. Sometimes, this kind of work is seen in his tosogu. I personally prefer the type of work seen in this kozuka: it has a more subtle design and irogane use with excellent carving techniques. In discussing the design of the hazeito (amaranthus), this is actually not a very interesting plant, and the motif is a little strange. But this has a hakogaki by Shomin's third son Unno Kiyoshi (Ningen Kokuho) and this shows Shomin's amazing artistic sense.

(Explanation by Kubo Yasuko)

Shijo Kantei To No. 673

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 673 issue Shijo Kantei To is March 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 March 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 2 sun 5.5 bu (68.33 cm)

Sori: 5 bu (1.52 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

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

Nakago length: 7 sun 5.5 bu (22.88 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a large mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. The blade is thick and has a chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and the entire jihada is a muji type, and there are dense ji-nie. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. Some places have a togariba type hamon; there are ashi, a wide nioiguchi, dense nie, a bright and clear nioiguchi, and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is a somewhat shallow iriyamagata. The yasurime are osuji chigai with this smith's unique kesho yasuri. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature located close to the mune, and the ura side has a date and saidanmei located on the ji and shinogi-ji.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For January

The swords discussed below were shown in the January 2013, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Date: January 12, 2013 (2nd Saturday of January)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Hinohara Dai

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 January 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.

Kantei To No. 1: katana

Mei: mumei Ko Aoe

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 4

Sori: 1 sun 5 rin

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame hada mixed with ko-mokume hada; the hada is visible; there are chikei and jifu utsuri, and the jihada has a dark slightly blue-black color.

Hamon: suguha type mixed with ko-choji midare and ko-midare; there are frequent ashi, yo, a worn down nioiguchi, nie, and some sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with komaru.

This is a osuriage mumei Ko Aoe katana, classified as Juyo Token. The nakago has one mekugi ana, from the condition of the nakago, this is not ubu: it was polished, has new yasurime, and the location of mekugi ana is in an uchigatana position. Judging from the shape of the mekugi ana, the funbari from the koshimoto, the shape and balance, and the condition of the yakidashi, this is o-surige. Considering its present length of 2 shaku 5 sun 4 bu, the original length is thought to have been over 2 shaku 8 sun 5 bu. Possibly more than 90% of the Ko-Aoe blades we have today have a narrow mihaba, a high koshizori, the tips are dropped, and there is a small kissaki. But sometimes, we see blades with not only koshi zori, like this tachi, but the tip has a strong sori, and probably judging from this characteristic, many people voted for work from the latter half of the Kamakura period, and for works from Bizen smiths such as Unju, Rai, and Enju smiths. There are few blades among the Ko-Bizen works, such as the Koku Ho O-Kanehira, and Kunozan Toshogu Sanetsune, which were made at almost the same time as Ko-Aoe works, and they have a wide mihaba for this era, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different, the tips are not dropped very much, and they have o-kissaki. These were used for fighting by the bushi (warriors), and narrow tachi were used by the kuge (noble families) as nodachi. I am making a personal guess,

these may be different purposes and types for tachi. Among Ko-Aoe work, there are few blades where the tip has sori, such as the Koku Ho Kitsunegasaki Tametsugu (this was used for fighting by a bushi family), and the Tokubetsu Juyo Token classified Toshitsugu tachi owned by the Nihonto Taikan. When you look at the basic shape, this looks like later era work, but the jihada shows dark areas with jifu-utsuri, and this extends over the shinogi-ji. The hamon is a suguha type mixed with ko-choji and ko-midare which are seen every area at the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period. Also, there are very dense nie, which are never seen from the latter half of the Kamakura period in Bizen work. From these observations, you can understand that the era this was made was not such a late period. From the jihada and hamon, you can guess Ko-Bizen and Ko-Aoe work, but look at the dark part jifu-utsuri carefully: the dark parts shapes are large and small with all sizes present, and some parts are spread all over the jihada. They look like sumihada. This kind of appearance is often seen in Ko-Aoe work, and color of the dark jihada is slightly dark blue, and from these characteristics, you can understand that the Juyo Token classification is appropriate.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Nagamitsu

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 8.5 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada; there are ji-nie and clear midare utsuri.

Hamon: round top choji hamon mixed with gunome; there are frequent ashi, yo, a bright nioiguchi, nioi type ko-nie, kinsuji, and fine sunagashi.

Boshi: on the omote and ura, a shallow notarekomi and komaru.

This is a Osafune Nagamitsu ubu-nakago tachi. The habaki-moto has enough funbari and shows the ubu shape. This has a standard mihaba, the moto and saki have different widths, there is a high koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. From these characteristics, you can judge this as late Kamakura work. The jihada is a tight itame and bright, and shows mainstream Osafune's refined jihada with midare utsuri. The hamon is composed of round top choji mixed with choji and gunome. There are ashi, yo, a bright nioiguchi, and strong nioi type ko-nie. The boshi is a sansaku boshi, and this is a typical Nagamitsu work. From this, many people voted for his name. Nagamitsu has a reputation for sansaku-boshi, but many of his sansaku works have a suguha or suguha type hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, and in case of an active midare hamon, it is more likely that his boshi are midarekomi and have a sharp tip.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Hoshu Takada ju Fujiwara Muneyuki

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: inokubi zukuri with yokote

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, there are fine ji-nie, a whitish utsuri, and a bright jihada.

Hamon: chu-suguha type hamon mixed with ko-notare, ko-gunome, and some places have tobiyaki; there are ashi, yo, a tight nioiguchi, ko-nie, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: both omote and ura have a wide yakiba with a midarekomi pattern and yakizume.

Horimono: both omote and ura have naginata hi with soe-hi carved through the nakago.

This tachi is a Bungo Takada school katana by Muneyuki. Usually, Muneyuki is known Fujiwara Takada smith from the early half of the Edo period. This katana is earlier than that however, and his active period was at the end of the Muromachi period around the Tensho era. This Muneyuki's work is rare and consequently this is an important reference material. This blade has a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is an o-kissaki, the upper half has sakizori, and there is a dynamic shape, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as work from the end of the Muromachi period around the Ganki and Tensho eras. Some people voted for smiths such as Kanefusa and Dodanuki. The time is correct, their school's jihada are itame and mokume with a large hada, sometimes mixed with nagarehada, and the entire jihada is visible, and most of the jihada colors are not bright. Describing Takada work from the last half of the Muromachi period, we can see that some of them have visible jihada, but others have a tight itamehada with a bright color, refined jihada, and a bright niouguchi, just like this katana, which looks like mainstream school work. There were also many votes for Sue Bizen smiths such as Sukesada. From the brightness of the jihada and hamon, that is understandable, but the shape is different, and this is classified as inokubi zukuri with a yokote. In a shinogi zukuri katana, the lower half has naginata hi, and above that there is a shinogi-ji. Usually, this kind of shape is never seen in mainstream school work such as Bizen and Yamashiro, and this is supposed to be a hint for work from outside of the mainstream schools. Also, if you look at the hamon carefully, the thickness of the nioiguchi, and the shape of the ashi and yo are different from Sue Bizen swords. The Takada hamon nioiguchi are tighter, there are sharp yo which look like they were formed by a needle, and if

you catch these characteristics, you can judge this as having a well made jihada and hamon from a high rank Takada school smith.

Kantei To No 4:wakizashi

Mei: Kunihiro

Length: 1 shaku 6 sun 2 bu

Sori: 4. 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume hada; there is a visible fine jihada; there are dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: notare type hamon mixed with gunome; the habuchi has tobiyaki, yubashiri, and kuichigaiba; there is a bright nioiguchi, dense nie, kinsuji, and fine sunagashi.

Boshi: both omote and ura are midarekomi; the tips are round with a return.

This is a Soshu Den Horikawa Kunihiro wakizashi. This notare and gunome hamon has few up and down variations, the entire nioiguchi is wide, there are dense nie, a bright hamon, dense and strong light nie, and yubashiri, which emphasizes the beauty of the ha-nie,. This is well finished and esthetic work. This is an ubu wakizashi shape which has funbari at the koshimoto. The mihaba is wide, the widths at the moto and saki are not much different; there is a shallow sori and o-kissaki, and this shape is a Keicho Shinto shape. The jihada is fine, but the entire jihada is visible, and this is a Horikawa school jitetsu. Many people voted for Horikawa school smiths. Beside Kunihiro, people voted for Echigo no kami Kunitoshi, Oya Kunisada, and Fujiwara Hiromitsu. Kunitoshi's hamon are a Seki type midare hamon, based on a shallow notare and togariba, and many of them have a worn down nioiguchi, and the boshi are a Sanpin style. Oya Kunisada's work is a Horikawa school style, similar to Kunitoshi, and has muneyaki. Hiromitsu has very few works; his hamon are often a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome, which are classic and and gentle. Among the Horikawa school smiths, it is would be difficult to judge individual smith's names. But from the jihada and hamon, you can judge this as Horikawa school work, and also from the beauty of the ha-nie and the notare hamon. In the first vote, I wish you had all voted for the Horikawa school. Beside Horikawa smiths, some people voted for Echizen Yasutsugu. This is a Keicho Shinto Soshu Den katana, and hamon are based on notare, midare hamon, and the yubashiri look like part of the ha-nie, and from this characteristic, I am guessing people voted his name. But if it were his katana, the jihada would be darker, the hamon is based on notare mixed with continuous gunome, and there would be a worn down nioiguchi, and the boshi is a Sanpin style with a long return.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Musashi daijo Fujiwara Korekazu

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly over 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: the entire jihada is itame hada and shows strong activity and becomes a masame hada; there are ji-nie, chikei and midare utsuri.

Hamon: choji midare; some places have tobiyaki; there are slight up and down variations in the yakiba; there are ashi and yo, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi ; there is a strong nioiguchi with ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: both omote and ura are a shallow notarekomi with a komaru.

This is a Musashi daijo Korekazu katana. The entire itame hada jihada shows strong movements and changes and becomes a masame type jihada in places. There is midare utsuri, and the hamon is a choji midare, and has saka-ashi. This is Korekazu's usual style. However, this katana has a slightly strong sori, and the choji are bigger and show up and downvariations when compared with his usual work. From this, many people voted for Fukuoka Ishido smiths, such as Koretsugu, and Moritsugu. For Korekazu, this would be a showy work, and the hamon would be mixed with ball type elements which are seen often in the Fukuoka Ishido school, and from this viewpoint, the answer is understandable. However, their characteristic choji hamon are described as having shapes "like squid heads", the tip is sharp, and each cluster opens strongly at the bottom and are very unique hamon. However, we do not see this kind of hamon on this katana and the tops of the choji are round. So from these considerations, if you choose one of these smiths, Korekazu is a better name than Fukuoka Ishido. If this were a Fukuoka Ishido katana, the midare hamon's high and low variations would be prominent and sometimes the high hamon would reach the shinogi-ji; in addition, the boshi is midarekomi with a long return. This katana doesn't have such a high hamon, and the boshi is shallow notare with a komaru and return. If this were a typical Edo Ishido school katana, Korekazu name would still come out. If you look at this as typical Edo Ishido work, the sori is a little strong, the choji hamon clusters are a little bigger than usual for Korekazu work, so from these considerations, some people voted for Mitsuhiro. Mitsuhiro's choji hamon have more high and lowvariations, each cluster of choji hamon contains all kinds of variable shapes, and a more active hamon. Also, some of Mitsuhiro's and Tsunemitsu's jihada are a tight itame hada mixed with masame hada, but usually their jihada do not have such clear masame hada as this katana does.

Shijo Kantei No 671 (in the December, 2012 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 671 in the December issue is a tachi by Osafune Tomomitsu.

This is a wide blade, and the widths at the moto and saki show almost no difference. It is suriage, has a strong koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is an o-kissaki, and from this shape, you can judge as a mid-Nambokucho tachi. Since the jihada has midare utsuri, a Bizen name is first t mind, and the jihada is itame mixed with mokume, the entire jihada is tight and has a bright color, there is a clear midare utsuri, and from this refined jihada, it is likely that this is not branch school work but Osafune mainstream school work, such as Motoshige and Omiya. The hamon is based on kataochi gunome, there is a midare hamon, the boshi is midarekomi, and the tip is sharp, and from these characteristics, Osafune Kanemitsu and his school comes to mind. The school founder Kanemitsu's work shows three types: a suguha style, a kataochi gunome style, and a notare style. In his school, Motomitsu used a kataochi gunome hamon, and Tomomitsu used a notare hamon and this is his strong characteristic. Tomomitsu does not have many kataochi gunome type hamon like this tachi, but Motomitsu has more. The kataochi gunome hamon mixed with couple of different hamon elements such sakaashi gunome, gunome, and togariba, where the entire hamon varies reminds us of Motomitsu work. Tomomitsu's work has horimono such as bo-hi, bonji, suken, sankozuka-no-ken, and kurikara. His nakogo tips are kurijiri, the yasurime are kate-sagari, and usually in case of tachi, on the omote side, a long signature is located close to the mune edge and some times the ura side has a date. As I mentioned before, today, we don't have many chances to see Enbun-Joji type long blades with a long signature. It is difficult to say clearly what the majority of the shapes were at that time, but we often seen swords where the tip has sori, and the bottom has koshizori. Today, there are many blades which look like Nanbokucho period work with a wide mihaba, okissaki and are mumei. These are supposed to be later time o-suriage Enbun-Joji type long tachi. Some Enbun-Joji tachi with ubu nakago examples are: Tokubetsu Juyo classified, Enbun 5 by Kanemitsu, and another with the same classification by Unju dated Joji 7, and their sizes are 2 shaku 5 to 6 sun. A Juyo Bunkazai classified tachi dated Enbun 22 by Kanemitsu is over 3 shaku, and there are 4-6 shaku long o-tachi, known as Tomomitsu master works, the Futarasan shrine Koku Ho o-tachi, and the Oyamazumi shrine den Bungo Tomoyuki Koku Ho o-tachi. These very long tachi which it seems would have been difficult to be used by one person. These are big, not only in length, but in kasane and weight too, and they supposed to have different uses as weapons. Just like in modern warfare, foot soldiers use different weapons such as machine guns, automatic small guns, carbines and pistols, and which type is used depends

on how it is used, the purpose, range, and battlefield environment. Among Enbun-Joji type o-kissaki tachi, there are many lengths, such as very long ones, some longer than usual, and some close to usual sizes. As weapons their purposes and uses are different and probably today, we usually see similar size suriage blades, because after the late Muromachi era, almost all blades were shortened to similar sizes. In voting, most people voted for the Kanemitsu school smiths such as Tomomitsu, Kanemitsu, Motomitsu, and Masamitsu. This school's smiths work is similar, and it is difficult to judge differences, so all these names were treated as correct answers. Usually, many of Kanemitsu's hamon are continuous well shaped kataochi-gunome; Masamitsu's works are narrower than this tachi shape, his hamon are ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji, ko-togariba; his work also contains mixtures of several different hamon patterns, and the entire hamon are smaller or narrower and often closely resemble Kosori work. Motomitsu's work is similar to this tachi and very closely resembles Tomomitsu's work..

Explanation by Hinohara Dai