

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kansho
Examination of important swords

Juyo Bijutsuhin
Important Art Object

Type: Katana
Kinzogan mei: Motomitsu
Owner: Sano Bijutsukan (Sano Art museum) Public Finance Foundation

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 4 bu (66.8 cm)
Sori: 6 bu 5 rin (1.97 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 1 rin (2.27 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 4 rin (1.95 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)
Sakikasane : 1 bu 1 rin (0.35 cm)
Kissaki length: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 2 bu 7 rin (19.0 cm)
Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. It is slightly thick, there is a slightly large sori, and a chu-kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame and mokume, and the entire jihada is fine and slightly visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, and midare-utsuri. The hamon is mainly kaku (square)-gunome, mixed with kataochi-gunome, ko-gunome and togariba, and the entire hamon is a wide midare hamon. There are ko-ashi, a little yo, and a nioiguchi type habuchi (hamon boundary). The boshi is midarekomi, the omote is a yakizume style, and the ura has a komaru. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bo-hi, but on the omote it is carved through the nakago, and on the ura it is finished with a kaku-dome. The nakago is o-suriage, the tip is a shallow kurijiri, and the yasurime on the omote are kiri, while the ura has slightly deep katte-sagari (new) yasurime and the original yasurime style is not visible. There are three mekugi-ana, two of them are closed, and this is a mumei katana.

Osafune Motomitsu is famous, and worked at the same time as Tomomitsu, who we introduced in the last issue. He supposed to be a Kanemitsu school smith or Kanemitsu's son. He used the "Sabyoe" title and one example is a tachi mei signed Bizen kuni ju Osafune Sabyoe Motomitsu which was the 21st blade classified as Juyo token . We recognize his earliest dated blade as being from Koei 2 (1343) and the last one is Eiwa 2 (1376). His shapes are usually large, which reflects his active period's characteristic shapes, and they are not different from other smiths working at the same time. But his jihada are not as refined as his teacher Kanemitsu's and are visible. His hamon are based on, or mainly on, Tomomitsu's specialty notare type hamon. Beside this, many of his hamon are primarily gunome. On this sword, there is a kataochi gunome hamon mixed with all kinds of hamon shapes such as saka-ashi, square gunome, ko-notare and togariba. They are not simple, and extremely variable, and this is his characteristic hamon.

This katana is o-suriage mumei, and was judged as Motomitsu's work by Honnami Mitsutada and has a kinzogan (gold wire) inlay. The thickness is a little large for the width, and similar to the next generation's Oei period shape. This kind of shape is seen around the latter half of the Nanbokucho period, and this is the same period as Motomitsu's career. His hamon are based mainly on square shaped features which are seen often in his work, and also are mixed with several other elements, such as kataochi gunome, and this judgement is quite natural. But the jihada is different from his usual work, and the entire jihada is fine and visible, but is a well forged ko-itame hada, and in particular, the midare utsuri is clear and this is one of his best works.

In Bizen work, those which are mainly based on kaku-gunome hamon were created by Nagamitsu (especially in his tanto), and Motomitsu's time is at the end of this type of style. Looking at the Bizen hamon transition, he is in an important position.

In Showa 23, this katana was classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, the owner was Dr, Honma Kunzan's younger brother Honma Yusuke who established the Honma museum in Sakata city, Yamagata prefecture.

This katana is currently being shown in the NBTHK as part of the special exhibit "Bizen Token O-koku (kingdom)". The second period, from Nanbokucho to Muromachi times is on display from August 25th to November 1st. The exhibit will travel on November 29 to the Sano museum in Shizuoka, and then to the Bizen Osafune Token Museum in Okayama.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Correction and apology:

In the September issue, in the Meito Kansho, we described an o-tachi over 4 shaku long, classified as Juyo Bunkazai. Unfortunately, this was an error and the sword is

classified as Kokuho. We apologize to the Futarasan shrine, the owner of the tachi, and at the same time, we wish to correct this mistake.

No.705 Tosogu Kanshou Juyo Tosogu (Important Tosogu)

**Hisago karakusa-mon (gourd and karakusa design) tsuba
Mei: Nobuie**

The two best master smiths working with iron tsuba are Kaneie in Kyoto and Nobuie in Owari. Kaneie chose scenery and people for his themes, and used a takabori (high relief) technique to develop his own style. Nobuie used a kebori (engraving with very fine lines) technique for letters, animals, and plant themes and showed a dynamic strong feeling in his work. Kaneie's jitetsu feels moist and rich, and shows an elevated elegance. Nobuie's jitetsu has a feeling of dynamism. This is a hisago karakusa pattern design with unique kebori work. The design is free, bold, and carefully done. A hyotan (gourd) has been used as a symbol for good luck since early times and Nobuie often used it as a theme in his tsuba. Beside this, Nobuie produced all kinds of kebori work such as letters and patterns, and they are majestic with a powerful design and his unique jimmon (surface pattern), and excellent work. Also, his amazing tsuba shape and finished edge is the best of Nobuie's characteristic points, and no one followed his impressive style. Nobuie's original tsuba shapes and powerful jitetsu display the iron's spirit, and at the same time you can feel a sense of mortality. The tsuba still exhibits some bushi's (warrior) spirit, and this is an excellent master work.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 705

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 703 issue Shijo Kantei To is October 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 October 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: tachi

Length: 3 shaku 1 sun 6 bu 8 rin (96.0 cm)

Sori: 1 sun 06 bu (3.2 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 09 rin (3.3 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 8 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 09 rin (3.3 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 7 bu (20.3 cm)

Nakago sori: 8 rin (0.25 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly wide shape, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshi-sori with funbari, the tip has a little uchi-sori and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and the hada is visible. There are thick dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, a dark color jihada, and jifu-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon has fine hotsure, uchinoke, frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, thick nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and the entire hamon has a classic elegance. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari, and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote side, above the mekugi-ana along the mune side there is a three kanji signature.

Usually, this school's smiths jihada do not have a not dark color. His tachi are usually around 2 shaku 6 sun or less with an ubu shape, and are mainly narrow and have a small kissaki.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For September

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

Meeting Date: September 12, 2015 (2nd Saturday of September) at 1:00 pm.

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

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: katana

Mumei: Fukuoka Ichimonji

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame hada mixed with itame and mokume, and the entire jihada is tight. There are ji-nie and midare-utsuri.

Hamon: choji-midare hamon mixed with ko-gunome and togariba, and the entire hamon is high with an active midare hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, a nioiguchi, a little ko-nie, some kinsuji, and some muneyaki.

Boshi: shallow notare-komi with a komaru.

The katana hamon is recognizable at first glance and is mainly choji, and is a gorgeous midare hamon. The jihada has also midare utsuri, and from this, you can judge this as Bizen Ichimonji work. But the boshi is not midare, but a gentle notare hamon, and the shinogi ji has a nagare masame hada, and from these details, a few people voted for the Shinshinto Ishido school's top smith Hioki Mitsuhiro.

Looking at this carefully, the nioiguchi's width has wide and narrow variations, and a very soft look, and the hamon shape is more variable, and for Mitsuhiro this is obviously too classical and natural. If it were Ishido school work, the nioiguchi would be tighter, there would not be as much ashi and yo in the active midare hamon, and usually there are not much hataraki inside of the hamon, when compared to this katana.

Considering the boshi, many Ichimonji signed works have alterations in the midare hamon, but sometimes there are still gently shaped boshi. Considering the shinogi ji's masame hada, in the case of Shinto work, one sees a tighter jihada and a more regular pattern.

The katana has some muneyaki, and there is a Juyo Bunkazai tachi signed ichi, which is owned by the Hie shrine, and it has muneyaki which is more prominent than this one.

Kantei To No. 2: wakizashi

Mei: Hashu junin Gassan Chikanori
Eisho 9 nen 2 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 9 sun 2 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: marumune

Jihada: itame mixed with nagare and mokume hada; some parts are ayasugi hada, and the entire jihada is well forged. There are ji-nie, chikei, and whitish utsuri.

Hamon: narrow suguha mixed with a some ko-gunome. There are ko-ashi, ko-nie, and nijuba.

Boshi: straight yakiba with a o-maru and return; there are nijuba.

Chikanori was a part of the important Gassan smith group, and opinions are that that he was Hikobyoei Sukesada's student. His jihada are strongly forged when compared with the usual Gassan work. His hamon, besides suguha, are based mainly on an open valley choji midare hamon. His jihada and hamon are sophisticated and almost look like Sue Bizen work. His nakago tip shape is not as narrow as his school's usual work and he is a special smith among the Gassan school.

O-shu Gassan smiths, as their name indicates, used to live the foot of Gassan, one of Dewa's three mountains which were known as a destination to where people made a pilgrimages. They are supposed to have likely been monks and traveled all over the mountain side to visit ashrams. From this it is supposed that they had communications over a large area. Gassan Hiroyasu has a blade signed Nichu-ju. From this, we can conclude that some smiths moved to Hyuga and Satsuma. We have to consider that the Gassan and Naminohira smiths are related to each other, and some details in their styles are similar.

This blade has an unusual o-kissaki, it is less than 2 shaku long which is a short length, and the tip has sori, and from the shape, you can look at this as a mid- to late Muromachi period wakizashi. The jihada is itame, the nagare hada is prominent, in some places there is a little ayasugi hada, and the entire jihada is soft looking. The hamon's nijuba is prominent, and also there is a wide shinogiji, a high shinogi line, and there are Yamato characteristic points seen as well.

Considering the marumune, this is a Kyushu work, and Satsuma Naminohira's better work seems to be the most appropriate answer, and about half of the people voted for Muromachi period Naminohira or Gassan. From the marumune, shape of the o-kissaki, and the suguha hamon, some people voted for Nanbokucho period Aoe work. But Aoe's shapes are different, their utsuri is not whitish but are dan-utsuri, and both the jihada and hamon are more clear and sophisticated.

Also, from the well defined narrow suguha hamon with prominent nijuba, some people voted for Sudo Kunitsugu in Kishu, and we treated that as a correct answer. From style of the hamon, it is understandable answer. However, Kunitsugu's jihada have more masame hada. This was from Tani Senjo's collection, who was famous

military man from Tosa prefecture, and active from the Bakumatsu to Meiji periods.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Fuyuhiko saku

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 8 bu

Sori: 8.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and o-itame, and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, and a dark color jihada.

Hamon: there is a short yakidashi at the moto, and above this, a wide suguha; some places have a ko-notare hamon and ko-gunome. There are ashi and yo, korie, and kinsuji; on the omote side there are tobiyaki and yubashiri; on the ura side there are prominent muneyaki.

Boshi: there is a wide yakiba which is almost ichimai; it is straight and a yakizume style.

This katana has large sori, and the sori on the upper half is a clear and prominent saki-zori, and the yakiba in the boshi is very wide, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as work from around the end of the Muromachi period or Sue koto work. Looking at the jihada, the itame hada pattern is a slightly large size, the hada is visible, there is a lack of refined forging, and a dark color jihada, and from this, you can recognize Northern area characteristic points.

This is a Fuyuhiko katana. The sword book "Meikan" listed 21 Fuyuhiko names in eight provinces such as Wakasa in the west, as well as Bizen, Bichu and Bingo. Today, from the signatures, obviously Fuyuhiko is not one sword smith. Because of this, Fuyuhiko styles show a wide variation, such as hitatsura, o-notare, Sue Seki, Sue Bizen, and this Takada style, and this type of work based on a suguha style is one of his styles. It is hard to judge just from the hamon style. This is a balanced suguha style, and on the omote there are tobiyaki and yubashiri. The ura has uneven muneyaki, and these unnatural hataraki stand out, and are different from traditional hataraki. Thus, we have to say that when compared with mainstream work, this has less sophistication. Also, Fuyuhiko's work sometimes has a narrow yakidashi at the moto, just like this katana. This is one of Fuyuhiko's characteristic points with his characteristic jihada. In talking about the yakidashi, you can imagine it was done after the beginning of the Shinto period. But in the Koto period, there are yakidashi styles, such as Nosada's among the Seki smiths, and the Senju school. Considering the period, the Fuyuhiko name was recognized and more than half of the people gave a correct answer in the second vote.

Kantei To No 4: tachi

Mei: Soshu ju Tsunahiro
Tenbun 17 nen Tsuchinoe Saru 2 gatsu pi

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 5 sun 7 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; some places have nagarehada, and some hada is visible.

Hamon: narrow suguha, mixed with ko-gunome. There are ko-ashi, a nioiguchi, and some uneven ko-nie.

Boshi: straight and and with an omaru. the ura is kuichigaiba.

Horimono: On the omote and ura are bo-hi with marudome. Under the hi on the omote there are bonji, gomabashi, and rendai. The ura has bonji and a So style kurikara. These are kasane-bori horimono (or different horimono).

This is a Soshu Tsunahiro tachi dated Tenbun 17 nen (1549). Usually his signed blades are short uchigatana or long hirazukuri wakizashi. They usually have prominent tobiyaki and muneyaki with a hitatsura hamon. It is rare to see a tachi with a suguha hamon by Tsunahiro. This could be some general's chumon-uchi sword (a special order). Possibly he promised to make a suguha hamon initially and then he forged more blades like this. The itame pattern is not as large as usual, and it is relatively well forged. It is hard to judge too much just from a suguha hamon and so it is important to find other key points.

Concerning the shape, since it is a tachi, the sori is a little too small, and instead, the sori at the tip is emphasized. The curve from the moto to the saki is too prominent, and from these details, it is usually hard to say something is Kamakura period work. Also the mitsumune middle surface along with the habakimoto is too narrow for the shape, and from this, it is a possibility that this is Muromachi period work. Looking at it more carefully, from the gentle suguha hamon, there is an imbalance with the muneyaki in the upper half. The horimono on the omote and ura are kasane-bori (independent) which is seen in many in Soshu Den works, and you can recognize the So Kurikara style horimono's sanko style tsuka, the tip of the tsuka is a hexagon rather than the usual circle. From these characteristics, it is possible that you can judge this as Sue Bizen work.

Another opinion was this was the work of Heianjo Nagayoshi who has some suguha work and is known for good horimono. His Kurikara sanko tsuka are the same shape and a similar style, but in his case, most of them are single horimono, and not kasanebori or several independent horimono. His jihada are ko-itame which are more tight and have a more refined jihada. His hamon have a bright

nioiguchi, and many of them are more sophisticated and refined. In his kurikara horimono the ken has a shallow curve, and more volume is seen, and these are major characteristic points.

Kantei To No. 5: tachi

Mei: ? ? Osafune ju Motoshige

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with nagare and mokume hada; hada is barely visible and some places have jifu. There are ji-nie, chikei and midare-utsuri.

Hamon: ko-gunome mixed with square shaped gunome, ko-choji, and ko-midare. There are frequent ashi and yo, and entire hamon has saka-ashi; there is a dense nioiguchi, frequent dense nie, and some places have kinsuji.

Boshi: straightens at the yokote, and above this, it is suguha. The tip is sharp.

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

This tachi's funbari is obviously gone, and you can recognize it as suriage. The width is standard, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The tip has sori, there is a chu-kissaki, and there are indistinct midare-utsuri, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as work from Bizen around the late Kamakura period.

The jihada pattern is a little uneven, and it is itame mixed with nagare, and the hada is a little soft, and some parts of the hada pattern are visible. There are jifu areas, and from these characteristics, it is appropriate to judge this as being from a non-mainstream Osafune school smith. Saka-ashi type hamon is seen in this period from Osafune smiths. Some parts of the hamon have slightly long square shaped gunome, and the boshi's tip is sharp, and these are Motoshige's characteristic points. But compared with his usual work, this hamon is a classic style. There are fine ha-nie along the edge of the hamon, and there are dense nie inside of the hamon, and from this some people judged this as Ko-Bizen work. But there is sori at the tip, characteristically shaped, dark utsuri, and saka-ashi, and usually these characteristics are not seen except in Yukihide's work.

Some people's opinion was that the tachi's characteristic nie style is similar to another sunnobi (long or oversize) wakizashi classified as Juyo-Bunkazai. This is supposed to be one of Motoshige's styles.

Comparing details from the work of the smiths who received votes, Chikakage's nie is not strong as this; if it were Kanemitsu, his jigane are more refined and better; if it were Unji, his shapes are wazori and his boshi are round with a return, and there

would be Aoe style dan-utsuri above the hamon and fine utsuri. Along the shinogi there are midare-utsuri, and these details are different from Motoshige's work.

Shijo Kantei To No 703 (in the August, 2015 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 703 in the August issue is a katana by Kurihara Nobuhide dated Keio 2 nen (1866).

This is a wide, long blade, and the widths at the moto and saki are almost the same. There is a shallow sori with an o-kissaki and you see this kind of shape often in the Shinshinto period. Among these shinshinto, with a low hiraniku and a poor fukura shape are the Yamaura school's characteristic shape made by their smiths such as Kiyomaro, Saneo, Nobuhide, Kiyondo and Masao.

The jihada is itame mixed with nagare hada, and the hada is visible. There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and a strongly forged hada. The hamon has square large gunome, and at the top of the hamon these are mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji, and form a midare hamon. Between the each gunome in some places, there are choji.

There are frequent ko-nie, and some very bright rough nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. From this strong characteristic style, most people voted for Nobuhide, and for an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Kiyomaro, Masao, and Kiyondo.

Nobuhide's teacher Kiyomaro's work around the Tenpo and Koka periods have characteristics such as: many of them have a gunome midare hamon mixed with prominent choji; the distance between the midare hamon waves is small; and there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. Around the Kaei period, his midare hamon no longer have prominent choji, and the entire hamon is a large gunome midare hamon, and the kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki are more gentle.

Kiyomaro passed way in Kaei 7 (1854), two of his students faithfully followed Kiyomaro's Kaei style, and one is Minamoto Masao who was Kiyomaro's student who became independent around Kaei 6 (1853). The other is Saito Kiyondo, who become a student of Kiyomaro in Kaei 5 (1852) and who stayed with him until he passed way.

Nobuhide was developing his own style around Kaei 5 (1852). His unique square shape hamon are different from those of Kiyomaro, Masao, and Kiyondo, and has more individuality. In Nobuhide's early work around the Kaei period, the square features in the hamon are not so prominent square, and his hamon are not too similar to his teacher Kiyomaro's. The hamon have smaller size gunome and a more gentle appearance.

Later, in the Ansei and Manei periods, Nobuhide's style become more individualized with a strong and unique appearance. We suppose that the change in his style may have followed his teacher's death, and developed right after he became independent.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai