

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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ANNOUNCEMENT

The NBTHK is moving its offices and museum

The NBTHK will move from its current site in Yoyogi to a new site in the former Ryogoku town hall campus in Sumida-ku, Tokyo, in September 2017. Consequently, the location for NBTHK events will change. Information about this move and the new location for NBTHK events and their timing is discussed here:

1. NBTHK exhibition schedule

All NBTHK exhibitions at Yoyogi will cease on March 31, 2017. In the fall of 2017, the NBTHK is planning to have an exhibition in the new Ryogoku building.

2. NBTHK shinsa schedule

In 2017, NBTHK shinsa events for swords will be in March, and touso and tousogu shinsa will be in April in the current Yoyogi location. After this date there will be a temporary break in the shinsa schedule.

In October, 2017, applications for items for touso and tousogu shinsa will be accepted again. The acceptance dates will be from Monday, October 2nd to Wednesday October 4th over a three day period.

In 2017, the Juyo token shinsa acceptance dates will be during the second week of October, from Tuesday, October 10th through Thursday, October 12th.

In 2017 in November, the token shinsa acceptance dates will be from on Monday November 6th to Wednesday November 8th over a three day period, and the number of items accepted for this shinsa will probably be limited. The actual number items to be accepted will be announced soon.

3. Teirei Kansho Kai, Kansho protocols, lectures, NBTHK loans of swords

These events will continue through June, 2017, stop in June, 2017, and then resume again in November 2017.

4. The 2017 Shinsaku Meito Ten

As usual, swords will be accepted in April, and prizes will be awarded. However, the associated exhibition will first be held outside of Tokyo. When the new NBTHK building and new museum are opened in the Fall of 2017, there will be a shinsakuto exhibition along with polishing and gaiso (koshirae) skills awards.

5. Token polishing and gaiso gijutsu (skill) contest

We will accept items from Monday, October 2nd to Wednesday, October 4th, one month earlier than usual. These exhibitions will be held at the same time as the Shinsaku Meito Ten.

6. Token polishing and gaiso gijutsu training course

This will start at the end of July and continue to early August which is earlier than usual.

7. Toshoku ginou (skill) training lecture

This will be held on the usual dates.

8. Sakuto gijutsu (sword making) training course

This will be held on the usual dates.

9. Murage yo-sei ko-za (tatara methods training lecture)

This will be held on the usual dates.

10. Den-i shingikai

The shingikai on September 2017 will not be held.

11. Token Bijutsu magazine will be published

This will be published as usual.

12. The data room

This will be available until March, 2017, and will close in April. However, the actual schedule might be changed because of the construction and moving schedules. Updates will be provided later.

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Heisei 28 (2016) Shinsaku Meito Ten

Tachi, katana, wakizashi, naginata and yari section
Takamatsu-no-miya Kinen (Prince Takamatsu
Commemory) prize

Type: Tachi
Mei: Kiyohiro
Heisei 28, Ni gatsu bi (February, 2016)

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 3 bu 5 rin (73.8 cm)
Sori: 9 bu 2 rin (2.0 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)
Kissaki length: 9 bu 9 rin (2.9 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 9 bu 3 rin (21.0 cm)
Nakago sori: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a standard width and thickness, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a wa-sori and a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are thick dense ji-nie and a little bit of fine chikei. The hamon is chu-suguha, and in some places there are frequent suji shaped yo, a dense nioiguchi, dense even ha-nie, and a bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi is straight with a round tip. The nakago tip is little bit ha-agari with a shallow kuri-jiri, and the yasurime are suji-chigai. There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote under the center, there is a small two kanji signature made with a fine chisel. The ura side has a date.

The smith, Morikuni Kiyohiro, came from Fukui city, and was born in Showa 42 (1968), and is now 48. From early childhood, he has been impressed by the mysterious process of sword making and could not help admiring this craft. In Showa 61 (1987), he started working under the late Miyairi Kiyomune, and after

five years of training, he received his sword smith's license in Heisei 3 (1992). After 2 additional years (1994) he had his first exhibited work, and in Heisei 7 (1996) he became an independent sword smith. He felt he still needed additional training, and in the following year (1997), he started working under his teacher's oldest son Miyairi Norihiro.

In Heisei 9 (1998) he went to study with Norihiro's teacher the late National treasure Sumitani Masamine to learn about making tosu. At the Sho-hin Ten (contest for small items), he has received numerous prizes such as the Sankei Newspaper prize. At the Shinsaku Meito Ten, as of today he had only won one prize. But his favored choji midare hamon are always fresh, bright and clear and we can recognize his excellent workmanship in this sword.

This time, he changed his signature choji midare hamon to a suguha hamon. He was impressed with his teacher Norihiro's recent suguha style work and received the No.1 special award, by making a sword in a very different style from before.

This sword's mihaba, kasane, and sori are not too pronounced, there is a comfortable weight, a good balance, and a tachi shape. The jihada is a tight ko-itame and very refined, but is not a muji type. there are dense ji-nie with fine chikei, and the entire jihada has a comparatively soft feeling. The hamon is a smooth chu-suguha, and is in a deliberate Yamashiro-den style. There is a nioiguchi, and toward the hasaki (tip) it becomes soft, and the entire hamon in the tip is bright and clear. With the refined jihada, the entire tachi is clean and fresh looking. Also, the suji shaped yo in the hamon produce an interesting look in what might be an otherwise monotonous suguha hamon, and the yo produce a clear character.

Recently, it has been rare to receive a high evaluation for suguha hamon work. But the three elements of the tachi shape, jihada, and hamon are well balanced, and this is an appropriate sword to receive the first prize.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Heisei 28, Shinsaku Meito Ten NBTHK Chairman's prize

Myohou rengakyo yaku-o bosatsu moji sukashi tsuba

Mei: Heisei Hinoe Saru toshi

Yoshiyuki saku

Last year Kawashima Yoshiyuki received the tokusho (special award) Kunzan-Sho. This year he received the long expected NBTHK Chairman's prize. Again, this year's sukashi technique is excellent, and these two years of continuous awards

are appropriate. We are expecting more excellent examples of his workmanship in the future.

This year Kawashima become 68, and he started exhibiting his work in Showa 61 (1973). In Heisei 16 (2005), he received the Doryoku-sho (prize for hard work). In Heisei 18 and 19 (2007 and 2008) he also received the Doryoku-sho, and in Heisei 20, and 21 (2009 and 2010) he received Yu-shu-sho (excellent work prize). As I mentioned in the beginning, last year he received the Kunzan-sho, and this year he received the highest award, or the NBTHK Chairman's prize. His long period of steady work is finally bearing fruit, and this effort shows the essence of Kawashima's work.

The kanji character sukashi technique shows excellent work, and the skill and nikudori (volume) elements are far better than other smiths' work. The workmanship reminds us of the words "conscientious" and "working earnestly", and shows excellent skillful work.

This work will remain for posterity, and in the future people will admire this as a master work.

People will remember this work as a very suitable work to receive the NBTHK Chairman's award.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 713

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 713 issue Shijo Kantei To is July 5, 2016. 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 July 5, 2016 will be accepted. If there are sword smiths with the same name in different schools, please write the school or prefecture, and if the sword smith was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

Information:

Type: katana

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5 bu 6 rin (74.4 cm)

Sori: 4 bu 5 rin (1.4 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 5 rin (3.2 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 4 bu 5 rin (4.4 cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 7 sun 4 bu (22.35 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, wide shape, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a shallow sori, the blade is thick, there is a long chu-kissaki, rich hiraniku, and this is a heavy katana. The jihada is a tight ko-itame mixed with nagare hada. There are dense ji-nie and chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In places, there are small yubashiri at the top of the hamon, and these become nijuba. There are frequent ashi, thick nie mixed with ara-nie, deep and tight alterations in the nioiguchi, a bright and clear nioiguchi, thick nie-suji, and frequent sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is a narrow iriyamagata. The yasurime are katte-sagari, and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote side, under the habaki on the mune edge there is a mon, and under this on the mune side there is a long kanji signature.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For May

The swords discussed below were shown in the May 2016, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: May 14, 2016 (2nd Saturday of May)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Kantei To No. 1: katana

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Katsumitsu

Meio 2 nen(1493) 8 gatsu bi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 2 bu

Sori: 9 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; some places in the upper part are mixed with itame hada. There are fine ji-nie, and straight shaped (bo) utsuri.

Hamon: based on chu-suguha, and mixed with ko-gumome and square gunome. There are ashi, nioiguchi type konie, fine sunagashi and kinsuji.

Boshi: wide yakiba with a small midare pattern; tip is round and there is a return.

Horimono: both the omote and ura at the koshimoto have horimo; the omote is a kurikara, and the ura is a five bonji kasane-bori.

This katana has a standard length, the tip has sori, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The shinogi-ji is slightly angled, and there is a slightly high shinogi. The boshi yakiba is wide compared with the katana's hamon width, and from these characteristics you can judge this as an uchigatana made after the mid-Muromachi period.

The Jihada is a tight ko-itame, there is a refined jihada, and both the jihada and hamon are bright and clear. From this you can imagine that this is highly skilled work, and many people looked at this as Sue-Bizen work. Of particular note, on the omote side, the Kurikara horimono at the koshimoto is characteristic, and this confirms this as osafune school work. From the old form "Shin, Gyo, So", the horimono is gyo style, and stylized and does not show a smoothly moving composition. The Ryu head is precisely horizontal, and the tip of the ken is carried in the mouth, and this unique horimono style is a strong characteristic point of the school. Because this is suguha work, some people voted for Kiyomitsu. Usually Kiyomitsu's jihada are a little different from this. His jihada have a slightly visible hada, and many of them are less refined. His hamon have more strong nie and soft yo, and his jihada and hamon are different from this.

If look for the same kind of horimono, this is work from a limited time period around Bunmei 10 (1479) to the Eisho (1504-20) period, a period of about thirty years. The active smiths during this period can be narrowed down, and includes smiths such as Katsumitsu, Munemitsu, Tadamitsu, or Sukesada (Hikobejo and Yosou-zae-mon-no-jo). Kiyomitsu's active period was after the Tenmon (1532-54) period, and in view of this his name would not be a good choice.

Also, there are some exceptions to the horimono pattern, showing a tail of the ryu (dragon) coiled around the Sanko-tsuka. After the Bunki (1501-03) period we know of three examples, and before this period we have just are two examples like this katana.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mei: ju Higashi no Eizan Shinobugaoka hotori (Ueno area) Nakasone Okisato
saku
Enpo 2 nen (1674) 6 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun

Sori: slightly over 6 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada; some places are mixed with itame hada. There are thick dense ji-nie and frequent fine chikei.

Hamon: small yakidashi at the moto, and above this a ko-notare hamon mixed with ko-gunome, and gunome. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, thick even fine ha-nie, and some sunagashi.

Boshi: yakikomi at the yokote; straight and with a komaru.

The katana's sori is not too shallow, the widths at the moto and saki are a little different, and there is a short chu-kissaki. The shinogi-ji's masame hada is obvious, and also fine and tight, and from these details, we can judge this as Kanbun period work, and specifically as Edo Shinto work. The jihada has thick dense ji-nie frequent chikei, and a tight refined ko-itame hada. The hamon has a short yakidashi at the moto, and above it, a continuous gunome pattern called "Juzuba". There are thick ashi everywhere, and the yokote area has yakikomi, and these are Kotetsu's characteristic points.

Also, only the moto area has a soft appearing jihada, and this looks like his characteristic "teko-tetsu". More than anything you can recognize his specific characteristics such as the refined jihada, and because of the bright hamon, clear jihada and hamon you can judge this as Kotetsu's work. In his early work called the Hane-tora period, his yakidashi are long. The hamon are mainly composed of groups of large and small gunome called Hyotan-ba, and these are distinctive. In voting, some people wrote this was "Hako tora" work.

The katana shows Kotetsu's characteristic points very well, and a majority of people voted for the correct answer in the first vote. Because for Kotetsu, the sori is a little large, some people voted for same school's Okimasa. If it were Okimasa's work, his jihada's rough nioiguchi would stand out. Because of the condition of the nie and clarity of the jihada and hamon, this is not like Okimasa's work. The second mekugi-ana is a "kesho-ana", often seen in Okisato's work. The hole shape looked at from the side is similar to a vase shape, and is called a "tsubo-ana". Beside this, there are several other shapes seen such as kiku-ana, kake-kawara-ana and mayu-ana.

Kantei To No 3: naginata naoshi katana

Mumei: Katayama Ichimonji

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume, and some nagare hada. There are midare utsuri; some parts of the hada are straight.

Hamon: ko-choji type hamon mixed with ko-gunome; the bottom half on the omote and ura have a high yakiba with large choji midare. The entire hamon has frequent ashi, and a nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi; on the omote there is a small return; the ura is almost yakizume, and both sides have small hakihake.

The katana has dark and pale clear contrasting utsuri, and from this you can judge this as Bizen work. The entire hamon is small or narrow, but the lower half on the omote and ura have a high yakiba, and a variable gorgeous hamon, and from these features you can judge this as Ichimonji work. Among the Ichimonji school, smiths famous for their primarily choji hamon are Yoshifusa, Sukezane, and Norifusa, and Yoshifusa and Sukezane have a reputation for high choji midare hamon.

Among these two, Yoshifusa is known for gorgeous work. His choji hamon clusters have large and small vertical variations, and some places contain “fukuro-choji” which are oblong and square shaped choji. Sukezane’s hamon are called “Kamakura Ichimonji”, and have a dense nioiguchi, prominent nie, and the entire hamon produces a strong impression, and the jihada and hamon feel powerful. However compared with these two smiths, Norifusa’s hamon are smaller and contain saka-ashi.

Kantei To No 4: katana

Mei: Satsuma yo-shi Motohira
Tenmei san kibo (1783) hattuke

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 3.5 bu

Sori: 3.5 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with itame and mokume hada. There are thick dense ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with gunome, ko-gunome and togariba. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, frequent thick and uneven rough nie, some sunagashi; some places have thick kinsuji.

Boshi: straight, and the tip has yaki-kuzure and hakikake.

Usually, in this period many Satsuma blades emphasized the sori on the lower half of the blade. This blade does not have much sori and so this feature is difficult to judge from the shape. But looking at the hamon, there are frequent thick large nie, and some parts around the top of the hamon have sharp nie also. This is not much, but there is also a twisted looking kinsuji called “Satsuma’s imozuru”, and from this, it is possible to judge this as Satsuma work.

At this time period, two active sword masters were the smiths Motohira and Masayuki. This jihada does not show Masayuki’s characteristic whitish tansetu (forge welded) lines, but instead, we see Motohira’s characteristic tight ko-itame and moist appearing jihada. This is a gentle work for Motohira, but around the yakidashi area the nioiguchi is not too wide when compared with the upper part,

and a tight nioiguchi is his characteristic point. Many of Masayuki's works are wider than this, with a large kissaki and dynamic shape. Motohira's work are a little less wide and have a longer chu-kissaki. They show mainly standard shapes, and this katana shows these characteristics.

In Meiwa (1764-71) and An-ei (1772-80) to Tenmei (1781-88), Motohira's early works often have a shallow sori like Kanbun Shinto blades, just like this one, and the hamon are more gentle than the usual ones.

Some people voted for same area's most prominent smith Mondo-no-sho Masakiyo. His hamon have a nioiguchi which has wide and narrow stretches, his nie are strong, and in some places at the top of the hamon there are prominent hataraki such as yubashiri and tobiyaki, and the entire hamon is more active than this example.

Kantei To No 5: katana

Gakumei: Masatsune

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly less than 8 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: on the omote and ura at the koshimoto it is primarily a choji type hamon mixed with ko-gunome. On the ura there are prominent large choji clusters. Above this there is a suguha style hamon mixed with ko-midare and ko-choji, and the entire hamon is high. There are ashi, yo, and frequent nie.

Boshi: straight and with a komaru.

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

This is a Koto Masatune katana with a gakumei. It is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki and a dynamic shape. The omote and ura at the koshimoto have active midare hamon. From these details, many people voted for the next era's mid-Kamakura period work, such as Mitsutada, Nagamitsu, Kunimune, and Moriie. But if it were these smiths' work, many of them made hamon which were composed entirely of gunome or choji, with a very active and gorgeous appearance and people need to remember this.

In Koto Bizen shapes the widths at the moto and saki are different, the tips are uchizori, and there is a small kissaki, which reminds us of elegant tachi shapes. But sometimes, among the Koto smiths, we see a dynamic tachi shape. Smiths using this style are Masatsune and others such as Sanetsune, Toshitsune, Kanehira, Yoshikane, Kunitsugu and Yukihide.

Tomonari is one of the two master smiths along with Masatsune, and he has a Juyo Bunkazai classified tachi dated during the Katei era (1235-38). Some people are of the opinion that the Masatsune name continued for 3 generations, but certainly more than one generation, and it is possible that some of these Masatsune blades were made after the early Kamakura period. Considering this information, looking at this katana carefully, the large vertical variations in the hamon are seen only in part of the koshimoto, and it is mainly a suguha style mixed with ko-midare and ko-gunome. There are thick even nie from the moto to the saki, and the nie reach to the kissaki, and you can see nie around the nioiguchi. Also, clearly the jifu utsuri's dark areas clearly extend over the shinogi line, and you can see that the jihada and hamon have Ko-Bizen characteristic points. Besides this, there is the tight refined ko-itame hada, wide hamon, straight and elegant round boshi tip and return, and these are Masatsune's characteristic points.

Shijo Kantei To No 711 (in the April, 2016 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 711

is a wakizashi by Nanki Shigekuni dated Genna 8 (1623).

This blade is wide, very long and thick, and with a sori, and from the shape, you can judge this as a Keicho Shinto period wakizashi.

Nanki Shigekuni's hirazukuri wakizashi's prominent saki-zori is a characteristic point. The styles he used were: (1) he continued his grandfather's and his father's Teigai style Yamato Den suguha, (2) some work was modeled after Go Yoshihiro with a Soshu Den notare mixed with gunome, and (3) he often mixed these two styles and this is an example of the third style.

The wakizashi's elements which show a Shoshu Den style are: the jihada is itame mixed with mokume, there is nagare hada, and the hada is visible. There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, a bright and clear jihada, and some oblong shaped mokume hada can be seen. The hamon is based on notare mixed with gunome. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense wide nioiguchi, dense nie, a bright and clear hamon, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. The boshi is midarekomi, sharp, and yakizume. There are frequent hakikake.

These characteristics are the wakizashi's Soshu Den features. Yamato Den characteristics are that the jihada is mixed with nagare-hada, and the habuchi has hotsure, and kuichigaiba.

Nanki has not have many dated blades. Among his Shoshu Den work, like this wakizashi, we see notare style hamon with dense nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, which remind us of Soshu Den work from the Kamakura to Nanbokucho periods, especially of Go. This is classic looking, and at the same time the jihada and hamon are bright and clear, and it is gorgeous work. This kind

of work is seen in his early work in Sunshu-uchi before he moved to Kishu, and often after moved to Kishu, around the Genna period (1615-23). After the period from Genna to Kanei (1624-43), Nanki's Soshu Den work changed following the common Kanei Shinto style, which was modern looking, and the next generation Monju Shigekuni inherited this style. Nanki Shigekuni was a Keicho Shinto smith and a first class master smith, and displayed a high level of skill. Among his works, this Sunshu-uchi blade and the Soshu Den work around the Genna period are often excellent masterpieces.

Unfortunately, sometimes today mumei swords which appear to be Nanki's work from this period receive papers designating them as high ranking Soshu Den smiths. This confirms the skill shown in Nanki's classic appearing work. Maybe Shigekuni is unhappily smiling in the other world.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai