

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

ISSUE NUMBER 733

Feburary, 2018

Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Jujo Bijutsuhin

Type: Tachi

Mei: Tamenaga

Owner: Mori Kinen Shu-sui museum

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 04 rin (72.85 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 7 rin (2.05 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 4 rin (2.85 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 4 rin (1.95 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 01 rin (3.05 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 8 bu (20.6 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. There is a wide shinogi-haba (width of the shinogi ji) and a standard kasane (thickness). There is a slightly large sori and a chu-kissaki. The kitae is ko-itame hada and the entire jihada is well forged and tight. There are ji-nie and some jifu and prominent dark midare utsuri. The hamon is low or narrow and is ko-choji mixed with ko-gunome, ko-midare and togari style hamon. The entire hamon has vertical variations which are not very prominent. The komidare hamon is a shallow and gentle hamon. There are frequent ashi and yo, and almost the entire hamon is defined by a nioiguchi, there are small tobiyaki, and particularly in the monouchi area there are intermittent nijuba, and there are kinsuji in some areas. The boshi is almost straight, the omote boshi is a maru (circle), the ura is ko-maru, and both sides have a long return. The nakago is suriage and the nakago tip is almost kiri. The old yasurime are o-suji-chigai, and on the ura, the new

yasurime are suji-chigai. There are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side towards the mune edge there is a slightly large two kanji signature made with a fine tagane (chisel).

The Bizen Koku Karakawa school has very few works left so it is difficult to learn much about them. According to the "Meikan", the sword smiths who belonged to the school or who were related to the school are Tameto, Tamenaga, Tamenobu, and Kagesada in Bizen. In Bitchu at the Senoo school, related smiths were Tsuneto and Muneto. Today we have a Tameto blade signed "Bizen koku Karakawa ju Sahyoejo Sugawara Tameto, Bunpo 1 (1317) Hinoto-Mi 3 gatsu hi" which is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin and also a tanto from the same period. Kagesada has a naginata naoshi signed " Bishu Karakawa ju Kagesada saku" and there are tanto and ken dated Genko 2 (1332) and Ryakuo 3 (1340). From these items it appears that their active period was from the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nambokucho period. The Karakawa location today is Nishi Karakawa, Kita-ku, Okayama City or Karakawa Ichiba, which is supposed to be near the Kibitsu shrine (the Bizen Koku Ichinomiya), and this is at the boundary of Bitchu Koku.

Tamenaga is supposed to be Tameto's son and there are very few of his signed works: in fact there are only two, this tachi and another blade which was the 59th Juyo Token blade. His style is same as the school's other smiths. The hamon are based on suguha mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji, and vertical variations are not prominent.

The "Meikan" lists Tsuneto and his son Muneto who were supposed to be active around the Bunei period (1264-75) contemporaneously with earlier period smiths. Tsuneto and Muneto belonged to the Senoo school, and both moved from a neighboring area to Karakawa. Certainly, today the Senoo area is Senoo Minami-ku Okayama city, which is only 4 km south of Karkawa. We can suppose that there were some interactions between Senoo school and Karakawa school. Also they used a relatively large number of gyaku-tagane strokes in their signatures which are chiseled lines forming kanji where the lines are inscribed or written in the reverse of the usual direction. On the Tameto Juyo Bijutsuhin tachi and on this tachi, the yasurime are o-suji chigai. From this and from the period that they worked, it is possible to consider them to be a small group of sword smiths who came from the Bitchu Senoo smiths.

This sword has a very tight ko-itame hada, and the hada pattern almost can't be seen. This is a very refined jihada, and is derived from refined forging. There are clear midare utsuri with dark areas, and they appear like a fine background. The entire hamon has a low yakiba, there is no glamorous or spectacular appearance, but there is a soft nioiguchi which shows delicate shades, and several different types of hamon patterns. Some areas have vertical variations along with frequent ashi and yo, and some areas have kinsuji. Besides the small size hamon, there are many variations and hataraki and we see many interesting points. From the boshi to around the monouchi area there are intermittent niju-ba, and the same

characteristics are seen in Kamakura period work from Yamashiro, Yamato, and often in Sanyodo smiths' work. These characteristics lend a charm to the tachi.

This is a signed Tamenaga tachi, and it is a well made and highly valued work, but also, this is an important tachi to help us study the Karakawa school's work.

At the time this tachi was classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, the owner was the Uwajima clan's Date family's 11th lord, Mr. Date Muneaki. During the Edo period it was supposed to have been the family's ancestral tachi or heirloom.

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

No.733 Tosogu Kanshou

Juyo Tosogu

Yabure Kikko-mon (turtle shell pattern) zu (design) Tsuba

Mei: Nobuie

From ancient times, people used to say that Nobuie's tsuba were the best tsuba suitable for a koshirae. Today, this kind of tsuba is not often seen in use. However, I feel that that statement is correct.

As a matter of fact, I start appreciating Nobuie's work in recent years. When studying tosogu, I feel it is not true to say that we understand Kaneie and Nobuie's work very well. I think about tosogu and life: after you experience more, their great work feels closer to you.

This tsuba has a wide bottom with a squared round shape, and the design configuration shows a contrast of strong and weak elements, and a flowing design. Some iron bones appear in the steel surface, and the ground or base surface of the tsuba shows a gentle height around the seppa-dai, and the entire tsuba has a rich nikuoki (volume). There is a dignified signature made with a thick chisel and there are no hitsu which is a favorite design element of Nobuie.

Nobuie's work is highly appreciated for a strong structure and unparalleled iron patina and hataraki, and this tsuba exhibits these properties. The kikko-mon (turtle shell pattern) is one of Nobuie's favorite designs. His themes are all from nature and myo-go (Buddism words) and are usually carved with a kebori technique. Nobuie also worked with sukashi and nikubori designs, and with either style of workmanship, his work is well balanced. This tsuba is just the right size, has a strong shape, and at the same time it has an interesting feeling in the iron and hataraki. I like the extremely condensed design elements in Nobuie's work. Every time I come across his work, I experience a strong feeling of calmness, and at the same time I feel nervous and like stretching my back and looking into the distance.

Looking at this tsuba, I feel I can't compete with him. I am amazed at his different dimensions and his strong feeling of loneliness.

Explanation Kubo Yasuko

Shijo Kantei To No. 733

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 733 issue Shijo Kantei To is March 5, 2018. 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 March 5, 2018 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: Wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 3 sun 3.5 bu (40.45 cm)

Sori: 2.5 bu (0.76cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 2 bu 6 rin (12.9 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

This is a hira-zukuri wakizashi with an ihorimune. It has a standard mihaba (width), a long length for the mihaba, and the upper half has saki-zori. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume and the hada is slightly visible. There are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei and midare utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are tobiyaki in some areas. There are prominent togariba in the midare hamon, mixed with small detailed elements. There are ashi, yo, nioiguchi type korie, and a bright nioiguchi. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi with marudome, and soe-hi carved through the nakago. In some areas, the soe-hi are interrupted or worn. The nakago is slightly machi okuri and the nakago tip has a wide kurijiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari, and there are three mekugi ana and two are closed. On the omote side, under the original mekugi ana and along the center, there is a long signature, and the ura has a date.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For the New Year, 2018

The swords discussed below were shown in the January, 2018, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: January, 13, 2018 (2nd Saturday of January)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kubo Yasuko

The Heisei 30 nen (2018) New Year Teirei Kanshou Kai was held at the Token Hakubutsukan's first floor auditorium, 70 people, included members attended.

There was a vote during the meeting, and the following people were awarded prizes, and received their prizes from the lecturer.

Special Prize:

Ten-i : Daiwa Yasumi

Chi-i : Maki Takatomo

Jin-i : Takehana Mitsuaki

Ji-ten: Ota Shiro

Kanshou-to (additional swords exhibited for appreciation):

Tachi: Mei; Bungo kuni So Sadahide saku, (Juyo Bijutsuhin)

Tachi: Mei; Yasutsuna, (Cho-fu Mori family heirloom)

Tachi: Mei; O-hara Sanemori (Juyo Bijutsuhin)

Tachi: Mei; Masatsune (Juyo Bijutsuhin)

Tachi: Mei; Bizen kuni Kageyasu (Juyo Token)

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mei: Sanekage

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 1.5 bu

Sori: 9.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: o-itame mixed with mokume; the hada is visible, and there are jifu. There are abundant dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, jifu utsuri, and a dark colored jigane.

Hamon: yakiotoshi above the machi; above this, the hamon is based on ko-midare mixed with ko-gunome and ko-notare. There are frequent ashi and yo, and

frequent nie; the entire hamon has strong and long kinsuji and sunagashi, and some areas at the habuchi have hotsure.

Boshi: kakedashi and unclear

This tachi is long and narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a small kissaki. There is a large koshizori with funbari, and going toward the point, the mune slants down towards the edge (some of the same school's work do not show this feature), and there is a very elegant shape. From these characteristics, this tachi could be judged as being work from no later than the early Kamakura period.

The itame hada is mixed with mokume hada and there are jifu. There are abundant ji-nie, and jifu utsuri. The hamon is based on ko-midare, there are abundant nie, and at the first, it reminds us of Ko-Bizen work. But the o-itame jihada is prominent, the hada is visible, there is a dark iron color, and the overall style is a rustic style.

Most striking is the yakiotoshi above the machi, and it is based on a ko-midare hamon mixed with individual ko-gunome and a ko-notare pattern. At the edge of the hamon there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki, and these are integrated into the jihada, and produces a distinctive look. From these characteristic points, among the possibilities, Ko-Hoki work would be a strong possibility. Also, the school's characteristic points are a narrow shinogi width for the mihaba (overall width), and a rich nikuoki in the ji and hamon.

Sanekage is supposed to have been an Ohara Sanemori school student, and according to the Meikan his active period was around the Genryaku (1184~1185) period. Today, there are very few signed works available, so if you look at this tachi as Ko-Hoki work, including Yasutsuna's work, it would be acceptable.

In voting, besides Ko-Hoki, some people voted for Ko-Bizen work and Bungo Yukihiro. The Bungo Yukihiro vote seems to come from focusing on the yakiotoshi. If it were old Kyushu work, the jigane appears moist, soft, and whitish, hamon is based on suguha, and the nioiguchi would look soft.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Yukihiro (Ko-Bizen)

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 4 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame mixed with mokume hada. There are abundant ji-nie, fine frequent chikei, and jifu utsuri.

Hamon: based on ko-midare mixed with ko-choji, choji, and some saka ashi. There are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, and sunagashi; the upper half has yubashiri, and the bottom half has kinsuji.

Boshi: the omote is straight with a komaru; the ura is a yakizume style; and both sides have a short return.

This is a tachi by Yukihide classified as Ko-Bizen work. Examining it, we see there is not much funbari at the machi or moto, and the kissaki is a little long for the period. From these details, in voting, some people considered this to be mid-Kamakura period work. But although it is suriage, it still has a large koshizori, and from the monouchi going towards the point, the mune slants down towards the edge. It is important to note that the jifu utsuri reaches the shinogiji, and this is a classic appearance. Therefore, the period it was made must be no later than the early Kamakura period.

From the type of the utsuri, you have to decide that it is Bizen work, and considering the period, this would be either Ko-Bizen or Ko-Ichimonji work. The upper half omote and ura yakiba are both low, and above the hamon, there are tobiyaki style yubashiri, and there is a classic elegant feeling. But below the center of the blade, there is a high yakiba with a choji hamon, and from this it is undersandable to look at this as Ko-Ichimonji school work, so it is difficult to decide what type of work this is.

In the jihada and hamon there are strong nie, and inside the hamon there are frequent nie, so this is more likely to be Ko-Bizen work rather than Ko-Ichimonji work. The noticeable point is the choji hamon on the ura around the center: inside the hamon there are saka-ashi mixed with ashi, and since ancient times, this has been pointed out to be a characteristic point of Ko-Bizen Yukihide's work.

In voting, all Ko-Bizen smiths' names were treated as a correct answer. Among these, from the characteristic saka-ashi, some people voted for the neighboring province's Ko-Aoe. If it were Ko-Aoe work, the jitetsu would be a fine prominent mokume hada, and more important, the utsuri would be either suji-utsuri or dan-utsuri.

Kantei To No 3: wakizshi

Mei: Bishu Osafune Motomitsu
Bunwa 4 nen (1355) 10 gatsu hi

Length: 1 shaku
Sori: 1 bu
Style: hirazukuri
Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada mixed with mokume; there are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and utsuri on the entire ji.

Hamon: based on square gunome mixed with kataochi-gunome, togariba, and choji. There are ashi, yo, a nioiguchi, and fine sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is a togari style komaru and there is a long return.

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

This wakizashi is wide and long and has a sori. Because it is healthy, it is thick compared with standard blades. There are utsuri along the entire jigane, and a kaku-gunome hamon. From these details, you can judge this as Nanbokucho period work, probably from around Kanemitsu's time. Motomitsu is one of Kanemitsu's students. His teacher Kanemitsu's hamon are usually classified as suguha, a kataochi gunome style kaku-gunome, and notare. In this school, Tomomitsu used a successful notare style, and Motomitsu was successful with kaku-gunome. However, comparing Kanemitsu's and Motomitsu's kaku-gunome hamon, the teacher Kanemitsu's work has a well defined continuous regular shape kataochi gunome style kaku-gunome. On the other hand Motomitsu's hamon are based on kaku-gunome mixed with kataochi gunome, and sometimes saka or slanted elements, and togariba and are notare hamon. His hamon are diverse and this wakizashi shows this. We can see some Masamitsu's work has kaku-gunome, but many of his work have ko-notare, ko-choji and togari-ba. These kind look alike Kozori.

In voting, because the school has many common characteristic points, we usually would consider all smiths' names in the school to be treated as a correct answer. However, this wakizashi has a number of characteristic points, and this is the special New Years' vote so we treated the correct answer with the actual smith's name as being different from the almost correct answer for all smiths in the school.

From observing similar Bizen hamon, a few people voted for Motoshige. However, if this were his work, it would have clear nagare hada; there would be jifu and high kaku-gunome; the valleys of the hamon would be sharp; and there would be many more strong ha-nie.

Kantei To No 4: tanto

Mei: Morimitsu

Length: 9 sun 7.5 bu

Sori: sakizori

Design: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada, the ha area has nagare hada, and the hada is visible. There are abundant dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and pale bo-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha with a very shallow notare hamon. There are ko-ashi, ko-nie, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, with a sharp point; there is a komaru and return.

Horimono: on the omote there are take-kurabe, i.e. two different length bo-hi; on the ura there is a katana hi, and both are finished with marudome.

The tanto's ji and hamon are well finished. The hamon is suguha with a bright nioiguchi, and some people voted for the Bizen smith Kagemitsu.

In looking at this Oei-Bizen work, people pointed out that there are many similarities that this is a revival of the Kamakura period style. One of these details is open valley gunome mixed with choji, and gorgeous spectacular work. However, well defined clean suguha hamon are seen, just like this tanto.

But compared with Kamakura period work the tanto is wide and long. Some people considered this work was made at the peak of the Nanbokucho period. Also since the hi on the omote and the ura are carved through the nakago, many people considered Nobukuni in the Yamashiro school.

There is definitely a similar impression, but Nobukuni is a Ryokai school smith, his jitetsu is mixed with more nagare hada than this blade, there is a soft hada, and many of hi are carved through the nakago. Also, there is a vote for the same period's Hasebe school work. If it were Hasebe school work, the jitetsu would show rougher hada, the boshi would be o-maru, and in particular, it would be thin.

Sometimes, in Oei-Bizen suguha hamon we see some areas that are mixed with ko-gunome, and have a knot-like or tangled appearance, but this tanto does not have this. However this is a high quality and almost perfect tanto, and for a one time vote, it could make for a difficult kanteito.

Compared with the Nanbokucho tanto, the fukura area is narrow, it is thick, the upper half has sori, and from the shape, we wish to consider it as work from the early Muromachi period around the Oei period. More than anything, this has an Oei-Bizen characteristic jitetsu, frequent chikei, and a strong hada, and in voting, these are major points.

Also, on the omote, the horimono consists of different length futasuji-hi, the ura has katana-hi, and as you know, Oei-Bizen work has many examples of this kind of horimono, and a marudome above the machi. This is a one of the main points in voting for the school.

Incidentally, Oei-Bizen boshi are midarekomi, a little bit sharp, and described as resembling the "wick of a candle," but these elements are seen only in the work that has open valley gunome mixed with choji. In the case of a suguha hamon, just like this tanto, usually the boshi tip is sharp, but straight and with a komaru.

Kantei To No 5: katana

Mei: Ozaki Nagato-no-kami Fujiwara Ason Suketaka

Kyowa 2 nen (1801) 2 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 2 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: there is a straight yakidashi; above the yakidashi there is a toranba style o-gunome midare hamon; there are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, frequent ko-nie, some fine sunagashi, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru; there is a long return and some muneyaki.

This katana has a long yakidashi at the moto, and above this, a gorgeous toranba style o-gunome hamon. The ji-ba (the jihada and hamon) are bright and clear. Notably, the jigane is not muji-hada that is a Shinshinto characteristic element. From these details, it looks like a toran-midare hamon such as we see in the work of Osaka shinto smiths such as Sukehiro, Sukenao, and Echigo-no-kami Kanesada. In fact in voting, some people voted for them.

However, the shinogi-haba (width of the shinogi) is narrow for the mihaba or width of the blade. Notably, the hiraniku is poor and there is a long chu-kissaki, so from the shape, you should also consider this as a possible Shinshinto. In that period, there were smiths working with hamon like Sukehiro's toranba style o-gunome hamon. Some of these smiths were Suishinshi Masahide, Kato Kunihide, Tsunahide, Tsunatoshi, Tegarayama Masashige, Ozaki Suketaka, his student Naoe Sukemasa, and Tokurin.

Moreover, like the large vertical up and down variations in the hamon with the wave shapes, one smith who made pure toranmidare hamon was Ozaki Suketaka. His hamon contained wave shapes and the bottom valleys have a square shape, and this is his characteristic point.

On the other hand, other Shinshinto smiths' hamon do not contain strictly wave shaped toran, and are more likely to be based on o-gunome and continuous gunome hamon. Furthermore, there is a shallow sori, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different, as if this were a shortened katana, the shape still shows Suketaka's characteristic points.

In voting, an almost correct answer is Suketaka's student Naoe Sukemasa, but he has few toran style o-gunome hamon, and his hamon are a more shallow notare style suguha like Inoue Shinkai. Tokurin's hamon are characteristic, and are gunome hamon with a continuous rhythm of one, two, or three gunome. In Tegarayama Masashige's midare hamon, the tops and valleys are sharp. One of Suishinshi Masahide's characteristics are that there are dark nie somewhere in the hamon and ji, and his hamon are different from the Osaka Shinto smiths' gradually widening hamon, and his katana have a uniform width.

Suketaka's nakago picture is shown at 98% of the actual size.

Shijo Kantei To No. 731 (in the December, 2017 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To in the December issue is a katana by Shume-no-kami Ippei Yasuyo

In voting, the majority of people voted for Yasuyo. Besides the correct and almost correct answers, a few people voted for Inoue Shinkai.

The Satsuma Shinto and Shinshinto swords are supposed to have been influenced by the Satsuma clan's Jigen-ryu swordsmanship. Their characteristics include a wide blade, the widths at the moto and saki are not too different, they are thick, have a rich or large hiraniku, and are heavy in the hand. This katana has these features, but of course there were some differences between individual Satsuma blades.

The other day, I saw a sword by another smith who worked in the same period as Yasuyo and was one of Satsuma Shinto's two master smiths, a Mondo-no-sho Masakiyo katana. In Kyoho 6 (1721) he moved to Edo, to work for a high level Shogunate official. At first sight, this sword reminded me of a Kanbun Shinto, with a standard mihaba or width, the widths moto and saki are different, and there was a chu-kissaki.

If this sword were made for the Edo Shogunate high official, it's likely that there was almost no possibility he mastered the Jigen-ryu techniques. In this case, we can say that the katana's shape had evolved to a standard shape.

Yasuyo and Masakiyo have a large number of dynamically shaped katana just like the one described above. Among their work, there are some examples without this characteristic shape. These are supposed to have been influenced by the owners who made specific orders, and probably practiced swordsmanship in different schools and styles, and so this variation in shape and design would appear to be a normal occurrence.

In addition, Satsuma blades with a dynamic shape are seen often in Yasuyo's and Masakiyo's work. In the Shinshinto period, more examples of blades are seen with a strong emphasis on the shape. Between Masayoshi and Motohira, Motohira has fewer examples of this, and Masayoshi has a conspicuously large number of such examples.

Among Yasuyo's work, this has a slightly narrower mihaba(width) when compared with his most dynamically shaped blades. Votes for Shinkai seem to be focused on this.

But, due to strong influence from the Shinto Naminohira school, Yasuyo's katana have a wide shinogi-haba (width of the shinogi ji), a high shinogi, and a Yamato-den style. In Shinkai's shapes, the mihaba, kissaki, and kasane have a standard

Kanbun Shinto shape, and the mihaba (width) of the shinogi-ji and height of the shinogi are not prominent.

Also, Yasuyo's ko-itame hada is rough, and the iron's color is a little dark. Shinkai's jitetsu is a tight ko-itame, there are abundant dense ji-nie, and frequent fine chikei. Among the Osaka Shinto smiths, his blades have the most refined jitetsu. At the same time, both smiths' strong points in their suguha style hamon are a dense nioiguchi and abundant nie. When actually looking at them, Shinkai's hamon are brighter, there is a clear nioiguchi, and rough ha-nie are not prominent when compared to Yasuyo.

Nakago picture is shown at 98% of the actual size.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai