

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kansho
Examination of Important Swords

Type: Tanto
Mei: Kaneuji

Length: 6 sun 3 bu 2 rin (19.15 cm)
Sori: very slight
Motohaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)
Motokasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)
Nakago length: 2 sun 7 bu 1 rin (8.2 cm)
Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

Commentary

This is a hirazukuri tanto with a mitsumune, a short length for the mihaba, a small kasane, and very little sori. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume hada. There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and pale midare utsuri. The hamon is ko-notare mixed with gunome, and somewhat similar to a choji type hamon. The entire hamon is a wide midare hamon. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant small even ha-nie, and the upper part of the hamon is rougher appearing. There are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, tobiyaki, yubashiri, and some places have muneyaki. The boshi is straight with an omaru, a shallow return, and the tip has hakikake. The nakago is a little suriage, the tip is sakikiri, and the yasurime are kiri. There are two mekugi-ana. On the omote under the second mekugiana, there is large size two kanji signature.

According to common opinion, originally Kaneuji was a Yamato Teigai smith and he used different kanji in his mei: 包氏 (Kaneuji). Later he moved to Nogami in Gomino prefecture (today this is Gifu prefecture Fuwa county's Sekigawara Nogami), and moved again to the same prefecture's Shidzu (Gifu prefecture's Kaizu city Mimami No-cho, Shidzu) and he changed the kanji in his name to 兼氏 (Kaneuji). From these facts, his popular name is "Shizu Saburo Kaneuji".

However, these facts are not completely certain, and since the earliest times, he was known as one of Soshu Masamune's students. He succeeded with his teacher's Soshu Den style very well, and is known as a great master smith. There

are early signed (包氏) blades from Kano1(1350) and Enbun 5 (1360) and this includes old oshigata, and these swords are not the same as blades signed 兼氏. These blades are supposed to have been made after he moved to Mino. At some point he worked in Yamato, and he followed the Teigai school's style and used a "包氏" signature. From this, in the case of o-suriage katana judged as "Yamato Shidzu", these are thought to be Kaneuji's work when he lived in Yamato and worked in the Yamato school style. This signature is large, and in the "Kane" kanji the fourth stroke in the corner forms a square corner, and this characteristic signature is not seen much. There are two tachi with the signature: one is marumune with an okissaki, and other is katakiriha zukuri with an okissaki, and the ura side has a signature. There is an opinion that these are yubisoe otachi (a wakizashi worn with a tachi) or are uchigatana. There are only two tantos with this signature, including this tanto, and neither of them have a date. The tanto shapes are a small size, just like a reduced Enbun Joji shape, and in the same style as other smiths working in the same period such as Bizen kuni Chogi, and Chikuzen kuni Samonji. Also, in the 兼 kanji, the last four strokes do not show the same intervals, and the two right side strokes and the two left side strokes are close together. Recently, the opinion is that this type of signature is from his later work, and in the same Kane kanji, the fourth stroke forms a round corner instead of a square corner. His hamon are a suguha type shallow notare, based on ko-notare mixed with continuous gunome, and there are larger midare hamon just like on this tanto. Among his blades, common points are Soshu Den type strong nie hataraki, the itame hada has a little nagare hada, the boshi has a round shape and a large and shallow return, sometimes mixed with kuichigaiba. These are Yamato school style characteristics. This tanto has a high yakiba for the mihaba, a large hamon, and among his signed blades, there are no other such examples like this, and for a small sized tanto, the characteristics produce a dynamic appearance. Also, the boshi's round shape is large, and there is a shallow return which are Yamato school characteristics. This tanto shows his characteristic points, excellent level of skill, and is appropriate work for a great master smith. Beside this, the signature makes this tanto an important reference material. Originally, this belonged to the Kuninomiya family (an old princely house which had a title in Meiji 8 and was abolished in Showa 22). In Showa 30, inside of Gifu prefecture's Kaizu City Zenkyoji temple, some sword collector volunteered to build Kaneuji's a stone memorial monument.

Explanation and the photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Shaji fuukei-zu (shrine and temple landscape design) Tsuba

Mei : Hosono Souzaemon Masamori with kao

This is a Hosono Masamori work. His subjects focus on customs of people such as farming people, people relaxing, Omi's eight famous scenes, and people inside of the capital city. He placed these subjects over the entire tsuba surface, with fine carving, and his work is very original. Masamori used live in Nijo, Kyoto, and was called Sozaemon. His active period was around the mid-Edo period and there are signed works dated in the Genroku and Kyoho periods. Mostly he used Shibuichi and Shakudo for the jigane or base, and used Kebori and Katakiribori. Most of his work use hirazogan inlay work with many colored metals such as gold, silver, and copper. This tsuba is an elaborate work, and he used Takabori iroe, which is unusual for him. But the composition is his original style, and the people and scenery are carved in fine detail. Looking at the scene, at the top of the Torii is written " Kanjinin" in kanji, and this could mean Yasaka Jinja in Kyoto, which used to be called "Kanjinin Jionsha". Judging from the main building's architectural style, and location of the Taho-to (treasure tower) which vanished in the Kansei period, this is supposed to be Yasaka Jinja. In Edo times, the Yasaka shrine was known for honoring both Shinto and Buddhism together, and the town people in Kyoto loved the shrine. The surface shows fine details in the Shrine's scenery, including a Shinto priest, a samurai, and town people together, and shows the prosperity of the Shrine. One can see individual people's clothes, and it is interesting to know the period's customs. Also, the individual differences in behavior are charming.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 686

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 686 issue Shijo Kantei To is April 5, 2014. 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 April 5, 2014 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 3 sun 1.5 bu (70.14 cm)
Sori: slightly over 5 bu (1.6 cm)
Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)
Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 9 rin (3.6 cm)
Nakago length: 7 sun 3 bu 6 rin (22.3 cm)
Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a poor hiraniku, a shallow sori, and a chu-kissaki. The mune angle is sharp and prominent. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and there are jinie and chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are ashi, a wide nioiguchi, thick nie, details are bright and clear, and prominent sunagashi and kinsuji. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is a shallow iriyamagata. The yasurime are sujichigai with kesho yasurimei and there is one mekugiana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long signature under the mekugiana on the mune side.

This smith's jihada are often mixed with fine nagarehada towards the hamon border.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For February

The swords discussed below were shown in the February 2014, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: February 8, 2014 (2nd Saturday of February)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ooi Takeshi

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mei: Kunitoki

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 1 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada with some places showing ko-itame and nagare hada; the entire jihada is slightly visible. There are frequent ji-nie, fine chikei, some places are mixed with a jifu (dark) type hada and a whitish jihada.

Hamon: based on chu-suguha; some parts have gunome and ko-gunome. There are frequent ashi, ko-ashi, and some places have Kyo-sakaashi; there are yo, ko-nie, fine sunagashi, and a slightly worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: above the yokote it is straight on the omote side; the ura side is a shallow notare; both sides have an omaru and short return.

This Kunitoki tachi shows not only Kunitoki's character but also shows Enju school characteristics very well. You can see the wazori very clearly. The jihada is itame mixed with nagare hada, and the entire jihada is slightly visible. Some places show a jifu type jihada and a whitish jihada appears like utsuri. The hamon has ko-nie, with a decent suguha, and is mixed with gunome and ashi, and some places have Kyo-saka-ashi which are ashi slanted back toward the nakago. The midare hamon and hataraki are gentle, with a worn down nioiguchi. The boshi is a straight type, with a prominent round tip and short return. These are all Enju school characteristics. Beside these points, the Enju school's characteristic points are sometimes that the monouchi to boshi area hamon has nijuba, and yo become shimaba. Also, Kunimune and Kunitoki have many bohi, and their boshi are ryochiri (on the shinogi ji, there is flat space on both sides of the hi, or in other words, the hi are not carved out right up to the shinogi ji. Kata-chiri hi have space between the hi and mune edge, but are carved right down to the shinogi ji). The Enju school smiths have many similar styles. Kunimune's work shows a long size, and the widths at the moto and saki are different, and there is a small kissaki. His jihada and hamon are softer, there are many low yakiba, and there is a classic quiet look. From this, in voting, it was necessary to think carefully. Maybe because of the well made tachi form, many people voted for the Rai school. Rai school works are more refined, and the jihada and hamon are more clear. Also, the Unrui school has many similar characteristics, and this answer is understandable, however, the Unrui school has utsuri with prominent dark parts which appear like finger imprints. The bottom part of the Unrui midare hamon has many yo, but the upper part does not have much activity and has a plain appearance.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Dewa Yamagata shi Shoji Naotane with kao

Oite Edo kore tsukuru

Bunsei 13 nen chushun (mid March)

Masse to shison takara (a family treasure for posterity)

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 4 sun 2 bu

Sori: 3 bu

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with oitame hada; some parts show large mokume, and in some places the hada is visible. There are strong ji-nie, frequent thick chikei, and pale utsuri.

Hamon: gunome midare; some places have ogunome, ko-notare, square type gunome, and kataochi gunome. There are thick long ashi, a dense nioiguchi, strong dense nie, hotsure, uchinoke, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi with strong hakikake; the tips are sharp but round, and there is a long return.

Horimono: the omote has shobu-hi (a pair of parallel short grooves beginning above the habaki); the ura has kuichigai-hi with kakudome (square ends)

This hirazukuri wakizashi is long and wide, and both the moto kasane and saki kasane are thick and heavy. The jihada is o-itame, and there are thick chikei and utsuri. The hamon is a Soshu Den style midare hamon mixed with gunome. There are Soshu Den and Bizen Den characteristics in the hamon, which is not defined by a particular school's style. Also, the ashi are long and thick, and in some places it looks like the ashi extend to the edge of the hamon. From these characteristics and overall appearance of the wakizashi, you should judge this as Shinshinto work. The jihada and hamon have prominent frequent nie, chikei, kinsuji, and sunagashi, and many other Shinshinto smiths worked in this kind of style. But the jihada is mixed with large mokume hada call uzumaki-hada, There are utsuri and some utsuri is seen up to the top of the hamon, the midare hamon is mixed with kataochi-gunome, and the entire blade is lively, well balanced, and demonstrates a high level of skill. From these characteristics, the Naotane name come to mind naturally. If it were Kiyomaro school work, there would be masame hada around the hamon, and the kinsuji would be longer. This would be different from Naotane's curved kinsuji along with itamehada and uzumakihada. It is understandable from the strong nie seen in the ji and hamon, that some judged this as Motohira's tsuribari (fishhook) kinsuji. But Motohira's jihada appear moist and tight, his hamon are a plain midare hamon, and there are togariba with nie, which we can't see on this wakizashi.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Mumei (Taima)

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: slightly less 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada with strong nagare hada, and some places are a masame type hada, and the hada is visible, There are fine ji-nie, chikei, and pale utsuri towards the mune edge.

Hamon: chu-suguha type hamon; some part are mixed with notare, and there are ko-gunome, gunome, togari, and the upper part of the hamon is wider. There are ko-ashi, yo, a wide nioiguchi, thick strong nie, hotsure, uchinoke, kuichigaiba, nijuba, frequent yubashiri, kinsuji, niesuji, frequent sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with abundant hakikake, which becomes kaen; the omote is yakizume, and the return continues to form a large muneyaki; the ura is yakizume and ichimai, and there are abundant hakikake and a return.

This sword has a high shinogi and a wide shinogi zukuri shape. The jihada is a strong nagare hada with masame type. The hamon is based on suguha, and there are frequent hataraki such as hotsure, and sunagashi along the hamon. There are frequent nie, and the nie is almost as strong as Soshu Den's. From the moto to the saki, the hamon becomes wider with stronger hataraki. The boshi has strong hakikake and is a yakizume style. The boshi is yakizume but the whole boshi has strong hataraki, and from this, the return (kaeri) is supposed to have a strong yaki. These characteristics are Yamato school characteristic features. According to old sword books, it is rare to see Taima school blades with a signature and actually, it is rare to see a signed one. There is a rare signed blade, such as the NBHTK owned Kokuho Kuniyuki, and this has is a gentle look.

Today there is no such a Yamato Den blade to be seen, which is close to Shoshu Den style work without a signature, and which was judged to be Yamato Den work in the past by the Honnami family. But in the past, you can imagine such a blade with a signature. Even today, after judging something as Yamato school work, if the jihada and hamon have prominent nie, chikei, and kinsuji, we have a tradition of judging it as Taima work.

Kantei To No 4: katana

Mei: Hizen kuni ju Omi no kami Fujiwara Kanehiro

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun

Sori: 6.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune:ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada; there are dense ji-nie, chikei, and the entire jihada is dark.

Hamon: wide hamon, based on onotare; mixed with gunome, choji, open bottom choji, togariba; the midare hamon appears a little crumbled (nie kuzure).

Boshi: slight midare hamon; the omote is komaru and the ura is omaru type; both sides have a slightly long return.

Horimono: both on the omote and ura have bo-hi carved through the nakago.

Omi no kami Kanehiro was the fourth generation descendant of the Shodai Tadayoshi's younger half brother Hirosada (whose first mei was Yoshiie). He was the Nidai Hirosada's (Kunihiro and Tadakuni's younger brother) second son, but he became the successor of Yamato Daijo Kanehiro (Kunihiro's son). His active period was around the Genroku to Kyoho periods. His high level of skill was known, and he became an okakae smith for the Nabeshima chief retainer during the Nabeshima family's fourth generation, Nabeshima Yaheisaemon Takanari (written reference in "Hizen To Biboroku").

Around the Genroku period, many Hizen swords had a large sori and sometimes, there are thick swords, and this is one of them. The jihada is a tight itame hada, with dense ji-nie, and becomes what is called komenuka-hada. There is also a dark color. The hamon is a complicated midare hamon, and the valleys of the midare hamon have a wide nioiguchi, and at the border of the nioiguchi there are frequent nie, and the nioiguchi is clean looking. There are yo inside of the gunome hamon, which look like "Ja no me" (snake eyes) and from these characteristics, you can judge this as Bo Hizen (collateral family) work. The characteristic points are a wide mihaba; the hamon is based on o-notare, and contain gunome; some parts show yakikuzure, and these are usual Bo Hizen characteristics. Beside these details, the katana has a unique dynamic look, and this is a characteristic of Omi no kami Kanehiro's style. Judging from the spaces between midare hamon waves, and the fact that there are no ko-notare waves connecting each midare wave, a Munetsugu answer is not too bad. If it were his work however, the jihada patterns are uneven and much of the hada would be visible, and his o-notare hamon are not prominent. His nioiguchi and nie are uneven, and a little worn down. His boshi are a stronger midare hamon and there are frequent hakikake. Munetsugu's style is a clear Soshu Den and this is different from other Bo Hizen smiths.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Muramasa

Kiritsuke Mei: Hizen kuni Tadayuki kore o suriage

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: strong nagare hada, and the hada is slightly visible. There are frequent ji-nie, and a slightly dark color.

Hamon: The bottom half is o-gunome, gunome, and togariba and there are large square shaped features. The upper half is a wide suguha mixed with ko-gunome, and the omote and ura have the same hamon. There are ashi, yo, a slightly wide nioiguchi, frequent nie, a long muneyaki and sunagashi.

Boshi: wide yakiba which is a shallow notare and there is a komaru.

This katana has sakizori, a sharply angled high shinogi-ji, and the hamon's upper half and bottom half are quite different. The boshi has a very wide yakiba and a long muneyaki, and these are clearly Sue Koto characteristics. Also, there is a slightly narrow shinogi-ji. The midare hamon pattern becomes a hakoba (square featured) hamon. The midare hamon is wide and narrow and there are very different widths. Between the hakoba peaks, the valley bottoms are round and face the edge of the hamon. The omote and ura side hamon are almost the same, and these show characteristic Muramasa features very well. Some people voted for Senji Masashige. This katana has strong nie, and some parts are crumbled and this is one of Masashige's characteristic features and the votes do seem to have been carefully considered. Besides the Senji school, some people voted for Heianjo Nagayoshi, and some voted for Sue Bizen and Sue-Seki smiths. The Nagayoshi jihada is a clear Kyoto type jihada, and both the jihada and hamon are bright, and most of the works have horimono. If it were a Sue Bizen smith such as Sukesada, the midare hamon would be mainly an open bottom hamon or a double gunome midare hamon. Sometimes, Sue Seki hamon are seen with a hakoba midare hamon, but there is a prominent whitish look, with fewer ashi and yo, and many of the nioiguchi are tighter when compared with this sword.

Shijo Kantei To No 684 (in the 2014 New Year's issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 684 in the New Year's issue is a wakizashi by Hioki Mitsuhira

The wakizashi's jihada is a ko-itame mixed with ko-gunome, and the entire jihada is tight, and there are midare utsuri. The hamon is a gorgeous active choji midare. This does not have a large sori and a tachi shape, but rather a shallow sori katana shape, and the shinogi-ji has a masame hada. The boshi is an almost straight komaru with a return. This is not an old Ichimonji blade.

It is highly possible that it is a Shinto period Ishido school work. Among the Ishido school smiths, this is choji midare hamon, with prominent high and low hamon areas and different shapes for the choji pattern. Some places have a high yakiba which almost comes up to the shinogi-ji, and a gorgeous active hamon. From these details, the Edo Ishido smiths Dewa no

Kami Mitsuhiro and Tsushima no Kami Tsunemitsu names come to mind. Mitsuhiro and Tsunemitsu have two types of hamon: one is a round top large cluster of choji with a gorgeous midare hamon which reminds us of old Ichimonji work. The other hamon is based on sharp topped choji or togariba, which has a sharp look, just like this wakizashi. The old sword book "Shinto Bengi" wrote about Mitsuhiro: "This is similar to Sanbonsugi, and looks like Seki Magoroku work". This means the hamon supposed to have a sharp look, as we see on this wakizashi. Mitsuhiro's many boshi are straight with komaru, or with a shallow notarekomi, and the tips have a small komaru and return. Sometimes, in case of a midarekomi boshi, usually either there is a small midarekomi and tip is komaru, or there is a small midarekomi and tip is a sharp komaru. Mitsuhiro does not have many sharp tipped boshi like the Osaka smith Tataru Nagayuki. Mitsuhiro's nakago are ha-agari kurijiri, and many of his early yasurime are sujichigai, while later works are katte sagari.

His signatures display many types and locations. In his early work, he signed "Hioki Mitsuhiro tsukuru", After this period he signed such as "Dewa no kami Minamoto Mitsuhiro", "Bushu Dewa no kami Minamoto Mitsuhiro", "Dewa Nyudo Taishin Hokyo Minamoto Mitsuhiro," and "Taishin Hokyo Minamoto Mitsuhiro". He signed with slightly large sized kanji with a gyosho style, and often added kiku mon. There are not many examples with a date and a saidan mei. This is a rare example, on which Mitsuhiro himself signed the saidanmei. In voting, most people voted for Mitsuhiro and some people voted for Tsunemitsu. Tsunemitsu has work very similar to Mitsuhiro's, and it can be difficult to judge this. Also, Tsunemitsu has many hamon based on sharp tipped choji or togariba, and from this, his name is also treated as a correct answer. Usually, many Tsunemitsu hamon are small when compared with Mitsuhiro's. His nakago tips are usually a shallow kurijiri. As an almost correct answer, some people voted for Musashi Daijo Korekazu.

Mitsuhiro and Tsunemitsu's jihada are a tight ko-itame, and with proper light, sometimes you can see it is mixed with a fine masame jihada. But Korekazu's jihada are a clear itame hada, with a strong nagare hada and becomes a masame hada. His choji hamon are a smaller size with saka-ashi, and his nakago tips are a shallow iriyamagata or sometimes kurijiri. Beside these names, a few people voted for Tataru Nagayoshi. His choji midare hamon are often mixed in places with a Sue Bizen type open bottom midare hamon; his nioiguchi are tight and his jihada and hamon are bright and clear; his boshi are midarekomi, and the tips are sharp; his nakago tips are kurijiri.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

