

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kansho
Examination of Important Swords

Classification:
Juyo Bunkazai

Type: Tachi
Mei: Masatsune

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu (71.5 cm)
Sori: 9 bu 8 rin (2.95 cm)
Motohaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)
Sakihaba: 5 bu 3 rin (1.6 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 2 rin (0.65 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)
Kissaki length: 7 bu 9 rin (2.4 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 4 bu 9 rin (19.65 cm)
Nakago sori: slight

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame and mokume hada and the entire jihada is well forged. There are ji-nie, a little bit of chikei and jifu utsuri. The hamon is a wide suguha type mixed with ko-gunome, ko-midare and ko-choji. Notably on the omote around the monouchi there is a midare hamon, and there are small tobiyaki, and yubashiri. The entire hamon has frequent ashi, yo, and fine nie. The boshi is straight with a komaru, and on the omote there are small hakikake. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a shallow kurijiri, and the yasurime are a shallow kattesagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote under the mekugiana along the center, there is a two kanji signature.

Masatsune is famous as one of the two best Ko-Bizen smiths along with Tomonari. Both of them have a reasonable number of extant blades with signatures.

Comparing their work, in the category of elegant tachi shapes, Tomonari is better. In the category of well forged and refined jihada, Masatsune is better. Tomonari's hamon are natural appearing and not artificial appearing, and with his characteristic tachi shape, his works have a classic look. Masatsune's work is more skillful and many of them are sophisticated looking. Comparing their different signatures we see that sometimes Tomonari has a long signature such as "Bizen kuni Tomonari", and Masamune has only two kanji signatures. The Ko-Bizen smiths such as Masatsune, Sanatsune, Toshitsune, Kanehira, Yoshikane, Kunitsugu, and Yukihide all made similar dynamic tachi shapes. Of course sometimes they made elegant tachi shapes too. Tomonari has a tachi classified as Juyo Bunkazai dated during the Katei period (1235-38). There is a theory that Masatsune has a third or higher than third generation signatures, and it is possible the later smiths were active after the early Kamakura period. This tachi has a slightly narrow mihaba and a large sori for Masatsune's work and a small kissaki, and shows an elegant shape. The jihada is a tight well forged ko-itame hada, with his characteristic moist appearing refined jihada, and there are clear jifu utsuri. The hamon is a wide suguha, and the width covers almost half of the ji and has a small midare wave pattern. There are ashi, yo, and abundant hataraki. The boshi is clean and straight, round and with a return. The entire jihada and hamon are bright and clear. This is a better than his usual work, and fully shows Masamune's characteristics, and is excellent work. In Masatsune's "tsune" kanji, the left side has two types of styles. Conventionally, the formal style kanji signatures have a more classic appearance. This signature is in formal style kanji, but this is not a classic appearing mei, and this is a notable point. The monouchi area shows part of the smith's characteristics. In the Edo period, this was owned by the Echizen Maruoka clan's Arima family. They were Christian daimyo and Arima Harunobu's family sent young boys on a mission to the Pope in Rome in Tensho 10 (1582).

Explanation and the photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Botan zu (picture of peonies) fuchi kashira

Mei : Hashimoto Ittshi with kao

The great master goldsmith Goto Ichijo, in the second half of the Edo period, had many master smith students, such as Funada Ittkin, Hashimoto Ittshi, Nakagawa Ittsho, Wada Ittshin and Araki Tomei, and the school was very prosperous.

Hashimoto Ittshi studied for 16 years under Ichijo. In the Kaei period (1848-1853) with Ichijo's permission, Ittshi became independent, and with another artist named Yushusha, he moved from Kyoto to Edo following Ichijo who was the shogun's okakae smith, and Ittshi worked with Ichijo's collaborators there. He was supposed to have been Ichijo's close aide and collaborator. Later he moved back to Kyoto, and produced many masterworks. After the Meiji period's Haitorei edict, he gave up his engraving work, the same as other goldsmiths. Occasionally he is supposed to have had a tabi business. However, he started working again as a goldsmith, and in Meiji 10 (1877) at the first Naikoku Kangyo Hakurankai (an exposition started by Ookubo Toshimichi) he displayed his work. After that, he worked for the Imperial Household Agency and received many prizes and honors. He passed away in Meiji 29, at the age of 77. Among the goldsmith schools, he followed most closely his teacher Ichijo's styles, materials, carving style, and themes. Usually, his works are very elegant with gentle carving. But this fuchi and kashira are a takaniku-bori botan with a full volume which is unusual for him. The botan's petals look like they are just opening, and full of life and dynamic. Maybe this was a special order or his original creation, but in either case, this is an elaborate work which displays his skill.

Expalanation by lida Toshihisa.

Shijo Kantei To No. 688

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 688 issue Shijo Kantei To is June 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 June 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: Tanto

Length: 8 sun 4 bu (25.4 cm)

Sori: almost none

Motohaba: slightly over 8 bu (2. 45 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 1.5 bu (9.54 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a hira-zukuri tanto with a mitsumune. The width is little large for the length, it is thick, and there is almost no sori. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, a unique jihada for the school, and clear bo-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture, and some parts of the hamon have yubashiri, ko-ashi, a slightly wide nioiguchi, dense nie, kinsuji and fine sunagashi. The hamon is bright and clear. The horimono on the omote and ura are katana hi with tsure-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu. The nakago tip is kurijiri and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side of the nakago, under the mekugi-ana along the center, there is a three kanji signature.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For April

The swords discussed below were shown in the April 12, 2014, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: April 12, 2014 (2nd Saturday of April)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Kantei To No. 1: katana

Mumei: Izumi no kami Kanesada saku

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with nagare hada in some places. There are dense thick ji-nie, chikei, and the bottom half has utsuri.

Hamon: gunome mixed with ko-gunome, yahazu gunome, and togari; the entire hamon is a high midare hamon. There are ashi, the hamon is almost nioi-deki, and there are some tobiyaki.

Boshi: on the omote side it starts as midarekomi, and becomes straight and has a komaru. On the ura side it is notare-komi, komaru, and the tip has small hakikake.

This katana's length is standard, the tip has sori, and from the shape, you can judge this as a Muromachi period katana. It is clearly seen that the hamon has primarily individual gunome, and the top of the hamon elements are round, and

some places have togariba. The entire yakiba is prominently high with up and down vertical alterations. Also, some places contain nagare hada, and from these characteristics, it is understandable this is latter half to late Muromachi period Seki work. Among Seki work, this is a refined jihada with almost no visible jihada; the hamon is even, the overall appearance is sophisticated, and you can recognize this as work with a high level of skill. Among the Sue-seki smiths, the most skilful and the ones with the best reputations are called "Nosada", and the name Izumi no kami Kanesada comes readily to mind, and in the voting, many people voted for him. Some people voted for Kanefusa and Kanemoto. If it were Kanefusa, narrow bottom gunome would be prominent and there would be more emphasis on vertical variations in the hamon. Also, he does not have many signed katana, and many of his works are either hira-zukuri sunobi wakizashi or tanto. Kanemoto's hamon are as you know, sanbonsugi-ba, which contains continuous groups of togariba type ko-gunome with three, four or five togariba. There is a low yakiba, and they are a different style. However, Kanesada has surprisingly many suguha beside this style. The other Kanesada hamon are mainly a notare Senshi style (Muramasa school style) which was the early Edo period smith Echigo no kami Kunitoshi's idealized style.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mei: Hizen kuni ju Mutsu no kami Tadayoshi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: slightly less than 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: small yakidashi at the moto, and above it a choji type hamon mixed with gunome, square shaped gunome, and clusters of these midare hamon are contiguous with a suguha hamon. There are ashi, yo, a wide nioiguchi, frequent dense nie, yubashiri, tobiyaki, and on the omote side in the middle there is a small muneyaki.

Boshi: straight and with a komaru. The boshi return is long.

This is a Hizen Sandai (third generation) Tadayoshi katana. The boshi is straight with a komaru and a clean shape beside the midare hamon. The entire hamon has a fresh look, and from this I hope you can judge this as a Shinto or Shinshinto katana. The katana has the right length and sori, and has a well balanced shape. The jihada is a well forged ko-itame hada. The hamon contains groups of midare clusters and is continuous or connected from the moto to the tip by a low suguha hamon. In some parts in the valleys, the nioiguchi's width is wider, and along the

entire hamon there are dense waves of ko-nie, and from these characteristics, it is not difficult to judge this as a Hizen to. Notably the jihada and hamon are bright and clear and well made. Usually the hamon style is called "Shizu utsushi", and from this, naturally the first three generations' names are supposed to come to mind. Also, another detail which can narrow down the smith is the slightly wide mihaba, the thick shape, and the strong healthy shape. The ko-itame hada is tight and the hada is not visible. Look at the midare hamon carefully, there are a couple of different hamon themes there. The boshi return is long, and consideration of these characteristics will bring to mind the Sandai Tadayoshi. Some people look at the yakidashi at the moto, the refined jitetsu, and prominent choji hamon as important points, and they voted for the Osaka smiths Shodai Kunisuke and Shin Kunisada. The rank of the workmanship and the jihada's judgement are fine. But if it were one of these smith's work, there would be a more prominent choji type hamon and a higher yakiba. The upper half, especially around the monouchi area, would have tobiyaki, yubashiri, or muneyaki. In particular, the Shodai Kunisuke's yakidashi gradually become wider.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Mumei Naoe Shizu

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; the entire jihada is well forged, and along the hamon border, a strong nagare hada becomes a masame type of jihada. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, and pale utsuri.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome, togariba, gunome, and the entire hamon has a low yakiba. There are ashi, slightly uneven thick nie, and some places have niesuji, kinsuji, sunagshi, yubashiri, and tobiyaki.

Boshi: straight; on the omote it is maru (round), and on the ura komaru; on both sides the tips have hakikake.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura there are bo-hi carved through the nakago.

This katana's original funbari is obviously gone. The sori is shallow for the length and there is a long kissaki. From the length, you can imagine this originally was a long katana. There is a well forged itame hada, and considering the variations of the hamon nioiguchi, nie, and hataraki, this should be Nambokucho period work. Also, from the prominent nagare hada, you can guess this Yamato school work. From Yamato, you can imagine this is Yamato-shizu, Mino-shizu, Naoe-shizu, or Kaneshige and Kaneyuki. Kaneshige and Kaneyuki's characteristic hamon do not

have too high gunome or continuous small notare, and are a different style from this katana. If this were Yamato-shizu work (using a narrow interpretation of Kaneuji's work during his Yamato stay, or a broad interpretation for the smiths who remained in Yamato), the boshi would be large and round, the return short, and the kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki more prominent, and their hamon are a smaller midare hamon. So the last choice would be either Shizu or Naoe Shizu. If it were Shizu, their strong characteristic point is the omaru boshi shape which is obviously different and the kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki would be more prominent than on this katana. There are frequent thick nie, more frequent vertical alterations, and as an established Soshu Den group they will have a strong spirit. After these candidates are gone, and from the hamon which is mainly gunome and ko-gunome, the Naoe-Shizu name would be sufficient.

Kantei To No 4: katana

Mei: Nagasone Okisato Nyudo Kotetsu

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 7 bu

Sori: 4. 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: small yakidashi at the moto, and above this mainly ko-notare mixed with gunome; at the koshimoto the hamon crumbles and becomes a kuichigai type hamon; the entire hamon is high, and a continuous midare hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, thick even ko-nie, and some places have kinsuji and sunagashi; in places there are nie-suji.

Boshi: yakikomi at the yokote (especially on the ura this is conspicuous); straight, and komaru. The omote side is a kuichigaiba style.

This katana's widths at the moto and saki are a little different. There is a shallow sori, short chu-kissaki, and the shape has a dynamic robust feeling. The shinogi-ji's masame hada is conspicuous, and tight and fine, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as Kanbun period work, and in particular, Edo Shinto work. The jihada has thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a refined tight ko-itame. The hamon has a short yakidashi at the moto, and above it, a continuous midare hamaon without much vertical variation. Some places have thick ashi, a dense nioiguchi, and the ji and hamon are bright and clear. Also, the ura has a conspicuous yakikomi at the yokote, and one should pay attention to the visible jihada called "teko tetsu". You can look at this as Hako-tora period Kotetsu work without misgivings. If it were early period Hane-tora work, there would be a long yakidashi, and the hamon style would be a primarily a mixture of one bunch of small and large

gunome called "Hyotanba", and the vertical variations would be prominent, and these characteristics are different. In voting, some people even mentioned this as "Hako-tora". If you look at the hamon closely, instead of gunome, it appears more like ko-notare. The mihaba is wide compared with Kotetsu's usual work and the hamon style is too small for the mihaba (or width of the blade). If you look down the entire hamon, from the moto to the saki you can recognize this as Juzuba. This katana shows his characteristic points very well, and most people voted for the correct answer in the first vote. As an almost correct answer, some people voted for Okimasa. If it were Okimasa's hamon, there are prominent rough nioiguchi with nie, his shapes are more likely to have a large sori, and the clarity of the jihada and hamon are not as good as Okisato's. From the signature, this katana is supposed to have been made around Enpo 1 (1673).

Kantei To No. 5: wakizashi

Mei: Mumei Den Masamune

Length: slightly less 1 shaku 9 sun

Sori: slightly over 3 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame hada, and the entire jihada is well forged; some parts of the hada are visible. There thick dense ji-nie and pale utsuri.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, and ko-choji; the entire yakiba is a low midare and some parts are yakikuzure. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, small and large size thick uneven nie, kinsuji, nie-suji, frequent sunagashi, yubashiri and tobiyaki.

Boshi: midare-komi; the tips are nie-kuzure and with hakikake.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura there are futasuji-hi carved through the nakago.

Masamune is a great master smith in Japanese sword history. He is famous, not only in the sword world, but also with the general public. He established the artistic nie style of the Soshu Den school which descended from Kunimitsu and Yukimitsu. His active period is known to be at the end of the Kamakura period. This wakizashi has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a long chu-kissaki and the tip of the hi on the omote is low (judging from the usual location of the tip of the hi on the ura side, it appears that the sword may have been polished too much). From these characteristics, a number of people voted for the next generation of smiths in the Nambokucho period. In particular, from the futasuji hi, some people voted for Sadamune. If it were his work, even though he followed his teacher's style well, his hamon are based on either small or

large shallow notare hamon patterns, or primarily, gunome and ko-gunome mixed in the hamon, and usually the entire hamon has a more gentle original style. Considering nie hataraki such as chikei, kinsuji, nie-suji, inazuma, tobiyaki, and yubashiri, Sadamune's work does not exhibit as much of a dynamic feeling. This is a Den Masamune wakizashi classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token. Masamune's styles are not only contain a lot of nie hataraki, the nioiguchi and the elements of the nie are completely in harmony: the nioiguchi's softness and shade, and the nie's large and small sizes, the strong and gentle appearance, and the nioiguchi's width all are in harmony. Masamune tried not to discipline or connect all of these elements in his swords. Dr. Honma Kunzan described his work with the word "kyo" (maniacal). His real ability is to use an endless range of styles just like sumie ink paintings (black and white brush pictures). This hamon has a lot of activity, and a dynamic style not afraid of failures. As I explained, you can see a lot of nie and nioiguchi hataraki. Some similarly shaped blades have Meibutsu or names such as the "Taro saku Masamune" classified as Kokuho and the Meibutsu "Ikeda Masamune" classified as Juyo Bunkazai. Looking at the futasuji-hi, there is similar carving in the Meibutsu "Ogaki Masamune" classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token. From these facts and the hamon style, the identification of a work from Den Masamune is definite. In the early Edo period, this was supposed to have been owned by the Tokugawa Bakufu ship bugyo (magistrate or commissioner) Mukai Shokan Tadakatsu who supervised warships, Bakufu ships, and patrols of the frontier.

Shijo Kantei To No 686 (in the March, 2014 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 686 in the March issue is a katana by the Nidai Echizen-no-kami Kanesada (Itakura Gonnoshin Terukane dojin: i.e. Itakura Gonnoshin Terukane is another name used by Kanesada)

This katana has a standard width and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a shallow sori and a chu-kissaki, and from the shape, you can judge this as a Kanbun Shinto katana. In the Nidai Kanesada's katana in this period, there are many long chu-kissaki instead of short chu-kissaki. For Shinto work, his styles often have poor hiraniku. Also, his mune have a noticeably sharp angle and this is one of his characteristic points. In the Shinto and Shinshinto periods, there are many smiths who worked with toran-midareba just like this katana, and each smith had a different characteristic style. In particular, the Nidai Kanesada's toran has many unique characteristics. His toran midare are a clear katayama shape, and yahazu shape gunome appear in the hamon. Near the yokote, there are three continuous gunome. His tight ko-itame jihada, near the ha side, are sometimes

mixed with nagare masame hada. Along with this jihada, there are prominent sunagashi. In voting, most people voted for the Nidai Kanesada. Besides him, a few people voted for Tsuda Echizen-no-kami Sukehiro. They have some common points: Sukehiro was also a Kanbun period Osaka Shinto smith, and worked in the Hato style which uses a breaking wave shaped hamon, toran-ba, and also midare hamon mixed with square shape gunome, and so the answer has understandable points. But in Sukehiro's toran we do not see often three continuous gunome under the yokote. His nakago have a unique koho shaped kesho-yasurime pattern. Sukehiro's toran's characteristic points are known as Hato style toran, which is a midare hamon mixed with square shaped gunome. His boshi start from a little under the yokote, the width of the hamon becomes wider and is continuous straight to the tip, with a komaru and return. He is famous as being the father of Toran midare, but to verify this, there are not yet enough detailed analysis or examples, and this issue should be studied more in the future.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai