

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 724
May, 2017

Meito Kansho
Examination of Important Swords

Juyo Bunkazai
Important cultural property

Type: Tachi
Owner: Hayashibara Museum
Mei: Bishu ju Takamitsu saku
Genkyo 22 nen, 7 gatsu bi

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 5 bu 4 rin (77.4 cm)
Sori: 9 bu 4 rin (2.85 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)
Sakihaba: 4 bu 6 rin (1.4 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)
Kissaki length: 6 bu 5 rin (1.95 cm)
Nakago length: 5 sun 9 bu 4 rin (18.0 cm)
Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 rin)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a narrow width, and a large difference in the widths at the moto and saki. There is a large koshi-sori with funbari, and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, there is some nagare jihada, the entire jihada is well forged, and there is a fine visible jihada. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, very clear mizukage type utsuri at the koshimoto which almost looks like the yakiba, and a continuous pale jifu type utsuri. The hamon is chu-suguha mixed with ko-gunome and ko-notare. There are frequent ashi and yo, the hamon has a nioiguchi, there are dense ha-nie, some fine sunagashi, kinsuji, and a tight nioiguchi around the center. The entire hamon is gentle and clear. The boshi on the omote is straight with an o-maru, and the boshi on the the ura is yakizume. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is almost kiri-jiri. The yasurime are filed slightly deep or strongly and are katte-sagari, and there is

one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, along the center there is a long signature made with a fine chisel, and the ura side has a date located slightly towards the mune side.

According to the Engishiki, a book of laws compiled in the early half of the Heian period, Bingo Kuni contributed goods, such as white silk, thread, salt, and hoes for farming, and iron. Later these eight prefectures in Bingo province were allowed to contribute hoes and iron instead of silk and thread. Judging from this, since early historical times, they produced a lot of iron, the same as other the other Chugoku prefecture areas. Geographically, the next prefecture to the east is Bitchu, and to the north, is Hoki. This was supposed to be a good location for sword making, so it is understandable there are many signed blades available since the end of the Kamakura period, and especially during the Muromachi period.

In Bingo, the sword making schools are the Mihara and the Hokke Ichijo schools, and besides these, the Tatsufusa, Goami, and Kura names are well known. The pioneer sword makers are the famous Kokubunji Sukekuni and Yoshitsuna (Bishu Bajo Yoshitsuna dated Gentoku 3 (1331)). Sukekuni's earliest signed blade is from Genkyo 3 (1323), and this tachi is one of oldest works known after Sukekuni's time and is from the same period as Bizen Kagemitsu.

There is no documentary evidence, but in the "Nihonto Meikan", it is said that Takamitsu lived in Kokubunji, Yasukuni, Tojo (Tojo seems to be a town), and the the Kozan Oshigata lists a Sukekuni mei as "Bingo Kuni Yasukuni Tojo Sukekuni". Also, according to a recent study, Yoshitsune's Bajo location was in Yasukuni County. Yasukuni is one of the 14 oldest county names in Bingo. It is located on the east side, and is next to Bitchu Kuni, and so it is not unreasonable to think that these three smiths may have had some kind of contact with each other.

This tachi is a little narrow and has a large koshizori. There is funbari and an elegant tachi shape. The kissaki is small, and there seems to be little alteration from its original shape. The hamon's width around the monouchi is not too narrow, and this supposed to be a characteristic shape in this period. Another shape seen in this period is wider with a longer kissaki. This tachi's shape has a slightly wide shinogi-ji, and a high shinogi, similar to the Yamato school's shape. The jihada is itame, and the fine visible hada is prominent, and becomes a chirimen hada, which is a characteristic of the neighboring Aoe school. The hamon has a lot of hataraki such as ashi, yo, sunagashi, and kinsuji, and the hamon is almost completely defined by a soft nioiguchi, which is a Bizen school characteristic. From this, our former teacher Kunzan used say it has details in common with the Unrui school.

The nakago signature is similar to what we see for the other Bingo smiths until the Nambokucho period, including the Mihara smiths. The signature is almost on the center, and signed with "Bishu ju", and under this is the smith's name. The tachi has a date and this is a very valuable material to study for such a rare smith and an example of early Bingo school work.

On the ura side along the center, there is a deep scratch, and this tells us this blade was actually used in a battle. This sword has endured almost 700 years now

without any rust or corrosion, and is the only example of Takamitsu's work left today, so consequently, it is an important work.

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

No.723 Tosogu Kanshou Juyo Tosogu

Hachi zu (bee design) kogai

Mumei: Sojo

**Accompanied by a Koryo origami stating a price: Daikin (price) 1 mai
2 ryo**

The Goto family was prosperous for 17 generations from the mid-Muromachi period to the end of the Edo period. The first three generations, the founder Yujo, the Nidai Sojo, and the Sandai Joshin's works are called the kami-sandai (the first three generations of the family) and people value these works very highly.

Compared with the Shodai Yujo's contrast of high mountains to low valleys with his excellent carving techniques, and the Sandai Joshin's rich nikuoki (high volume) work, this kogai's smith's, the Nidai Sojo, work shows a more gentle carving technique and a highly classical refined style. The kogai's tsukurikomi (carving technique) and kamon (family crest) carvings are round, and show a soft carving style, and this illustrates his characteristic style very well.

The paper which accompanies the kogai is by Renjo Koryo (the 11th generation Goto) and contains an unusual word "warabite kin maki". This term seems to mean that he made many nanako dots, like a wide wrapping, from the front to the back, on this kogai. Sometimes the nanako background goes from the top surface and around and over the mimi or rim or side areas. Today people call this style "maki koboshi" or "maki chirashi", and among the Goto family works, this is an unusual nanako technique. This special technique provides support for this highly classic feeling.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 724

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 724 issue Shijo Kantei To is June 5, 2017. 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 June 5, 2017 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 8 bu (72.11 cm)

Sori: 5.5 bu (1.67 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 6 rin (3.5 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 7 bu (20.3 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, and which is slightly wide. The widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The sori is slightly large, and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame hada. There are thick dense jinie, fine chikei and a unique jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie, a bright and clear hamon, and kinsuji and fine sunagashi. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is iri-yamagata. The yasurime are kate-sagari and there is one mekugi ana. On the ura side, towards the mune edge, there is a long kanji signature. The omote has a date.

The smith does not have many kate-sagari yasurime: usually his yasurime are kiri.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For April, 2017

The swords discussed below were shown in the April 2017, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers and discusses the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: April 8, 2017 (2nd Saturday of April)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Tanaka Hiroko

Kantei To No. 1: wakizashi

Mei: Bizen kuni Osafune Kanemitsu

Jowa 3 nen (1347) 12 gatsu bi

Length: 1 shaku 7 sun 5 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: hira-zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and the hada is slightly visible.

There are frequent ji-nie, chikei, and utsuri close to the mune edge.

Hamon: based on a notare hamon mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji. There are ashi, some yo, frequent nie, yubashiri, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: notarekomi; the tip has hakikake; on the omote the tip is sharp; on the ura, the tip is round and somewhat large, and there is a return.

Horimono: on the omote there is a long bonji and harami-ryu kurikara (pregnant dragon climbing up a sword); on the ura there is a long bonji, and under the bonji, a suken carved through the nakago.

The wakizashi is wide, long, and thin, and from the shape, you can judge this as Nambokucho period work. A long hirazukuri wakizashi is very rare in this period and this is almost an example of an uchigatana. The itame jihada is slightly visible, there are frequent ji-nie, fine chikei, and midare utsuri. The notare type hamon has frequent nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. This is a Bizen Den plus Soshu Den style and is supposed to be Soden-Bizen work. In particular, from the gentle notare hamon, you could look at this as a work by Kanemitsu.

Kanemitsu's early work is based on kataochi-gunome hamon which he inherited from his father Kagemitsu's style. Later, around the Jowa to Kano period (1345-1351), it is known that his hamon were based on notare. From the date, this is known as a his earliest notare hamon work, and is one of Kanemitsu's masterpieces and is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin. The harami-ryu kurikara horimono is not in Nagamitsu's style, but more likely is a characteristic Osafune mainstream style.

In voting some people voted for Morimitsu. Morimitsu has hirazukuri uchigatana with notare hamon similar to this, and that answer is understandable. But Morimitsu's notare hamon and the gunome waves closer to each other when compared with Kanemitsu's hamon. Also, his kurikara horimono sanko (vajra hilt) is more round, and the outer edges of the round parts of the hilt are longer than center, and these details are different from Kanemitsu's characteristics.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Bishu Osafune Morimitsu
Oei 12 nen (1405) 8 gatsu bi

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 7 bu

Sori: 8.5 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: open valley gunome mixed with choji and gunome. There are ashi, yo, a nioiguchi with ko-nie, yubashiri, and kinsuji.

Boshi: midarekomi with a komaru.

This is a Tokubetsu Juyo Token Oei Bizen Morimitsu tachi.

The width is standard, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori, from this you can imagine this is a Kamakura period tachi. Looking carefully, the tip has sori when compared with Kamakura period work, and it is thick, and from this, you can understand it is early Muromachi period work. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and there is utsuri. The hamon has open valleys and gunome mixed with choji and there is a nioiguchi. The jihada and the hamon show the characteristic Oei Bizen style very well.

Morimitsu is one of Oei Bizen's best two master smiths along with Yasumitsu. Generally, the two smiths' different characteristics are: Morimitsu's hamon have a larger size midare and round top choji are prominent when compared with Yasumitsu's work. Yasumitsu's hamon have prominent togari, and his midare hamon are smaller.

This tachi's jihada is tighter than Morimitsu's usual work, and the itame and mokume hada is not very visible. The hamon has a high yakiba and a gorgeous midare. The boshi style is called the "center of a candle" and characteristic Oei Bizen details are not prominent, and because of this, some people voted for Sue Bizen smiths such as Sukesada. The number 3 katana below is almost the same size as this one, so please compare them. If this were Sue Bizen work, the

difference would be that the koshizori would not be so large, there would be a large sakizori uchigatana shape, and there would be more strong ha-nie.

Kantei To No 3: katana

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Yosozaemon no jo Sukesada saku
Tenmon 2 2 (means 4) nen (1535) 2 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 2 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: based on open valley gunome, mixed with ko-gunome, togariba, some fukushiki (double or nijuba) hamon; the entire midare hamon has a high yakiba. There are ashi, yo, ko-nie, and the upper half has small tobiyaki.

Boshi: slightly wide yakiba; midarekomi; the tip has a slightly large round shape and there is a return.

This is dated Tenmon 22, and Yosozaemon no jo Sukesada's katana is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin. There is a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The tip has a large sori. From the shape you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi period.

The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and the steel color is bright. The forging is refined, there is midare utsuri, and this is typical Sue Bizen work. The hamon is based on open valley gunome mixed with ko-gunome, togariba, and in some places there are two or three grouped midare. The entire hamon has a beautiful high yakiba with frequent ko-nie, and from this very skillful work, Sukesada's name comes to mind. Yosozaemon no jo Sukesada is an obvious choice, and the majority of people had the correct answer at the first vote.

Some people voted for Katsumitsu. His fukushiki gunome hamon are at the top of the hamon or there is a midare hamon mixed with a choji hamon with more frequent ashi and yo hataraki, and he also has beautiful hamon. Some people voted for a later smith Tatara Nagayuki. This could be looked at as a copy of Sukesada's work. If it were Nagayuki's Sukesada ushimono or copy, his hamon would show continuous large open valleys in the gunome hamon, some places would have togariba, the nioiguchi would be very tight, and his boshi would be midarekomi, with a sharp point and return.

Kantei To No 4: katana

Mei: Kawachi no kami Kunisuke

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 3 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada and the hada is visible: there are thick dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: fist shape choji mixed with gunome and ko-notare. There are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

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

This is a Nidai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke (Naka Kawachi) sword. The width is standard, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a very shallow sori and a short chu-kissaki. From the shape you can judge this as Kanbun Shinto work.

The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are frequent thick dense ji-nie, and typical Osaka Shinto refined forging. The hamon has a yakidashi from the koshimoto towards the tip where the hamon becomes wider, and above this we see his unique fist-shaped choji. In many places, we see Kunisuke's characteristic points, and from this many people voted for the correct answer on the first vote.

Besides the correct answer, some people voted for Tadatsuna, the Kishu Ishido school's Yasuhiro and Hizen sword smiths.

Besides the same style choji hamon, Tadatsuna's choji have long ashi, and there are kinsuji and sunagashi with long sides, and the kinsuji and sunagashi would go across these long choji legs, and this is his characteristic hamon. Yasuhiro's choji hamon are high, and there is a smaller midare hamon. Neither smiths use fist shape choji mixed with gunome and ko-notare and this is a difference between them. If it were a Hizen katana, there would be a somewhat larger sori, the jihada would be a komenuka hada, there are not many yakidashi, and there are no fist shaped choji.

Kantei To No 5: katana

Mei: Shume no kami Ippei Yasuyo with Ichiyo Aoi mon

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with ko-mokume, and the entire hada is a little rough.

There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and a dark colored jihada.

Hamon: suguha style hamon with shallow notare and mixed with ko-gunome.

There are ko-ashi, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie mixed with rough nie and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: wide yakiba; straight with a komaru; the tip has hakikake, and there is a long return.

Yasuyo was active during the mid-Edo period when there was not much of a demand for swords. He studied under his father Yasusada and the Naminohira 58th generation Yamato no kami Yasukuni. In Kyoho 6 (1721), he received permission from the Tokugawa bakufu to use the Ichiyo Aoi mon.

However, 7 years later in Kyoho 13 (1728) Yasuyo passed away, at the age of 49 years. He was representative of the Satsuma Shinto master smiths, but not too many of his blades are available today, and his relatively early death is supposed to be one reason for this.

This katana is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. The blade is thick, has a rich hiraniku, is heavy, and shows Satsuma Shinto characteristic points very well. The jihada is itame hada, the hada is a little rough, there are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and the ji is dark colored. The hamon is suguha with a shallow notare, and there is a dense nioiguchi, dense nie mixed with rough nie (ara-nie), and a bright nioiguchi, and these are Yasuyo's characteristic points. Many people recognized these characteristics, and voted for him.

From the katana's signature and the 馬 ("me") kanji's shape, this is supposed to be Yasuyo's adapted son Yasuari's dai-me (signed for his teacher). Yasuari's characteristic points are supposed to be the jihada and hamon hataraki, such as nie, kinsuji and sunagashi which are more gentle than the usual Yasuyo hataraki.

Some votes were for Inoue Shikai, Nanki Shigekuni and Hizen Tadayoshi, and these smiths were good at making suguha hamon.

Many of Inoue Shinkai's shapes are Kanbun Shinto shapes, his jihada is a tight ko-itame, and there are dense ji-nie and refined forging. His hamon have more dense ji-nie, and many of them are brighter and clearer. Naniki Shigekuni's jihada are itame mixed with nagare hada and mokume. In the case of suguha hamon, his nijuba, hotsure, and kuichigaiba are prominent, and show a Yamato Den type hamon. Hizen smiths such as Tadayoshi have a komenuka hada and a refined jihada, and the hamon show a belt-like shaped suguha; the boshi are komaru following the shape of the fukura and there is a return.

Shijo Kantei To No. 722 (in the March, 2017 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 722 in the March issue is a tachi by Rai Kunitsugu

This tachi has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori with funbari, the tip has sori and there is a chu-kissaki. From the shape you can judge this as being work from the latter half of the Kamakura period to the early Nambokucho period.

The overall shape is a wazori tachi shape, the jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are frequent ji-nie and bo-utsuri, and there is a characteristic Rai hada. The hint about jifu type hada and a unique jihada refers to this. The hamon is a suguha style hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome. There is a bright nioiguchi, ko-nie, and muneyaki at the koshimoto, and these are all Rai school characteristic points. In voting, the majority of people voted for Rai Kunitsugu. Beside Kunitsugu, some people voted for Rai Kunimitsu and Rai Kunitoshi.

There are not many Rai Kunitsugu signed tachi today, and only 10 of them are recognized and the hint refers to this.

Kunitsugu's tachi style reflects his active period around the early half of the Nambokucho period. Primarily his shapes are wide with a chu-kissaki. Other points are that the widths at the moto and saki are different, the kissaki is not too long, and there is a narrow elegant shape.

The hamon is based on a suguha style mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, and there is a bright nioiguchi which is a Rai school traditional suguha style, and the first impression reminds us of Kunitoshi's work.

Beside Kunitoshi, this style shows a strong Soshu Den influence, high and low vertical variations in the ko-notare hamon which also contains with ko-gunome. There are yubashiri, frequent nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi. Other Shoshu Den styles are based on notare, gunome, and choji hamon, and in some places gunome and choji are fused together. Also, there are simple suguha style tachi.

There is the Tokugawa shogun family's Rai Kunitsugu tachi classified as Juyo Bunkazai: the itame-hada becomes a masame style hada, the hamon is suguha style mixed with ko-midare, and there are frequent sunagashi, which is a strong influence from the Yamato Den style. Among Kunitsugu's small number of tachi, there seem to be many styles.

Rai Kunimitsu has a tachi with a style similar to this tachi, and so his name is treated as a correct answer. Usually at the NBTHK shijo kanteito, if we see a Rai Kunitsugu sword, a Rai Kunitoshi answer is not treated as a correct answer. However, because Kunitoshi has a work similar to this one, and only for this time, we accepted the Rai Kunitoshi name as a correct answer.

Among other answers accepted as almost correct answers were Ryokai, Rai Kunisue, and Rai Tomokuni.

Ryokai has narrow shaped tachi, with hamon similar to this suguha style hamon. His jihada are itame mixed with nagare-hada, there are whitish utsuri, and many of his hamon are soft looking.

Rai Kunisue tachi are very rare today. His Juyo Bijutsuhin tachi has a tight ko-itame hada and there are jifu utsuri. The hamon is a suguha style mixed with sakashi, and there is a tight nioiguchi and ko-nie, which reminds us of Bizen Unrui school work.

There are no Rai Tomokuni signed tachi recognized today. Among the Rai school works, even among mumei katana, there are very few blades judged as his work. His accepted mumei katana are a little wider, much of the itame hada is visible, his hamon are a suguha style mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, and there are some strong ha-nie.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

