

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kansho
Examination of important swords

Juyo Bijutsuhin

Type: Tachi

Mei: Toshitsune

Owner: Sano Bijutsukan (Sano Art museum) Public Finance Foundation

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 4 bu (76.95 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 3 rin (2.05 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 1 rin (3.05 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 3 rin (1.9 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane : 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 3 bu 3 rin (22.2 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. It is slightly thick and long, and there is a prominent large koshizori with funbari. The tip has uchizori and there is a short chu-kissaki which appears as a small kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume hada, and is well forged. On the ura side there is a fine koitame hada. There are ji-nie, chikei, and the entire jihada appears moist ("uruoi") and there are jifu utsuri. The hamon is komidare mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome. There are frequent ashi and yo, dense thick ha-nie, some kinsuji, and at the koshimoto mizukage shaped utsuri is clear, and it almost looks like part of the hamon. Some parts of the hamon appear soft. The boshi is straight, a little kuichigai, with a komaru and a return. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bo-hi with kaku-dome. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a shallow kurijiri, and the yasurime are katte-sagari. There are two mekugi-ana, and on the omote under the second mekugi-ana, there is a large two kanji signature almost on the center, which was made with a thick chisel.

There are many Ko-Bizen smiths' blades available with signatures and which are recognized in meikan sword books. Tomonari and Masatsune are examples and Toshitsune is one of these. He has more than ten signed blades today. There is one Juyo Bunkazai (owned by the Kyoto National Museum), Juyo Bijutsuhin, and ten Juyo Token classified blades. In the meikan, his works are listed during the Shogen (1207-11), Bunreki (1234-5), and Kencho (1249-56) periods, but his active period has not yet been completely and definitively determined. His signature uses the "tsune" kanji and are only two kanji long, and there are no long kanji signatures, the same as seen with Masatsune. His signatures are located under the mekugiana and almost on the center of the nakago, and from this he is thought to be one of the Masatsune school smiths. His works are in the Ko-Bizen style, and show either a ko-midare hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, or a suguha style hamon mixed with ko-midare. Most of his hamon have frequent dense nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Among Toshitsune's signed tachi, this is well done, in good condition, and could be one of his best works. This is over 2 shaku 5 sun long, but the upper half's sori is slightly uchizori, and from this characteristic shape, there is an elegant feeling and this reflects the period's character. The itame hada is refined, and on the ura side the ko-itamehada is very fine, and the entire jihada is well forged, and there are clear jifu-utsuri.

This tachi's utsuri are strong, and almost look like a yakiba, and in the same period in Bizen there are several examples similar to this such as Masatsune's Juyo Bunkazai tachi owned by the NBTHK, a Yoshikane classified as Juyo Bunkazai and owned by the Hayashibara museum, and a Tadashige classified as Tokubetsu Juyo.

There are abundant hataraki such as ashi, yo, and kinsuji. As a Ko-Bizen work, the ko-choji and ko-gunome in the hamon are somewhat prominent. This has a classic hamon showing good technique and this is supposed to be an important characteristic in judging the period.

Just looking at the tachi, you can recognize Toshitsune's high level of skill, and details such as the large nikuoki, the healthy shape, and especially the ubu nakago are very valuable. This is one of the tachi shown in the "Kozan oshigata" book.

This tachi is being shown in our special exhibit "Bizen Token O-koku (The great kingdom of Bizen Swords)" with the first period shown being from the Heian to Kamakura periods. This is at the NBTHK from June 9th to August 23rd. On November 29, the exhibit travels to the Sano museum in Shizuoka prefecture, and after this it will travel to the Bizen Osafune Token hakubutsukan.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

No.702 Tosogu kanshou

Yatsunashi (a theme from the story Ise Monogatari) sukashi tsuba Mumei, Heianjo style sukashi tsuba

From the mid-Muromachi to mid-Edo period, we see Heianjo-sukashi or Kyo-sukashi tsuba. These are iron sukashi tsuba, with sophisticated unique designs, and detailed carving. From the sophisticated designs, they should have been made around the Kyoto area, and the name comes from there. Older period work is called Heianjo sukashi, and later work is called Kyo-sukashi.

Heianjo and Kyo-sukashi tsuba were made at almost the same time as Owari sukashi tsuba. Owari sukashi tsuba have dynamic designs, and are heavy iron sukashi tsuba. Heianjo Kyo-sukashi tsuba are a little thin, the ground or surface is flat, there is a large open sukashi base, and the pattern's lines show fine details, with a very delicate and elegant feeling. These two styles show large contrasts. This tsuba is a good example of Heianjo sukashi work, showing a part of the classic story "Ise Monogatari", or "Yatsunashi". Usually, the Yatsunashi theme uses kakitsubata (iris), but sometimes there are no kakitsubata, just moving water, clouds, and karigame (wild geese) design elements, as we see on this tsuba. The ground shows large open or sukashi areas, narrow designs elements, and the entire composition is well balanced, and shows a refined feeling. Compared with the same school's work, the iron is excellent, and the area above the seppa-dai is a little narrow compared with the area below, and the hitsu-ana are long vertical shapes, from these characteristics, the tsuba is from the older period, and can be judged as Heianjo sukashi work.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 702

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 702 issue Shijo Kantei To is August 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 August 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: wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 6 sun 4 bu (49.7 cm)

Sori: 3 bu (0.9 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 bu 5 rin (3.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 1 sun 2 bu 2 rin (3.7 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly less 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 5 sun 1 bu 2 rin (15.5 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 8.5 bu (14.7 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi zukuri wakizashi with an ihorimune, wide shape, and the widths at the moto and saki are almost the same. There is a shallow sori and large kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and on the ura side at the koshimoto o-hada appears. There are ji-nie and fine chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon has ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, and dense nie. The jihada and hamon are both bright and clear, and there are kinsuji, and sunagashi. The horimono on the omote and ura are futasuji-hi with marudome. On the omote side under the hi there is a bonji, and on the ura side inside of a koshi-hitsu (a box shaped frame) there is a Daikokuten carving. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is a strong iriyamagata shape and sharp (a ha-agari kurijiri shape). The yasurime are sujichigai with kesho, and there are two mekugi ana. On the omote side, between the ubu ana and on the center of shinogi-ji there is a long signature, and on the ura side there is a kinzogan saidan-mei.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For June

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

Meeting Date: June 13, 2015 (2nd Saturday of June) at 1:00pm.

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Imoto Yuuki

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: Nagamitsu

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 7 bu

Sori: 8.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume hada; the entire jihada is well forged and tight. There are dense ji-nie, chikei, and midare-utsuri.

Hamon: choji mixed with kawazoka-choji, fukuro-choji, gunome, ko-gunome, and togariba, There are frequent ashi, and yo, and a nioiguchi; some places have nie; on the omote there are some tobiyaki and kinsuji and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: small midarekomi, tip are sharp, and short return.

Horimono: the omote and ura have bohi; the omote has a marudome and on the ura the hi is carved through the nakago.

This is a Juyo Bijutsuhin Nagamitsu tachi. It is a little wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. Although it is suriage, there is still a large koshizori, and the tip also has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. This is a typical mid-Kamakura period dynamic shape.

The tachi hamon on the omote is mainly based on gunome, and the ura hamon based mainly on choji which is an unusual style. People recognized the ura side's gorgeous choji hamon with the dynamic shape, and many people voted for a Fukuoka Ichimonji smith.

But if it were by a Fukuoka Ichimonji smith such as Yoshifusa, Sukezane, and Norifusa, the hamon on the omote and ura would contain more choji, and an a very active midare hamon. Yoshifusa's hamon with narrow waist fukuro-choji are prominent. Norifusa's hamon are mixed with saka-ashi and are narrow.

Looking at the choji hamon carefully, the hamon is mixed with kawazuko-choji with a narrow waist, and also forms a midare hamon. Norifusa has many gunome hamon, and around the monouchi the hamon becomes gentle. From this characteristic hamon, it is possible to narrow down possible smith's names to smiths such as Osafune Mitsutada, Hatakeda Morie and gorgeous hamon work by Nagamitsu.

This tachi is Nagamitsu's early work and follows his father Mitsutada's gorgeous choji midare hamon example (on the ura side), and many people voted for Mitsutada. But the omote side hamon is mixed with more gunome, and some places show a continuous hamon, and round top hamon features, and this is a characteristic Nagamitsu hamon. Also, Morie has work similar to this this, but if it were his work, many of his jihada are visible.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mei: Naokatsu

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: slightly less 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itamehada; the hada is barely visible. There are dense ji-nie, and frequent fine chikei.

Hamon: gunome mixed with ko-notare, choji, and togariba. There are dense nie, some uneven and small tobiyaki, frequent kinsuji, and long sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi with hakikake; on the omote there are togari and a komaru; the ura is yakizume.

Suishinshi Masahide's theories and ideas were adopted by his student Taikei Naotane, and were transmitted to Naotane's students. One of Naotane's top students was Jiro Taro Naokatsu. This tachi is in the Soshu Den style established by Naotane, and then followed by Naokatsu.

This is a wide blade, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a poor hiraniku with a long kissaki, and this is a heavy katana. From these characteristics, not many people missed the Shinshinto period. The jihada is itame, the hada is visible, the hamon has frequent nie, kinsuji and sunagashi, and from these characteristics, many people voted for in Shinshinto period Soshu Den smiths, especially Kiyomaro and his school's smiths.

The hamon has frequent nie, the entire hamon has kinsuji and sunagashi, the boshi tip is sharp and has a return, and from this, at first impression it looks like the Kiyomaro school. If it were Kiyomaro school work, the hiraniku would be smaller and poor, the kissaki more slender, and there would be a sharp feeling in the shape. Also, the Kiyomaro school's jihada are itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and they are well forged. Kiyomaro's hamon around the Tenpo and Koka periods have gunome mixed with choji, and between the midare waves, the hamon peaks are close to each other and there are vertical alterations. Around the Kaei period, Kiyomaro's midare hamon choji are not prominent, and the entire hamon is composed primarily of large size gunome. In the same school, Nobuhide's hamon are large square shaped gunome mixed with ko-choji, ko-togari, ko-gunome, and is a characteristically intricate rough midare hamon.

This katana does not have these characteristics, and people voted for Kiyomaro school the first time, but many of them corrected themselves in the second vote and voted for the Naotane school, which used to specialize in Soshu Den as well as Bizen Den. This was a good judgement.

Also, this katana does not have strong characteristic points to use to judge an individual smith's name, so Naotane and his school's smiths are treated as almost correct answers.

Other answer were Shinshinto Satsuma smiths such as Motohira and Masayoshi. Their blades have more ha-niku, the opposite of a katana shape, and their jihada and hamon have prominent uneven ara-nie.

Kantei To No 3: tachi

Mumei: Bishu Osafune Tomomitsu

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 4 sun 1 bu

Sori: slightly over 8 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; the entire jihada is tight, and there are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, clear midare utsuri and a bright jigane.

Hamon: kataochi gunome mixed with gunome, kaku-gunome, choji, togari, and there are some sakaashi. There are ashi, yo, a nioiguchi, some nie, and some kinsuji .

Boshi: midarekomi; the omote side has small togari, and the ura side is based on togari.

Horimono: the omote and ura have bo-hi with marudome, and under the hi on the omote side is a bonji with a gyo style kurikara; the ura side has three bonji with a suken.

This is a Tomomitsu tachi, recently classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token. The sword book "Kokon Meizukushi" listed Tomomitsu's work as being very similar to Kanemitsu's work. Also, in this book, he was listed in the the school as the most skilled smith.

This is a wide blade, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. It is thin with an o-kissaki which is a mid-Nambokucho period shape. The jihada is itame mixed mokume, and the entire jihada is tight, and there is a bright jigane with clear midare utsuri. The hamon is mainly kataochi gunome mixed with kaku-gunome, the boshi' tip is sharp, and there is a return. From these characteristics most people voted for Kanemitsu and his school's smiths.

Kanemitsu has three students. First was Tomomitsu, and he was supposed to be either Kanemitsu's younger brother or his son; the pther students were Motomitsu and Masamitsu. They all carried on their teacher Kanemitsu's style. Many of Tomomitsu's hamon are based on notare and Motomitsu's hamon are a kataochi-gunome style. Among the three students, the youngest is Masamitsu, and usually

many of his shapes are more gentle than the peak Nambokucho shape, and his hamon are narrower and close to the Kosori style.

Looking at this tachi carefully, notice that the hamon is based on kataochi gunome mixed with all kinds of structures such as kaku-gunome, choji, saka-ashi gunome, and togari, and the entire hamon has vertical alterations, and this kind of hamon is seen often in Motomitsu's work.

This kind of work by Tomomitsu tells us, that besides making his own style hamon, he worked in other styles, and this is a good example. If you look at this as Kanemitsu school work, it is enough. In particular, Motomitsu is a good judgement and his work is close to Tomomitsu's, and so his name is treated as an almost correct answer at this time.

The other answer was for the branch school smith Motoshige. If it were his work, the jihada would have nagarehada, the hada would be visible, and his hamon contain wide kaku-gunome somewhere.

Kantei To No 4: kotachi

Mei: Bishu Osafune Yorimitsu
? toku 2 nen 2 gatsu pi

Length: 1 shaku 9 sun 2 bu

Sori: slightly over 7 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itamehada mixed with frequent mokumehada; there is some nagarehada, and the entire jihada is visible. There are ji-nie, frequent thick kawari-tetsu type chikei, pale straight utsuri and a slightly dark jihada.

Hamon: gunome, mixed with ko-notare, togari, kaku-gunome, and kataochi-gunome. There are ashi, yo, a nioiguchi, some ko-nie, fine sunagashi, and at the koshimoto there is some kinsuji.

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

Horimono: the omote and ura have bo-hi with marudome, and under this a bonji inkoku horimono.

The Kosori school, at the end of the Nambokucho period in the Bizen area referred to smiths who did not belong to the mainstream Bizen schools. The mainstream smiths were Kanemitsu and branch school smiths such as Motoshige, Chogi, and Morikage. Beside these, other smiths whose school affiliations were not clear are called Kosori smiths.

It is not known where the Kosori name came from. There is a theory that the name derived from many small sized tachi, just like this kotachi. Beside kotachi, sometimes there are blades over 2 shaku 4 sun long, and many of the widths are

either standard or a little wide, the widths at the moto and saki are different, tip has sori, and the kissaki is either a chu-kissaki or a long chu-kissaki.

Many of the jihada are itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and the hada is visible. The entire jihada not too refined and soft appearing. There are different colored jifu, different types of iron chikei, and a type of unique forging. There are many styles of hamon: ko-notare mixed with gunome, kataochi-gunome, kaku-gunome, small ball-like gunome hamon which are continuous like Yoshii work, ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-togari, square shapes, kataochi gunome, and intricate midare hamon. These hamon are diverse, but are narrow hamon for the mihaba, or a small size, and this is a characteristic point.

This kotachi shows these characteristic points well, but all Kosori works are similar, and it is difficult to judge individual names. Some people voted for Hidemitsu and Moromitsu, but if you judged this as a Kosori smith's work, we treated that as a correct answer at this time.

Possibly because of the small size, many people voted for Eikyo (1429-1440) Bizen smiths such as Norimitsu and Sukemitsu. But if it were Eikyo Bizen smith work, many of the jihada are tight, and we almost never see this much unrefined jihada.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Higo no kami Tachibana Yoshitsugu saku

Kiritsuke-mei: San-no-ma otoshi hiraji-iri

Nochi ryokuruma otoshi hiraji-iri

Matanochi wakige otoshi hiraji-iri

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5.5 bu

Sori: 5.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: based on a wide suguha and mixed with gunome and ko-notare. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, thick nie, some nie-suji and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: small midarekomi with strong hakikake, a round tip and a return.

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

This is a Edo Hojoji school Higo no Kami Yoshitsugu katana. There is a Yoshitsugu wakizashi that Yamano Kanjuro Hisahide donated to the Shiogomori shrine. From the wakizashi signature "Hongoku (native) Hitachi", Yoshitsugu is known to have come from there. Also, in Genroku 5 (1692) he is supposed to have moved to

Kagoshima, and there is a Satsuma-uchi blade, signed and stating he is 66 years old.

This is a wide blade and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a chu-kissaki and a slightly large sori which falls within the Kanbun-shinto shape. The hamon is based on a wide suguha mixed with gunome and it has a juzuba (string of beads) form. There is a dense nioiguchi and dense nie. From these characteristics, besides Yoshitugu, many people voted for Kotetsu, Okimasa, Kazusa no suke Kaneshige and Edo Hojoji school smiths.

Many smiths whose active period was during the Kambun to Empo periods have shapes that have a shallow sori, like a Kanbun-shinto shape. If this were Kotetsu's work, the jihada and hamon would be clearer, his boshi are gunome at a yokote, and then straight, with a komaru tip and return which is called Kotetsu boshi.

Kazusa no kami Kaneshige's hamon in some places show several continuous or fused gunome.

The Edo Hojoji school smiths' hamon, except for Yoshitsugu, are primarily a mid-suguha style with continuous gunome, and the entire hamon does not show much vertical alteration. They are also a small or narrow suguha style hamon. Okimasa was active at almost the same time, and he has blades with larger sori. However, his hamon are a juzuba style with prominent continuous gunome or with two fused gunome waves, and many of them have yubashiri, rough ha-nie, and more dynamic hataraki.

Yoshitsugu's hamon characteristics have each gunome with a clear shape and a midare hamon, and this is different from the Edo Hojoji school's usual small or narrow hamon. He has a large sori and this seems to arise from the time he was working. Also, he has blades which often show mixed ara-nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and prominent imozuru and may be an influence from his time in Satsuma. The katana shows his characteristic features.

Shijo Kantei To No 700 (in the 2015 May issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 700 in the May issue is a wakizashi by Dewa Daijo Kunimichi.

The wakizashi is wide, long, thick, and has a slightly large sori, and from the shape you can judge this as Keicho Shinto work.

Dewa Daijo Kunimichi's signed blades show up from Keicho 13 (1608) to the dated work in Kanbun 2 (1662). For 55 years, his active time spanned the Keicho Shinto to the Kanbun Shinto periods.

From this, in his work, his shapes can show a Keicho Shinto shape, a Kanbun to Shoho period Shinto shape, and have standard widths with a chu-kissaki which is close to a Kanbun Shinto shape.

Many of Kunimichi's jihada are itame mixed with mokume, and the entire hada is visible. There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, the Horikawa school's unique rough forging, and the hints refer to this. At the same time, often his jihada on the hamon side show some nagarehada and masame hada, and this is one of his characteristic points.

He produced all kinds of styles. In particular, his hamon can be based on a large size midare hamon with gunome, vertical alterations, and a dynamic gorgeous midare. There are ashi, yo, some saka-ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and this wakizashi shows a good example of his characteristic hamon. We could say this is the best of his examples with this kind of hamon in a Keicho Shinto shape, with dynamic and detailed work. Most of time the boshi are a shallow notare with a sharp tip and return, which is a Sanpin style, and this is a one of his characteristic points.

Kunimichi's nakago tips have a pronounced kurijiri; his yasurime are osuji-chigai, and although he makes Keicho Shinto blade styles, we often seen kesho style yasurime in his work.

His signatures are often long on the omote side in the center, and are not completely straight. His work often is dated too.

This is a typical Kunimichi work, and most people voted for the correct answer.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai