

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 718
November, 2016

Meito Kansho
Examination of Important Swords

Juyo Bijutsu Hin
Important Art Object

Type: Tachi
Mei: Yoshimoto

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 8 bu (75.4 cm)
Sori: 8 bu 1 rin (2.45 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)
Sakihaba: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)
Kissaki length: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)
Nakago length: 5 sun 7 bu 9 rin (17.55 cm)
Nakago sori: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. It has a standard thickness; there is a large koshizori with funbari and there is a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed itame, and there is some mokume hada. There are ji-nie, some chikei, and midare-utsuri. The hamon is ko-midare and ko-notare with choji mixed with ko-gunome and square shaped gunome. The hamon's vertical alterations are not prominent, and there is a relatively small hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, the hamon is a nioiguchi hamon; there are some uneven ko-nie, some tobiyaki, and some prominent kinsuji. At the koshimoto there is very clear mizukage shaped utsuri which is close to the yakiba, and the entire hamon has a dense, bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi on the omote is suguha, and on the the ura it is midarekomi. Both boshi are round and have a return. The omote tip is niju-ba. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is a very shallow ha-agari kurijiri and the yasurime

are suji-chigai. There are two mekugi-ana, and on the omote side above the mekugi ana, there is a slightly large two kanji signature inscribed toward the mune edge.

The Bizen smith Yoshimoto is listed in the sword book "Meikan", and two blades are described as Fukuoka Ichimonji and three blades described as Osafune, but he has fewer than 10 signed blades. Some of his work is listed as being in different schools depending on the sword books where they are listed, and it is difficult to judge which school he belonged to. Today, there is no clear evidence that he was an Osafune school smith. However, there are two blades listed as Fukuoka Ichimonji work, one from around Ryakunin (1238-9), and another is listed as being by Yoshifusa's son (i.e. Yoshimoto) around the Shogen (1259-60) period. Like much of the school's work classified as Juyo Token, many of his signed blades have a small hamon and do not have gorgeous active hamon, and this supposed to represent his characteric hamon. All his signatures contain only two kanji written in a slightly large size, and located toward the mune edge. His kanji are not all the same style, and in some of them the "yoshi" kanji's right side is lower than the left side (it appears tilted), and this is one of his characteristic points.

From this tachi's shape, workmanship, and utsuri, this seems to be his later work. On his father Yoshifusa's masterpiece work, you can see a gorgeous high choji hamon like that on the "Okada-giri". Yoshimoto has a wide hamon style, but today we see more small narrow hamon. Among these, he has some suguha hamon. On this tachi, some parts of the jihada are well forged and refined and the hada looks almost like ko-itame hada. In the hamon, there are frequent vertical variations. There is a nioiguchi which appears soft, worn, and delicate. There are also abundant hataraki such as ashi and yo. Beside these details, there are kinsuji in some places near the tip on the omote and ura, and this produces a dynamic feeling for the hamon. On the omote side there are more frequent nie, although the nie are weak, but with shape of the midare hamon, this produces an appearance of work fitting between the Bizen Den and Shoshu Den styles. This is a very dynamic work and very special. There is a dignified and sophisticated ubu tachi shape, the tip has sori, there is abundant hamon hataraki, and a magnificent feeling. The simple signature reflects the period and this is optimal. In addition to the fact that this is a rare Yoshimoto signed tachi, this is a fine example and important work. The mizukage shaped utsuri at the koshimoto is very clear, and on the omote it is close to the yakiba. This kind of utsuri is seen sometimes around the mid-Kamakura period in Bizen work. The same type of utsuri is seen in the Masatsune Juyo Bunkazai tachi owned by the NBTHK, in the Yoshikane Juyo Bunkazai tachi owned by the Hayashibara Museum, in the Toshitsune Juyo Bijitsu Hin tachi owned by the Sano museum, and in a Tadashige blade classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

No.718 Tosogu Kanshou Tokubetsu Juyo Tosogu

Yuri zu (carp design) soroi (set) kanagu:

Large tsuba, mei: Tanso Yoshitsugu sen

Small tsuba, mei: Sonobe Yoshitsugu sen

Daisho fuchi-kashishira and kozuka, mei: Sonobe Yoshitsugu with kao

Daisho menuki, wari-kibata-mei : Yoshitsugu

Edo period toso kinko are classified as: (1) Bakufu okakae smiths (those who work for the Shogun) like Goto, (2) machibori smiths (town craftsmen) in Edo such as the Yokoya school, Nara school, and the Kyoto Otsuki school, and (3) country smiths such as those from Mito, Shonai, Owari, Higo, and Satsuma. After the mid-Edo period many very characteristic machibori and country kinko smiths appeared, and these became prominent as the mainline kinko Goto family was until then. But the Goto family maintained their important prestigious position as important Bakufu (shogunate) smiths. The Goto family had a main family and branch families, and besides Goto smiths, they produced many master smiths such as Tanaka, Tobar, Miyata, Nomura, and Morito.

Sonobe Yoshitsugu is the Goto school Tanaka Yoshiaki's student. His work is mainly based solidly on the Goto style, but sometimes followed current machibori trends. This set of kanagu are all based on a carp design. The ground is shakudo nanako, and moving water, water plants and carp are carved in sukidashi-takabori and yo-bori styles. A fine nanako surface produces a tense atmosphere for the scene. The swimming carp wriggles his body, and is carved with takabori and yo-bori techniques, and the chisel strokes forming each scale are very good.

This is solidly based on the Goto style, but not dominated by his teacher's style, and there is a more free composition, and this is one of his master works.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 718

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 718 issue Shijo Kantei To is December 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 December 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 3 sun 4.5 bu (71.05 cm)

Sori: slightly over 3 bu (1.0cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 06 rin (3.2 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 5 bu (19.7 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a very shallow sori with a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight itame, but the hada is visible. There are thick dense ji-nie and fine chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are frequent ashi and yo, a slightly dense nioiguchi, dense nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bohi with maru-dome. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is a narrow and ha-agari kuri-jiri. The yasurime are osuji-chigai and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, towards the mune edge, there is a long kanji signature.

This smith is well known for originating this type of katana hamon.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For October 2016

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

Meeting Date: October 8, 2016 (2nd Saturday of October)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kurotaki Tatsuya

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mumei: Masatsune

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 7.5 bu

Sori: 4.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame and some o-hada. There are ji-nie, chikei, and jifu-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha with ko-choji midare mixed with ko-midare, some places have large clusters of choji hamon and there are square shaped gunome. There are frequent ashi and yo, abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi and yakizume.

This is a Ko-Bizen Masatsune tachi classified as Juyo Bijutsu Hin in Showa 16 (1941). This is the Tokugawa Shogun family's tachi. The entire shape is narrow, there is funbari at the habaki-moto, koshizori, the tip is uchizori, there is a small kissaki and a elegant tachi shape. From the shape, you can judge this as work from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period.

The jihada is tight ko-itame, there are ji-nie and chikei, and the entire jihada is bright and refined. The jifu utsuri's dark area extends over the shinogi line. Also from the mune to the shinogi-ji, there are dark areas call kuro (black)-utsuri which is a very unique type of utsuri. From this type of utsuri, we would judge this as work from a period no later than the early Kamakura period.

Looking at the hamon, there are prominent vertical alterations, square shaped gunome, and large clusters of choji, and these elements are mixed together. From the hamon's characteristics, some people voted for Yoshifusa instead of Ko-Bizen work. But the shape and the utsuri shows that this is an older tachi. The komidare hamon with dense nie suggests that you can judge this as Ko-Bizen work.

Therefore, if you look at this as Ko-Bizen work, it is a sufficient answer.

Masatsune's characteristic points are the tight ko-itame refined jihada, and some parts of the hamon show a prominent unique ko-choji pattern.

Kantei To No. 2: tanto

Mei: Bizen Osafune Kanemitsu

Enbun 5 nen (1360) 3 gatsu bi

Length: 8 sun 2.5 bu

Sori; slightly less than 1 bu

Design: hira-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame; there are dense ji-nie, chikei, and pale bo-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha based hamon mixed with square shaped gunome, kataochi-gunome, and ko-gunome; the upper part of the hamon is wider; there are saka-ashi, and a continuous pattern.

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

First, please carefully observe the tanto's shape. The first impression is that this is not a large tanto, but if you look carefully, you can see that there is a little sori. Also it is thin, and from this you can judge this as a Nambokucho shape. Next, look at the jitetsu and hamon. The jitetsu is a tight refined and bright itame. There is bo-utsuri near the hamon, and near the mune there is midare-utsuri. The hamon has saka-ashi, kaku (square)-gunome, and kataochi gunome. There is a nioiguchi with ko-nie, from these characteristics, of course, you can imagine this is Bizen work. From the hamon characteristics, you can think this work by Kagemitsu, Kanemitsu or one of their school's smiths. Again, if you look at the shape carefully, this is a Nambokucho period shape, and from this you can vote for Kanemitsu.

If it were Kagemitsu's work, there would be dense ji-nie and fine chikei, and the jihada would be a well forged ko-itame, and fine even among the Osafune school's very refined jitetsu. If it were Tomomitsu's work, the hamon would be a notare or prominent kaku-gunome. If it were by Masamitsu, the hamon is usually a small or narrow Kosori style.

We put the tanto here for a comparison with the No.4 Tomomitsu tanto. Comparing the No. 2 and No. 4 tanto with mainstream Osafune school work, you can recognize differences in ability between the leader and a student. From these two tanto, please learn to recognize the differences in each jigane.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Dewa Daijo Fujiwara Kunimichi

Length: slightly less 2 shaku 6 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly less 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; the hada is visible in some places. There are dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: based on a shallow notare; mixed with gunome, togariba, yahazu choji. There are high and low vertical alterations. There are some tobiyaki, ashi, yo, and some saka-ashi. There are frequent nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: shallow notare; the tip is togari-like (sharp); there is a komaru and return.

Dewa-daijo Kunimichi's dated blades are seen from the Keicho (1596-1614) to Kanbun (1661-72) periods. As far as we know today, his active period extended over 50 years. Because of this, his blades are seen with Keicho Shinto to Kanbun Shinto shapes. From his signature styles, this katana is supposed to have been made during the Meireki period (1655-57) or somewhat earlier or later, but the shape is a Kambun Shinto shape.

The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, the hada is visible and called a zanguri (rough) jihada. The hamon is ko-notare mixed with gunome, togariba, and yahazu choji. The boshi is a shallow notare, and the tip is sharp and called a Sanpin-boshi. From these characteristics, you can vote for Dewa-daijo Kunimichi.

If this were the Mishina school smith Masatoshi, who is close style to Kunimichi, in his hamon, the tops of the hamon elements are close to each other, and the inside of the hamon has ball-like areas which appear unhardened or like a type of yo. This Kunimichi katana's hamon in some places is a midare hamon with saka-ashi, and this is supposed to be one of the characteristic points used to judge this as Kunimichi work.

In voting, some people voted for Iga-no-kami Kinmichi. If it were his work, the jihada would be a prominent nagare-hada, and the hamon has nie-kuzure, which reminds us of sudare-ba. His boshi are not a typical sanpin-boshi which is the katana boshi present on this sword. Kinmichi's boshi have strong hakikake and nie-kuzure.

Kantei To No 4: tanto

Mei: Bizen Osafune Tomomitsu
Koan gan-nen (1361) 7 gatsu bi

Length: 8 sun 3.5 bu

Sori: very slight

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume hada; the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, and under the mune machi, there is clear bo-utsuri.

Hamon: ko-notare with square shaped gunome mixed with gunome. There are nioiguchi-like ko-nie, and along with the top of the hamon in some places there are small tobiyaki.

Boshi: the omote is midarekomi with a slightly sharp point; the ura is straight with a komaru and return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are katana hi carved through the nakago.

This blade is wide and thin with a very shallow sori, and from the shape, we would judge it as a Nambokucho period tanto. Looking at the jihada, there are clear bo-

utsuri. The ko-notare hamon has square shaped gunome mixed with kataochi gunome. From the shape, you can judge the period, and from the jihada and the hamon, you can imagine this is Kanemitsu school work, and this would be a reasonable judgement.

Considering the No. 2 Kanemitsu tanto above, look at this jihada and the hamon. Looking at the jihada carefully, we see the hada is visible and the color is not as bright as Kanemitsu's. Comparing this with the No. 2 Kanemitsu tanto's refined jihada, you can see a difference. The same observations can be made for the hamon. Tomomitsu's midare hamon is uneven, in some places, the tops of the gunome are too long, and the hamon composition is different. Also, the clarity of the nioiguchi is not as good.

Usually, Tomomitsu's characteristic hamon is a notare, but this is the same as the No. 2 Kanemitsu tanto with a square gunome hamon. The two smiths have an age difference of only one year and 4 months, and this tanto is almost same length as the Kanemitsu tanto.

Tomomitsu is a Kanemitsu school skillful master smith. But when you compare the two smiths, you can see Kanemitsu's ability seems to rank higher than Tomomitsu's.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Bizen no suke Fujiwara Munetsugu
Bunroku 4 nen (1863) 2 gatsu bi
Tenka Muteki (invincibility on earth)

Kiritsuke mei:

Kiri-musufu ha no shita wa jigoku-nari, mi wo sutete koso ukabu-se mo ari.
(under the cutting edge is death: but try to enter this space, because if nothing is ventured, nothing will be gained.)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: 4. 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame, but the hada is barely visible; there are dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: based on gunome-choji mixed with ko-choji; there are small up and down vertical alterations. There are long ashi, a bright nioiguchi, and nioiguchi type ko-nie.

Boshi: notarekomi with a komaru and return.

This is a wide, thick, heavy blade with a dynamic katana shape. From the shape, you can judge this as Bakamatsu period work (1800-1868). The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and is almost muji (i.e. there is almost no visible hada). The hamon is based on round top gunome and choji, and is a continuous pattern, and from this, it is not difficult to vote for Koyama Munetsugu.

In this period, besides Munetsugu, other smiths working with Bizen Den hamon were Suishinshi Masahide and Taikei Naotane. But neither Masahide nor Naotane hamon are ever this regular.

Many examples of this type of hamon are seen in the work of Munetugu, his school's students, and his actual teacher Chounsai Tsunatoshi. Many of Tsunatoshi's works have a relatively large sori, funbari at the koshimoto, a tachi type shape, and a short yakidashi at the moto.

This kind of dynamic shape, and a hamon without a yakidashi is seen in the work of Munetsugu and his school's smiths.

Shijo Kantei To No 716 (in the September, 2016 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 716 in the September issue is a tachi by Ko-Ichimonji Sadazane.

This tachi is narrow, the widths at the moto and saki are different, and although it is suriage it has a large koshizori. The tip is uchizori with a small kissaki, and from this you can judge this as a tachi from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period.

From this period, we have examples today, and each area and school had styles in common, such as a narrow tachi shape like this one with a classic ko-midare type hamon.

The hints pointed out that the school this smith belonged to had jihada with abundant jifu-utsuri. In this period, the schools with this characteristic type of utsuri were Bizen schools such as Ko-Bizen and Ko-Ichimonji, and Ko-Aoe and Ko-Hoki.

The jihada's color is bright, the hamon has dense ha-nie, a bright nioiguchi, and shows sophisticated work. These details suggest the work is either Ko-Bizen or Ko-Ichimonji.

In the same period, the old Kyoto schools were known to be as sophisticated as Bizen, however, many of their works have bo-utsuri, and thus do not match the hints.

Sadazane is classified as a Ko-Ichimonji smith. However, his work has strong ha-nie and his jihada utsuri are not prominent. For a Ko-Ichimonji smith, his works are classic, and more notable than Ko-Bizen work.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Ko-Bizen smiths such as Tomonari, Masatsune and Kanehira, and Ko-Ichimonji smiths such as Norimune, Sukemune and Muneyoshi.

The Ko-Bizen and the Ko-Ichimonji styles are very similar to each other, and all of these smiths' names are treated as correct answers at this time.

The next page's hamon oshigata are: from the left, from the No.705 (October, Heisei 27 (2015)) issue's Shijo Kanteito tachi by Tomonari classified as Juyo Bijutsu Hin. Next is this Sadazane tachi, and the third tachi is a Ko-Ichimonji Sanenori tachi classified as Juyo Bijtsu Hin (all are full size).

Tomonari is known to produce very classic hamon among the Ko-Bizen smiths. However, he produced all kinds of styles, and it is thought there were several generations using the same name.

The Juyo Bijutsu Hin Tomonari tachi's hamon is supposed to be his original classic appearing work. That hamon is more intricate and irregular than Sadazane's usual Ko-Bizen style hamon. At the same time, the hamon has a more classic and sophisticated look.

The next oshigata showing Sadazane's hamon is often seen in Ko-Bizen work, which is mainly a suguha hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-midare.

The third Sanenori hamon is compared with the average Ko-Bizen hamon and has more vertical alterations, and the choji-gunome clusters are a little larger and rounder than Sadazane's. Compared to the average Ko-Bizen sword, this Sanenori hamon is a little more gorgeous, has more vertical variations, and progresses towards a Ko-Ichimonji style.

Later in the period, the tachi shape becomes wider, and at the same time, the hamon show a gorgeous large choji midare style, and this style progresses in the Fukuoka Ichimonji school. Of course these three blades have no dates on them, and we can not say exactly which is older. We are guessing that Ko-Bizen and Ko-Ichimonji styles are shown going from the left to the right.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai