

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Examination of Important Swords

Classification:
Juyo Bijutsu Hin

Type: Katana
Mei: Kawachi no kami Fujiwara Kunisuke
Kanei 19 nen 2 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 4 bu 2 rin (74 cm)
Sori: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)
Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 2 rin (0.65 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)
Kissaki length: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 7 bu 3 rin (20.4 cm)
Nakago sori: none

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, large mihaba (the blade is wide), and the widths at the moto and saki are different. The sori on the bottom half is notable, which is an example of the Kanei and Shoho period's unique shape and short chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are dense ji-nie and fine chikei. The hamon has a yakidashi at the moto, and above this is based on choji mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, togari, and square shaped gunome and the hamon is wider along the upper part. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, thick almost even ko-nie, and on the upper part of the ura side there is a somewhat rough nioiguchi, a little bit of tobiyaki, and the middle to upper half has a pale muneyaki. The boshi is a wide yakikome, straight, with a komaru and return. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a wide ha-agari kurijiri, and the yasurime are osuji-chigai. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote above the mekugi-ana along the mune side, there is a long kanji signature made with thick strokes, and the ura has a date.

The Shodai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke was one of the founders of the Osaka Shinto tradition, and from old investigations and studies, there are certain and uncertain facts about him. According to old member's records from the Ryukai temple in Osaka Kita-ku, Kunisuke passed way in Shoho 4 (1647), but his age was not written, and we are not sure of his birth date. Also, some historical books and sword books state the opinion that he was the same person as Kobayashi Jinbyoei who was the son of Ise no kuni Tajima no kami Kunisuke, an Omi Ishido (or Ishito) school smith who was active around the Genki period. However, today's strong opinions are that this was a different person. Either way, he definitely came from Ise and was one of the Ishido school smiths. From Kunisuke's early work and residences, he is supposed to have become a student of the Horikawa school after Keicho 4 (1599) when Kunihiro settled in Kyoto. At this time, Kunisuke's signature, style, type of kanji, and chisel marks are similar to the senior student Echigo no kami Kunitoshi when compared with his usual mei. From this, we are sure that his actual teacher was Kunitoshi. He was thinking of moving to Osaka, however, at that time city was the site of the "Osaka no jin" (battle of Osaka) in Keicho 19 (1614) and again in the following year Genna 1, (these were the final battles between the Tokugawas and the Toyotomis) and you can not imagine how people must have moved around or coped during these wars. Osaka's recovery was overseen by Matsudaira Tadaakira who was lord of Ise no kuni's Kameyama castle and was appointed as lord of Osaka Castle. He aggressively encouraged the return to the town of merchants who had been dispersed by the wars, and encouraged immigration by merchants from Fushimi and Sakai. Also, Kunitoshi's fellow student Shin Kunisada has a signed blade dated Genna 7 (1621) and reads "Seshu Osaka ju Fujiwara Kunisada". From this, Kunisuke is thought to have moved to Osaka in Genna 3,4 or 7, after the area calmed down.

Today we have his early works with the title "Kawachi no kami" dated Kanei 3 (1626), and these include tanto, wakizashi and naginata. There is earlier work similar to these works with the title, and which are similar to Kunitoshi's signature. Considering Shin Kunisada received his title in Genna 9 (1623), Kunisuke must have received his title at the same time. This katana was made five years before he passed way. From the signature, there is a strong opinion that this is a dai-mei, either by the Nidai Kunisuke (Chu Kawachi) or the Shodai Sukehiro (Soboro Sukehiro). Either way, the shape shows Kanei to Shoho period work.

The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there is a refined jihada, and the hamon is typical of his style. There is a thick nioiguchi, thick even nie, and the jihada and hamon are bright and clear. This is a valuable work of Kunisuke, and is a rare dated blade. In addition, the workmanship could be admired as one of his best works. This is being exhibited at the NBTHK special exhibition "Token from Osaka" (July 15 to October 26).

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Tsutsui tsutsu zu (part of the Ise-monogatari theme) fushi kashira

Mei : Kanoto Tori Fuyubi (winter) Natsuo with kao

This poet is part of a romantic song from the well known Ise monogatari (an early Heian period song and story) section call Tsutsui-tsutsu. It is a romantic story about childhood friends who liked each other, and after growing up, eventually married. Roughly, the story goes: Man singing: in childhood's time, I compared my height with you around the well fence without seeing you, and now my height extends over the fence (meaning he is an adult now). The woman returns: my doll style hair which I compared with you, has grown over my shoulder. Who can come up to my hair (this means an adult woman who can marry) besides you ? In the end, they married as they wished. The fuchi and kashira theme come from this story.

This shows a friendly little boy and girl playing with each other around a well and their doll style hair is cute. The kids glossy black hair is made from shakudo with neat chisel marks, and the kimono show bright elegant mon made with kin-zogan (gold inlay). Also, the technique uses takaniku-bori (large volume high relief) and usuniku (thin or low relief) carving together, and shows perspective. The carving techniques from the front to the side showing depth and extent are excellent. This work shows a full range of Natsuo's sophisticated techniques.

Expalanation by lida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 691

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 691 issue Shijo Kantei To is September 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 September 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: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 8 bu (72.20 cm)

Sori: slightly over 5 bu (1.53 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)

Motokasane: 3 bu 1 rin (0.95 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 8 rin (0.55 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 4 rin (2.85 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 9 bu 7 rin (18.1 cm)

Nakago sori: slightly less 7 rin (0.2 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. The widths at the moto and saki are different; it is thick; there is a large koshizori with funbari; the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and the entire jihada is tight. There are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and midare-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture, and midare hamon has saka-ashi. There are long ashi, a bright nioiguchi, and nioi type ko-nie. The horimono on the omote is a bo-hi with a soe-hi, and the bottom ends of the grooves are finished with a yahazu shape, and under this there is a Shin no Kurikara. On the ura there is a bo-hi with soe-hi finished with kakudome, and under the bo-hi, there is relief of a Hairyu (dragon). The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are osuji-chigai with kesho and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side of the nakago, there is a long kanji signature with the title, and there is a date on the omote side.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For July

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

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

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kurotaki Tetsuya

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mei: Yasutsuna

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 8.5 bu

Sori: slightly less than 9 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: oitame mixed with mokume; the entire hada is visible. There are jifu, ji-nie, and chikei; the jihada is a dark color and there are jifu utsuri.

Hamon: the moto has a yakiotoshi, and above this is ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome; in the upper part, a komidare hamon is prominent. There are hotsure at the habuchi, yubashiri, a worn down nioiguchi, dense nie, sunagashi and kinsuji.

Boshi: narrow yakiba, straight, and yakizume style.

This is a tachi, and at first you have to recognize the shape correctly. The tachi has enough funbari at the habakimoto, a wide mihaba, and the difference in width at the moto and saki are prominent. There is a large koshizori, the tip has curvature, and there is a small kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as end of Heian to early Kamakura period work. In this period, you can imagine that the active schools and smith's name are Ko-bizen smiths such as Tomonari and Masatsune, Ko-Kyoto, Ko-Hoki, and classic Kyushu. For these schools, this blade has a large size itame and mokume jihada, a dark color jihada and has jifu utsuri. Also, classic hamon have a worn down nioiguchi, and the entire tachi has a country (non-mainstream work) feeling, and from these characteristics, I hope you can vote for Ko-Hoki work. Many of them have narrow shinogi-haba, rich hiraniku, and characteristic shapes. Yasutsuna has two styles of hamon: one is based on komidare, and the other is a midare hamon based on ko-notare and ko-gunome, just like this tachi. Thus considering this, you can judge this as Yasutsuna work. In voting, some people voted for Ohara Sanemori. Sanemori does not have any blades left today compared with Yasutsuna. His hamon are midare and small when compared with Yasutsuna.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Bishu Osafune Iesuke

Eikyo 9 nen 8 gatu bi

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 6.5 bu

Sori: 8.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada and entire jihada is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, and clear midare utsuri

Hamon: open bottom gunome hamon mixed with choji, togariba, and gunome. There are frequent ashi, yo, and noi type ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekome, and the tip is a togari shape.

Considering small funbari at the habaki moto, the original shape was long. The widths at the moto and saki are different. There is koshizori but the upper half has sori, and from this shape, you can judge as work as a tachi from the early half of the Muromachi period. After the Nanbokucho era wars, this period was a stable time. In addition, this blade's style has Oei period influences, and a revived classic prominent choji hamon. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and there is a visible jihada. There are frequent chikei, and a prominent midare utsuri. The hamon has open bottom gunome mixed with choji, and there are noi type ko-nie. These characteristics are typical Oei Bizen work. From this, you can imagine the Morimitsu and Yasumitsu names. But please examine the hamon again. The open bottom gunome are mixed with prominent square shape gunome and togariba, the midare hamon is a little rough, and the entire hamon is small. The jihada is a little rough when compared with Morimitsu and Yasumitsu's work. Also, the boshi is an Oei Bizen characteristic style called "center of candle", with the tip leaning forward to the hamon side and no comparison with the two best master smiths. From these details, you can think about Oei Bizen smith names besides Morimitsu and Yasumitsu, and then you can imagine the Iesuke and Noriie names. In particular, the hamon has prominent square gunome, and from this, hopefully, you can vote for Iesuke.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Shumeshu Ipei Yasuyo with Ichiyo Aoe mon

Length: 2 shaku 9 sun 9 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with mokume, and the entire jihada is a little rough. There are dense ji-nie, chikei, and the entire jihada is a dark color.

Hamon: suguha style, with shallow notare. There is a wide dense nioiguchi, and some parts are mixed with rough nie; there is a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: on the omote and ura sides, there is a wide yakiba, an ichimai style, and a long return.

This is a Shumeshu Ipei Yasuyo katana, and he is one of Satsuma Shinto's best master smiths along with Mondo-no-sho Masakiyo. Usually, many of the Satsuma shinto are wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. They are thick, there is a large hiraniku, they are heavy, and there is a dynamic shape. Yasuyo was a successor of the Shinto Naminohira school and the katana shows this influence. These influences are the wide shinogi haba, the high shinogi-ji, and a suguha style hamon with dense and abundant nie. Yasuyo's characteristic points are prominent ha-nie, hataraki in the jihada and hamon, and kinsuji when compared with the usual Shinto Naminohira smiths' work. But the katana does not have prominent Satsuma characteristic points such as Imotsuru style long niesuji and kinsuji. Also, from the signature on the nakago, from the 馬 (uma) kanji shape, you can recognize, that this is a daimei by Yasuyo's adapted son Ipei Yasuari. In this case, one sees less hataraki such as kinsuji and imotsuru than is usual for Yasuyo work, and more gentle ha-nie. In voting, some people voted for Nanki Shigekuni. If this were Nanki work, there would be more strong masame hada, kuichigaiba, and hakikake in the boshi, and it would be a more prominent Yamato style. Many people voted for Inoue Shinkai. If it were Shinkai's work, the jihada and hamon would be clearer, and usually we never see such a wide and high shinogi-ji.

Kantei To No 4: tanto

Mei: Rai Kunimitsu

Length: 9 sun 3.5 bu

Sori: almost none

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, and some areas of the jigane have a different color. There are thick dense ji-nie, clear bo-utsuri, and a bright jihada.

Hamon: the entire hamon is notare mixed with ko-gunome. There is a thick and dense nioiguchi and abundant nie. The hamon is bright and clear and there are kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi with a sharp tip and return, and some hakikake.

The tanto's first recognizable element is supposed to be the unique jihada. The jihada is a tight ko-itame with refined forging, and some areas show a darker color jihada. This is called a "Rai hada". If you keep in mind the Rai hada, and observe more closely, there is bo-utsuri, beautiful dense nie, and both the jihada and hamon are bright and clear. This kind of hamon based notare and gunome with a bright and clear nioiguchi is seen often in the work of Rai Kunimitsu and Kunitsugu. Also Kunimitsu's wide variety in his work deserves special mention among the Rai school smiths. Rai Kunimitsu has dates from Kareki to Kano, and his active period

was from the end of the Kamakura to the Nambokucho period and he worked for a long time. Looking at the shape this has a standard width, a long size for the width, is thick, and has almost no sori. This kind of shape is seen often from the end of the Kamakura to the early Nambokucho period. From these characters, you should vote for Rai Kunimitsu. Some people voted for Yasuyoshi. If it were Yasuyoshi's work, the shape would be an Enbun/Joji shape, the jihada would have whitish utsuri or bo-utsuri, the hamon would have a narrow nioiguchi, and the boshi tip would fall towards the hamon side.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Suishinshi Masahide

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada which becomes a mu-ji type jihada. There are abundant ji-nie.

Hamon: straight yakidashi, and above this, there is an ogunome midare hamon. There are frequent nie, and in some places the nie moves into the jihada; there are kinsuji and sunagashi.

This is a Suishinshi Masahide toran midare work. First, we have to examine the shape. The katana has a narrow shinogi-ji for the width, low hiraniku, and a long chu-kissaki, and these are Shinshinto characteristics. This is also true of the ji-nie and mujihada. From the toran style hamon, you can imagine the names of several smiths besides Masahide, such as Tegarayama Masashige, Ozaki Suketaka, Kato Tsunahide and Tsunatoshi. Among these, Ozaki Suketaka's hamon are wave shape toran hamon, and the same as Kato Tsunahide and Tsunatoshi's. This katana hamon has small and large gunome mixed together, and show a toran type midare hamon. But if you look at the hamon carefully, this is a mixed gunome toran style hamon. Actually we can say this is a o-gunome midare hamon. Masahide's early work is modeled after Sukehiro's toran type midare hamon and his latter work has changed to Bizen-den style work. This is typical of his early work. Also, looking at the hamon carefully, the rough nie come into the jihada, and each nie grain is dark colored, and this is one of Masahide's characteristic points.

Shijo Kantei To No. 689 (in the June, 2014 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 689 in the June issue is katana by Katayama Ichimonji Norifusa.

This is a wide blade, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a large nikuoki, and the blade has a hamaguri-ha (clam shell) cross section. It is suriage with some koshizori, the tip has sori, there is a chu-kissaki and inokubi type kissaki shape. From the shape you can judge this as being work from around the mid-Kamakura period. Also, there are midare utsuri on the ji, and from this, the Bizen name comes first to mind. Norifusa is known as a master smith along with Yoshifusa and Sukezane, who are representative of the mid-Kamakura period Ichimonji school.

Yoshifusa has 3 to 4 different types of signatures. He also has a couple of different styles in his work: one is wide with a typical inokubi kissaki, and has a dynamic tachi shape with a very active o-choji hamon. The other style has an almost standard width with a suguha hamon mixed with ko-gunome, and with a tight nioiguchi. You can imagine his long active period from this, and some people think it is possible that there was more than one smiths doing this work. Norifusa has all kinds of different signatures, and again there are some opinions about the possibility that several different smiths might have used the same name. Among Norifusa's masterpieces, one is a Tokugawa shogun family's tachi, classified as Kokuho. This is wide with an inokubi kissaki, a dynamic tachi shape, and with a very active beautiful o-choji midare hamon. But compared with Yoshifusa and Sukesane's work, in Norifusa's work, the midare hamon are smaller, the ashi are fine in the hamon, and the hamon have saka-ashi. Also, the jihada is bright and clear, and these are Norifusa's characteristic points. In thinking about Norifusa's work, many people imagined that this was the Kokuho tachi. Compared with the Kokuho tachi, this is tachi is a little narrower, has a lower yakiba, and there is not a very prominent gunome midare hamon; the choji clusters are close to each other, and there is no space between midare waves, and from this characteristic hamon and shape, I wish you could judge this as mid-Kamakura period Bizen work. There are ashi and yo, fine hataraki, the entire hamon has saka-ashi, and the jihada and hamon are bright and clear, and these are details characteristic of Norifusa's work. In voting, most people voted for Norifusa, and besides him, for other mid to late Kamakura period Bizen smiths such as Sukezane, Nagamitsu and Kunimune. This katana has a slightly low yakiba for Norifusa, and is similar to work by the above smiths. From this, at this time, the mid- to late half Kamakura period Bizen smiths whose works have a wide inokubi kissaki tachi shape, and are similar to this style were treated as a correct answer. For Norifusa's, this is not his most spectacular work. If you understand that Norifusa has made many different kinds of shapes and used many styles, these votes are fine. Among Bizen works, many are seen from the latter half of the Kamakura period around the Shoho period. In some of the old

sword books showing tachi, among Nambokucho tachi listed, but there are only Embun/Joji tachi listed. Today, based on Bizen's dated blades, Nambokucho tachi shapes can be dated as being from the beginning, early, late, and peak periods, and I personally believe in these differences . If there were dated Bizen blades from the end of the Heian period and before the Shoho period, or just after Shoho period, we could analyze their shapes and styles and correlate that with their dates. However, I am sorry to say we cannot do that today, but this seems to be a good area for future research.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai