

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

ISSUE NUMBER 699

April, 2015

Meito Kansho

Examination of Important Swords

Type: Katana

Kinzogan mei: Shikkake Norinaga kore suriage Honnami Koshitsu with kao

Owner: NBTHK

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 2 bu (70.3 cm)

Sori: 9 bu 1 rin (2.75 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 7 rin (2.95 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 1 rin (2.15 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane : 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 7 rin (3.25 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 4 bu (19.4 cm)

Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. The shinogi is wide, there is a slightly high shinogi, a large hiraniku, and a strong or substantial shape. The blade is thin, and there is a large sori and a chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and some parts of the jihada are visible. There are thick dense jinie, and some chikei. The hamon is ko-gunome mixed with ko-notare and togari. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, slightly uneven nie, some hotsure, frequent kinsuji, niesuji, sunagashi, and small yubashiri. The boshi is midarekomi, the tip is yakizume, and there is hakikake and yubashiri. The nakago is o-suriage. The tip of the nakago is sakikiri, and the yasurime are katte-sagari. There is a one mekugi ana, and on the ura side, under the mekugi ana, there is a kinzogan-mei, along the center.

The location of the Shikkake school, one of the five Yamato schools, is uncertain today. One opinion is it was in today's Tenri City's Kishida-cho, and another opinion is that it was around the Todaiji area in Nara City's Zoshi-cho. Many old

sword books list "Norihiro" as the founder of the Shikkake school, but he has no signed works left, and today we consider his son Norinaga to be the actual founder of the school.

Norinaga has several different signatures, such as "Yamato Norinaga saku", "Yamato no kuni Shikkake ju Norinaga saku", and "Yamato Sakonjo Norinaga saku", and these are long signatures. These signatures are seen into the Muromachi period. The "Sakonjo" signature is supposed to have been used by the Nidai, and signatures with "Shikkae" and "kuni" supposed to have been used after the Nidai or second generation.

There are some important existing reference materials: one tanto in the Boston museum is signed on the omote "Yamato Shikkake Norinaga 48 saku kore" (he was apparently 48 years old at that time) and the ura side is signed "Bunpo 3 (1319) Mi Sangatsu to-ka (March 10th)". Another tanto is signed on the omote "Ya ?? kake ju Norinaga saku", and on the ura is a date of "Ryakuo 3 (1340) 6 gatsu bi 69" (he was apparently 69 years old at that time). From these, we can definitely place his active period and his birth date as Bunei 9 (1272). But there are two opinions about these two tanto from experts. One opinion is that these are early works, and the other opinion reflects an old historical opinion that these are the Nidai's work. If these are the Nidai's work, the Shodai's accepted active period is too early, and from the signatures and the styles, it is difficult to see clear differences from the Shodai's work. Thus the opinion that these are the Nidai's work may need to be reconsidered. Concerning the opinion that these are daimeiri by the Nidai (works by the shodai which were not signed by the nidai), it would be necessary to find and study more new material to address this idea.

Norinaga's work has a many similar characteristics to other Yamato school swords: the school's unique shape, the jihada type, hamon based on suguha with hotsure and uchinoke, and the frequent nie and sunagashi. However, sometimes Norinaga's hamon have prominent continuous ko-gunome, sometimes only in places and sometimes over the entire hamon, and usually this is a major characteristic point. Also, he has naginata which is unusual among the Yamato school smiths.

This blade has large thick ha-nie, and this is similar to Toma school work. But the entire ko-gunome hamon is prominent, there is an almost continuous hamon, there are frequent nie, and the hamon pattern is similar to a signed tachi which is signed Yamato Norinaga saku and classified as Juyo Bunkazai. This tachi is owned by the Kurokawa Historical Culture Institute and was discussed in the NBTHK Sword Journal in the Issue Number 343's Meito Kansho. From these details, this sword would naturally be recognized as Norinaga's work. From the "suriage kore" zogan signature, it appears that Honnami Koshitsu may have appraised this mumei tachi as Norinaga's work, and it is possible that when he shortened this (made it suriage) he inlaid the kin-zogan (gold inlay) mei.

The tachi has a Tensho 3 Honnami Mitsutsune origami. In the first Juyo token shinsa in Showa 46, this tachi was classified as the first Tokubetsu Juyo token.

This was the former NBTHK chairman Suzuki Kajo's family's donation to the NBTHK.

Explanation and the photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Ota Dokan zu fuchi-kashira Mei: Seiryoken Hagiya Katsuhira

This is the Mito smith Katsuhira's fuchi-kashira, with a design based on a story concerning Ota Dokan who built Edo castle and developed the Edo area. This is a famous Yamabuki (Japanese rose) legend.

The story is when Dokan went hawking, there was a sudden rain, and he stopped a farmer's house to escape the rain. He asked to borrow a mino (straw raincoat) but a young woman only brought him a Yamabuki (mountain rose) branch instead of a mino. He was angry about that because he was not asking for flowers and returned to the castle. His vassal then told him a well known historical poem, "the Yamabuki blooms with 7 to 8 petals, and it is sad, because not even a single seed develops". What the girl tried to tell him, was that a "mino" (or a straw raincoat) means a yamabuki seed, but because they were so poor, they did not have even have one mino, and she apologized for not loaning him a mino.

Dokan was ashamed of his illiteracy, and after learning about the girl's message, he is supposed to have studied poetry. This kind of story became popular to convey a moral for both, the literary and martial arts.

The fuchi-kashira artist Hagiya Katsuhira was the Mito clan's Goyo smith (a smith who worked for the daimyo), and in the Bakumatsu period, he was an active important master smith among the Mito kinko smiths. He trained many students, and the school produced great master smiths such as Namekawa Sadakatsu and Unno Shomin.

The fuchi design is a girl presenting a Yamabuki branch, and the kashira design is Dokan hunting. The takabori nikuoki is very rich and volumetric, generously colored everywhere, has very detailed dynamic carving, and the bright colored inlays are well done, and this is a spectacular work.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 699

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 699 issue Shijo Kantei To is May 5, 2015. 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 May 5, 2015 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 9.5 bu (69.5 cm)

Sori: 6 bu (1.8 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 8 rin (0.55 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 2 rin (3.4 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 2 bu (21.8 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a slightly large sori and a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame. There are fine ji-nie, chikei, and midare utsuri. The shinogi ji has a masame type jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are tobiyaki in some places, ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, nioiguchi type ko-nie, and the nioi guchi is bright and clear. There are kinsuji and some sunagashi. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari and there is a one mekugi ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature towards the mune edge. On the ura side there is a soe (companion) mei with a comment about the type of material used to make the sword.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For March

The swords discussed below were shown in the March 2015, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: March 14, 2015 (2nd Saturday of March) at 1:00pm.

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 sword smith's name.

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mei: Osafune Kanemitsu

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5 rin

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame, and some areas are mixed with mokume; there are ji-nie, chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: kataochi-gunome mixed with kaku-gunome; some places are suguha.

There are ashi, yo, and some saka-ashi; there are nioiguchi type ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi, the tip is komaru, and there is a return.

All five swords here today are from Bizen. They are arranged by time, from the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nambokucho period; from the early half of the Nambokucho to the peak of the Nambokucho period, and from the latter half of the Nambokucho to the end of the Nambokucho period. After you examine the nakago, you can compare all of the Nambokucho period Bizen blade shapes and styles.

All of the blades seem to be familiar to many people. A few years ago, at one of the NBTHK brunch meetings, we arranged and displayed a group of Bizen blades, and people were more interested than we expected. Because today, at the Teirei Kanshokai meetings, the current members have changed so much, we are again showing a group of Bizen swords. Considering the transition of tachi, katana and tanto shapes during the Koto period, Bizen work has become the major standard. During all periods many Bizen works are seen, and numerous signed and dated works are available to study the period.

Among Bizen works, from the end of the Heian to the early half of the Kamakura period, there are very few blades with a date, and it is difficult to judge or classify the shapes. From the latter half of the Kamakura period, around the Sho-o era

(1288-1292), more dated blades were produced. From this information, today, Nambokucho tachi shape classifications seem to form about five different styles. The No. 1 Kanemitsu tachi has a standard width, and also has his father Kagemitsu's favorite kataochi-gunome hamon, and this is around the late half of the Kamakura to the early Nambokucho period, which represents his early work. The jihada is a tight itame and bright, and has mainstream Osafune's unique refined jihada. The hamon is based on kataochi-gunome and kaku-gunome, with a nioiguchi, and from these characteristics many people voted for either Kanemitsu or Kagemitsu.

In Kagemitsu's tanto, the hamon are regular kaku-gunome or kataochi-gunome and continuous from the the moto to saki. His tachi are primarily kataochi-gunome mixed with kaku-gunome, ko-choji, and ko-gunome. There are ashi and yo, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi.

In the case of his son Kanemitsu, even tachi hamon are a continuous regular kaku-gunome and kataochi-gunome, over all or most of the hamon.

This tachi shows Kanemitsu's unique hamon, the boshi is not a sansaku-boshi, but is midarekomi, and from this characteristic the Kanemitsu name is appropriate.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mumei: Kanemitsu

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itamehada; there are fine ji-nie, chikei and midare utsuri.

Hamon: Notare type gunome, mixed with ko-gunome; there are frequent ashi, yo, and ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi; the boshi has togari.

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

This is a o-suriage mune katana, and was judged as Kanemitsu work by Honnami Ko-on.

Osafune Kanemitsu's work is often described as follows: in the early Nambokucho period around the Koei era, his tachi and tanto are both standard shapes, the hamon are either a suguha style mixed with gunome, or a kataochi gunome style which resemble his father's style. Around the Jowa and Kan-o periods, his shapes become larger, and have notare hamon which were never seen before. Around the Bunwa and Enbun periods we see many blades with this style. This transition work is well known, and dated Jowa 3, and this uchigatana is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin. This is a wide blade with a long kissaki. There is a gentle notare type

hamon, and this is typical of Kanemitsu's later work. Compared with typical Enbun Joji work, this is slightly narrow, and the kissaki is smaller.

After Joji 5, no Kanemitsu dated blades are seen, and his active period is supposed to have been around the peak of the Nambokucho period.

This is a mumei katana, and we cannot deny it is from the peak of the Nambokucho. But this is slightly narrower than an Enbun Joji shape, and reminds us of a transition shape. From this, this is considered as work from the early half of the Nambokucho.

From the typical Kanemitsu details, many people voted for the correct answer at the first vote.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mumei: Chogi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: 3 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and hada is slightly visible; there are ji-nie, chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: notare type ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji, and a variable low and high hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, and a tight nioiguchi in ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi; tip is sharp and there is a return.

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

About 30 years ago, the NBTHK had items which belonged to the Noshu Takasu Matsudaira family, including a signed Chogi tachi, which was classified as Juyo-Bunkazai. Beside this one, I have had opportunities to see 5 Chogi blades, classified Juyo-Bijutsuhin and Juyo-Token, and mumei blades which were judged to be his work.

Among these is one with the most visible jihada, a midare type hamon, a worn down nioiguchi, nie, and hataraki such as kinsuji and sunagashi, and this work is exactly what was evaluated as "among Bizen swords, the one whose works are the most different from Bizen is Chogi". This particular sword has a gold inlay name of Chogi, and a go (or nickname) of Yagyū Chogi.

This sword is a Soshu Odawara clan Okubo family katana. The jihada is not very visible, there are clear bright utsuri, the hamon has gentle nie, and it is a gorgeous work. I remember, among the 5 mumei swords, this is the most traditional appearing Bizen katana, and at the same time the shape of the midare hamon is well balanced. The mihaba is wide with an o-kissaki, it has a typical

Enbun Joji (1356-1367) shape, and there is no mistake in looking at this as peak Nambokucho work.

Who created the Enbun Joji name? I have not sufficiently studied this, but Honnami Koson used to use the term often for explanations. Personally, I can easily imagine that the name was created by him.

Before the 2nd world war, there were no sword books which explained the transition or evolution of shapes. Possibly from looking at classified signed blades, we can see this kind of outstanding dynamic shape in swords which come from around the Enbun Joji period during the Nambokucho era, and which are only seen in this very short period. Since early times, without as much information as we have today, Honnami seems to have understood this, and I greatly respect him for this excellent observation.

Back to main subject now. Around the peak of the Nambokucho period, the Osafune school's top master smith Kanemitsu established a unique notare hamon and produced many of them. His notare hamon are gentle, the tops of the hamon are ko-gunome, and there is a balanced and orderly shaped hamon. With this hamon, the shapes are an Enbun Joji style, with a long dynamic shape. Chogi's jihada are mainstream Osafune's tight itame refined jihada, and there is a bright nioiguchi. He established his own legitimate dynamic style.

This Chogi notare hamon is mixed with frequent ko-choji and ko-gunome, the top of the notare hamon has vertical alterations, and even the entire notare hamon has vertical variations, and there are frequent ashi and yo hataraki.

Looking at the ashi and yo hataraki, some places under the ashi have yo, and in some places the yo are stacked into two or three layers. Also, some ashi short and some are long, and a lot of hataraki are seen. With this kind of complex hamon, it is not overwhelming, and the entire hamon is well balanced, a lot of alterations and dynamic changes. This is different from Kanemitsu, and shows Chogi's characteristic notare hamon and his high level of skill.

People voting for Kanemitsu is not too bad an answer, but please pay attention to the fine details.

Kantei To No 4: tachi

Mei: Bishu Osafune Moromitsu

Eiwa 2 nen 6 gatsu (below this the nakago is cut)

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 bu

Sori: slightly over 6 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and the entire jihada is visible. There are chikei, jifu, a dark jihada, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji and ko-togariba. There are ashi, yo, ko-nie and sunagashi, and the entire hamon is small.

Boshi: midarekomi, with togari, and hakikake.

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

This sword is discussed below with sword number 5.

Kantei To No. 5: tachi

Mei: Bizen Osafune Tsuguyuki

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 6 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and nagre hada, and the hada is visible; there are ji-nie, some thick kawari-tetsu, chikei, jifu, and pale midare utsuri.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with ko-choji, ko-gunome, and square shaped ko-gunome. There are ashi, yo, and some saka-ashi, ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi; the entire hamon is small.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is sharp.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura are bo-hi with marudome.

Swords number 4 and 5 are discussed together below:

Sword number 4, Moromoitsu and sword number 5, Tsugiyuki are two Kosori blades. Neither blade has much funbari at the habakimoto, and from this, you can guess that these are suriage shapes. The Moromitsu shape is slightly wide, and the widths at the between moto and saki are different, and there is a slightly long chu-kissaki. These two blades are slightly narrow when compared to the number 3 kanteito with an Enbun-Joji shape, and the widths at the moto and saki are different, and there is a smaller kissaki. But compared with work from around the end of the Nanbokucho period, around the Shitoku and Kakei eras (1384-88) which have narrow tachi shapes, they are still wide and the kissaki are larger. The swords No.4 and No.5 are transition shapes, dated on the ura side, and with a characteristic shape from around the Eiwa period.

Tsugiyuki's shape is similar to Moromitsu's, but is slightly narrow, and is prominently thick for the width. Usually this type of shape is seen after the Eiwa period. The present shape has a slightly long chu-kissaki, but considering the boshi, it is possible that the yokote was moved slightly lower after it was made. If you

think about the original shape, the kissaki is supposed to be slightly smaller and this would help illustrate the transition shape explanation.

On both swords, the jihada is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, the entire jihada is visible, there are jifu, and a refined jihada. The hamon are mixtures of several different patterns, and the overall hamon are complex, also they are also small midare hamon. The boshi are midarekomi, and the tips are sharp and these are the Kosori school's prominent characteristic points.

The Kosori group's characteristics are: compared with the blade's width, the hamon are very low, and both of these blades show this.

For the Tsuguyuki tachi, some people voted for latter half of the Kamakura period smiths, such as Chikakage.

That answer seems to arise because this is a standard width tachi shape, and the hamon has some saka-ashi midare pattern. But Chikakage does not have this thick type of shape for the width. His hamon are mainly based on kataochi-gunome and kaku-gunome with midare hamon, and even saka-ashi type hamon, and are different from this hamon with many complex kinds of hataraki and low shape.

Also, Tsuguyuki's jihada sometimes have thick kawaritetsu (a visible and different type of steel surface) chikei, which are seen often in the Kosori work, and usually never seen in Chikakage's work.

Shijo Kantei To No 697 (in the 2015 February issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 697 in the February issue is a katana by Itakura Gonnoshin Terukane.

The answer for the February issue is an Itakura Gonnoshin Terukane katana. This is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a shallow sori, and a chu-kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as a Kanbun-Shinto period katana.

Noda Hankei is a strong personality and had many unique styles. If we put his katana up for a shijo kantei to, all kinds of his characteristic points have to be explained. I think that people who are used to voting for a kantei can get the Hankei name without even seeing an oshigata.

Itakura Gonnoshin Terukane's wave hamon is the same way, and visually easy to recognize, and there are many clear characteristic points. I think, if it is a typical work of his, he is one of the smiths whose work is easy to recognize.

Terukane's characteristic points are: the mune has a prominent sharp angle; there is often poor hiraniku; his hamon are a tight ko-itame mixed with nagare and masame hada; there is a wave-like midare hamon with a katayama shape (one side is low); yahazu shape gunome appear in the midare hamo; there are three continuous gunome hamon under the yokote; and there are prominent sunagashi.

This katana clearly has many of these characteristic points, and most people voted for Terukane.

For an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Tsuda Echizen no kami Sukehiro.

He is a same period Kanbun-Shinto Osaka Shinto master smith, and an expert in making wave-like midare hamon, and they definitely have some similar characteristics. But Sukehiro does not have many poor hiraniku shapes, his wave hamon are not mixed with yahazu shaped gunome, and often his midare hamon don't have left and right slopes, and square shaped gunome are seen.

The katana was signed "Itakura Gonnoshin Terukane Echigo no Kami Kanesada do-saku kore". This is supposed to let us know that this is a Terukane work, and Terukane and Kanesada are the same smith. Please remember that Sukehiro does not have this kind of signature. Sukehiro's hamon changed with time and approximately were: in his early work, choji and gunome choji hamon look like the Shodai Sukehiro's choji midare hamon; later his gunome become large and wave shaped, and finally he established his wave-like midare hamon.

Also, in Terukane's early work, his hamon show other patterns beside wave-like midare hamon, and often are similar to the Shodai Kanesada's gunome mixed with choji hamon. With later Terukane signatures, most hamon seem to become a characteristic wave hamon and this is a same kind of evolutionary process we see with Sukehiro.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai