

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 736
May, 2018

Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Kokuho

Type: Tachi

Mei: Rai Kunimitsu

Owner: Kyushu National Museum

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 6 bu 3 rin (80.7 cm)

Sori: 1 sun 7 rin (3.25 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 7 rin (2.95 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 9rin (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)

Saki kasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 3 rin (21.3 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is wide and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. The blade is thick, long, has a strong koshizori, and a short chu-kissaki. The kitae is a ko-itame hada mixed with smaller sized itame and mokume, and is well forged. There are ji-nie and chikei, and some places have straight pale utsuri. The hamon is based on chu-suguha, and is mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji. Around the center of the blade, there are frequent ashi and yo, a nioiguchi, and abundant ha-nie. The moto and saki areas have muneyaki, and this muneyaki is especially prominent on the ura side. The boshi is straight, and on the omote there is a large maru or circle point (i.e. the boshi is omaru). The ura boshi is a small maru or circle (i.e. it is komaru). The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi. On the omote the hi is finished with a marudome, while on the ura it ends in a kaki-nagasu style (i.e. it is extended or is finished in the middle of the nakago). The nakago is suriage, and the nakago tip is sakikiri. The new yasurime on the omote are kate-sagari, and on the ura they are kiri, and the style of the original yasurime is unknown. There are four mekugi-ana and one

is closed. On the omote, around the tip of the nakago, there is a small three kanji signature.

Rai Kunimitsu is listed as Rai Kunitoshi's son in many old sword books. He is well known with along Kunitsugu as a master smith for the next generation along with Rai Kunitoshi. Today, his earliest dated work is from the end of the Kamakura period in Karyaku 1(1326) and his latest dated work is the early Nambokucho's Kano 2 (1351). He thus had a career lasting around 25 years. Among the Rai school smiths, he produced at least as many excellent works as Kunitoshi. Among his dated works, there are three Kokuho, seventeen Juyo Bunkazai, and fourteen Juyo Bijutsuhin swords. From the large number of highly ranked swords, we can recognize his high level of skill. He worked in more than one style and we see both long and short sized blades, along with wide, standard and narrow blades. His hamon are a clean or defined suguha, suguha with ashi, and hamon based on suguha mixed with small sized gunome and choji. This style of hamon is seen less often on tachi, and mainly on tanto, and is based on gunome and ko-notare with a large midare pattern. Incidentally, with Kunimitsu's large midare hamon, we see more strong nie, and a lot of movement or activity. This is considered to be a style outside of the Yamashiro school style, and more like the Soshu Den style, with a strong dynamic feeling.

This tachi is long, and besides being suriage, it is wide and thick, even for Kunimitsu's work, and the widths between the moto and saki are not too different. Examining the signature's location and comparing it with his ubu tachi, we can guess that the original length was about 3 shaku 1 sun, so this is a magnificent, large tachi. The jigane has absolutely no faults or defects along its entire long length. It is ko-itame hada mixed in some places with a small sized itame hada, and the the entire jihada is very tight, and is a truly refined hada. The suguha style hamon is wide, and from the central area to the bottom half, there are frequent ashi and yo hataraki. Notably, on the hamon on the omote side, some places have slanted ashi extending toward the nakago which are Kyo-saka-ashi. On the ura side we see saka-ashi which is a Rai school characteristic. Also, the muneyaki is prominent which we sometimes see in the school's tachi, and this tachi shows the school's characteristic points very well. The hira-niku shape is large, and the heavy weight reminds us of Shinto and Shinshinto work. It is very healthy, and well preserved, so its suriage condition does not detract from this work. It is an excellent example and a masterpiece.

This tachi is supposed to have belonged to Ieyasu's first daughter, princess Kame's, fourth son. He was the Okudaira Matsudaira family's founder Matsudaira Tadaakira who wore this tachi at the Osaka Castle battle. The historical book or diary "Shintei Kansei Cho-shu Shoka-fu No.1" says on page 270 that Matsudaira Tadaakira was born in Tensho 11(1583) at Mikawa Koku Shinshiro. Tshogun (Ieyasu) heard the news, looked at him, and said he would give him a name. Later the boy visited Suruga with princess Kame, and met Ieyasu at the O-oku for the first time. At that time, he received the name Tsurumatsu-maru. The book does not

list the sword smith's name, but at their first meeting, Ieyasu himself handed this sword to his grandson, and it was probably this tachi.

After this, during the Edo period, this tachi remained with the family for a long time, and in the Bakumatsu period (at the end of the Edo period), the lord of the clan was Bushu Oshi. In the Meiji period, the tachi left the family and was owned by Ono Gishin. Ono came from the Tosa clan's Sukumo village headman's family and worked for the Ministry of Industry. Later he became a consultant for the Mitsubishi zaibatsu, and was the first president of the Japan Railways, and he also constructed the Koiwai farm.

After that the tachi was owned by Iwasaki Yanosuke who was also from Tosa and established Seikado-Bunko. He was a younger brother of Iwasaki Yatarou who was a founder of Mitsubishi zaibatsu. Later Yamagata Aritomo owned this tachi. He came from Choshu after the Meiji restoration. During the Meiji to Taisho periods, he was very powerful, not only for domestic affairs involving the army and politics, but also for diplomacy. In Meiji 18 (1885) on October 19, the Meiji emperor visited Yamagata's house, and presented him a silver cup and some currency. To return this favor, Yamagata presented the emperor with this tachi and two calligraphy written by Yoshida Shoin. Yamagata could not resist expressing his appreciation for the emperor's visit, and on the following month, he promptly built a stone monument in his garden. On the front is a waka (poem), and on the back are the details of the emperor's visit. Today, we can see the stone monument in the Yamagata Aritomo house's garden in Chiyoda-ku, Kudan Minami, inside of Sanban-cho which the Ministry of Agriculture manages.

This tachi will be exhibited from September 29 to November 25, at the Kyoto National Museum's exhibit of "Swords in Kyoto: master works and the heart of Japanese Elegance". The exhibit shows almost all of the National Treasure classified blades among the Yamashiro school works, and will have 190 pieces for the exhibit. Please visit this exhibit.

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

No.736 Tosogu Kanshou

Juyo Tosogu

Tachi-zu (tachi design) futa-tokoro-mono

Kozuka mei: Goto Kenjo with kao

Menuki warikibata mei: Goto Kenjo

When discussing tosogu, the most important group of makers is the Goto family.

Among them, the Shodai (first generation) Yujo, the Yondai (4th generation) Kojo, and the Nanadai (7th generation) Kenjo (or the “yu, ko, ken” family members from the kanji representing these three smiths) have been praised as master smiths.

Kenjo was the 7th generation head of the Goto family in the early Edo period from Genna to Kanei (1615-43). After he transferred the headship of the family to Sokujo Mitsushige, Kenjo worked for Kaga Maeda clan alternated with his cousin Kakujo. Kenjo’s style shows a tight tension and nikudori, and strong tagane (chisel) marks, and some compare his work to Kojo’s work, From his high level of skill and accurate depiction of themes, he left his name in tosgo history.

This is a futa-dokoro mono made without using any iroe (color) inlay, but which uses just shakudo, Kenjo shows a small cosmos. Besides this kind of example, we see work with a shakudo ground with takabori (high relief), a chicken design mitokoro-mono owned by the Tokugawa museum, and one with a solid gold ground with takabori, and a Kurikara design mitokoro-mono which is privately owned. It is an unusual work, with polished solid gold or a polished shibuichi ground with kebori, which shows off an excellent level of skill.

The kogai’s shape is well balanced and beautiful. The menuki’s shapes show the tachi’s sori, and do not over emphasize or distort the tsukurikomi or form. The theme of an itomaki-no-tachi is produced carefully and clearly. The reproduction of the tsukamaki and watarimaki, and the distribution of the kamon on the saya are considered accurate and detailed, and finished conscientiously and neatly. The theme used on the koshirae’s futa-dokoro-mono is an image of a koshirae itself. From this, we can see his sophisticated sense of design.

Many of the Goto family’s menuki made before the mid-Edo period are mumei. However, this has a rare wari-kibata signature (the signature is split into two separate parts with one part on each menuki), and this is a valuable reference material. From either the workmanship or the signature, we could say this is a masterpiece futa-dokoro-mono by Kenjo.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 736

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 736 issue Shijo Kantei To is June 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 June 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:Tachi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu (70.0 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 5 rin (2.2 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 5 rin (2.6 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu (1.8 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin(0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: slightly less than 9 bu (2.7 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 1 bu (18.5 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is narrow and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori although it is suriage, the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, nagare hada and masame hada, and the hada is just visible. There are frequent jinie, fine chikei, jifu and midare utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In the midare hamon, square shaped features are prominent. There are frequent ashi and yo, the entire hamon has saka-ashi, there is a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bo-hi with marudome. The nakago is suriage, and the nakago tip was originally kurijiri. The old yasurime are kattesagari, and the new yasurime are kiri. There are three mekugi-ana, and on the omote side near the nakago tip towards the mune edge there is a long kanji signature.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For April, 2018

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

Meeting date: April, 14, 2018 (2nd Saturday of April)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Kantei To No. 1: katana

Mei: oite Efu Chounsai Tsunatoshi saku
Koka 2 nen 11 gatsu 26 nichi oite Senju Dada
Dotanbarai Kirite Yamada Gosaburo

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 4.5 bu

Sori: slightly less 9 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itamehada mixed with some small sized itame; there are ji-nie.

Hamon: straight yakidashi at the moto, and above this, the entire hamon has a high yakiba; there is a choji style hamon mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, togari, and square shaped gunome; there are frequent ashi and the hamon is nioideki.

Boshi: the omote is a small midarekomi, and the ura is a shallow notare; both sides have a komaru and return.

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

This is a very heavy katana, and the jigane is very tight and so this resembles a muji hada. The hamon is fresh looking, and from the moto to the saki we do not see uneven work, and so this could be judged as being Shinshinto period work. In this period, Suishinshi Masahide and Nankai Taro Tomotaka advocated the idea of making swords in former or older styles and, many smiths modeled their work after old swords. In particular, the Bizen Den style like we see on this katana was used by many smiths. On this katana the midare hamon is a small sized choji midare hamon, and the pattern repeats regularly about every 5 sun, and there is a tight nioiguchi. Also, the moto has a small yakidashi, and this is an important characteristic. Considering these characteristics, you can narrow this work down to the name of Chounsai Tsunatoshi relatively easily.

For an almost correct answer, Tsunatoshi's Disciple Koyama Munetsugu's style was similar to his, and so was Unju Korekazu's style. If it were Munetugu's work, we almost never see a yakidashi, there are more vertical alterations or variations in the hamon, we see large and small yakiba, and there is a beautiful hamon. Moreover, looking at the shapes, the sori style, and mihaba, we see that many of Tsunatoshi's swords have shapes which are similar to old tachi shapes. Munetsugu's shapes in his early work during the first half of his career, appear dynamic and look like Shinshinto work, and this katana's shape is an important characteristic point to look at in recognizing Tsunatoshi's work. Korekazu's usual shapes are the same as Tsunatoshi's. His hamon use mainly choji, but we see a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and more probable Soshu Den elements. So you need to consider these details.

From the yakidashi at the moto and the choji midare hamon, some people voted for Naka-Kawachi (the nidai Kunisuke). But Kunisuke's active period was the Kanbun period. Usually there is a shallow sori and in his hamon, five narrow choji

are clustered together, and this group forms a fist-like choji, and these are prominent in places.

Kantei To No. 2: wakizashi

Mei: Bishu Osafune Sukemitsu

Length: 1 shaku 6 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume; there are nagarehada, and the entire jihada is well forged. There are ji-nie, chikei, and pale utsuri.

Hamon: based on open valley gunome, mixed with ko-gunome and togari. Some places have a doubled or parallel midare hamon, and the hamon is nioideki (composed of nioi).

Boshi: notare with a komaru and a small return.

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

The wakizashi's shape shows funbari at the habaki-moto. It is short, and the upper half's sori is somewhat prominent, from this you can judge this as Muromachi period work. Also, the hamon is based on open valley gunome, and from this you can narrow this down to Bizen work. Furthermore, for the width, it is a little long. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, and the hada pattern appears very clearly. In some places we see a jifu type dark colored jigane. The nie is not very prominent, and there is mostly nioideki, and from these characteristics, you can judge this as early Muromachi period work from the Oei period. From this, Morimitsu and Yasumitsu's names come to mind. Furthermore, in examining the hamon's shape, the yakiba height is not as high as the standard Oei Bizen hamon, the open valley intervals are prominent, and in some places, we see square shaped gunome and ko-gunome, and some parts of the hamon are small or narrow. Also we should note the yakiba's high and low areas, the choji which are not prominent, and the less active hamon when compared with Oei Bizen. Also compared with Sue Bizen work, the hamon does not show much undulation or large open valley fukushiki (double) gunome.

Because of these features, the entire hamon is gentle, some places are small or narrow, and the entire hamon has a small size. This type of style is seen between the Oei Bizen and Sue-Bizen periods. In particular, this is seen around the middle of the Eikyo period, and this is called "Eikyo Bizen".

Incidentally, Sukemitsu is listed in the "Meikan" as a Muromachi period smith, but around the Eisei period, and he is only smith listed in the Eisei period. The Bizen smiths signatures on shinogi-zukuri uchigatana and wakizashi are usually along the mune side from about the end of the Oei period. Before that period, the

signature was usually along the center of the nakago or close to the nakago tip. From this, it is a possibility that Sukemitsu was active around the Oei to Eikyo periods, and is a relatively early smith in that period.

Kantei To No 3: tachi

Mei: Kanemoto

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 1 bu

Sori: slightly over 6 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame mixed with mokume, and on the ura side, mixed with nagare hada; there are ji-nie, some chikei, and whitish utsuri.

Hamon: chu-suguha; at the koshimoto it is mixed with gunome; there is a tight nioiguchi and the hamon is nioideki (formed in nioi).

Boshi: the omote is straight, and the ura is a very small notare; both sides have a komaru and return.

In case of suguha hamon work, it is difficult to narrow down the work to an individual name using only the hamon style. You have to obtain information from the shape, tsukurikomi (design or form), and jigane. This katana shape has a less pronounced koshizori compared to Kamakura period tachi, and has a little sakizori, and from this, we wish to judge this as Muromachi period Seki work. The jigane has whitish utsuri mixed with nagare hada, and a somewhat soft jihada. The hamon is a clear well defined suguha. On the omote and ura in the same place, the suguha is interrupted by a large gunome. Also, the poor or low hiraniku cannot be missed. From these characteristic points, this is a Muromachi period work. In particular, the jigane from the moto to saki is smooth, the suguha hamon has no irregularities, and this is a high class work, and from this you can list a number of highly skilled smiths, such as Izumi no kami Kanesada (Nosada) and Magoroku Kanemoto's suguha work.

This is a Magoroku Kanemoto katana. Usually, the Seki hamon is associated with a high gunome midare hamon or prominent togariba. On the other hand, there are suguha, but mainly on tanto. Notably, Kanesada (Nosada) is known for excellent Rai utsushimono work. Both smiths' katana and tanto have suguha hamon which are classified as Juyo Token. Probably Kanesada (Nosada) has more suguha work, but if you choose one of these two smiths, we would say that Kanemoto is more likely to be the correct choice.

Besides these two smiths, some people voted for smiths known for good suguha hamon such as Kanetsune and this is a reasonable viewpoint.

Kantei To No 4: wakizashi

Mei: Bizen Osafune Yoshimitsu

Length: slightly less than 1 shaku 8 sun 3 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; there are ji-nie and midare utsuri.

Hamon: choji mixed with ko-gunome and togariba, and it is almost nioideki; there are some ko-nie, and some kinsuji.

Boshi: the omote is midarekomi with a komaru; the ura is kuichigaiba and the tip is yaki-kuzure with hakikake.

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

This wakizashi is thick for its width. It is a little long, and the sori in the upper half is a bit prominent. From these details, some people voted for early Muromachi work. Also, from the midare utsuri, more than a few people voted for Oei Bizen work. But if you examine the hamon, this is mainly a choji hamon, with a lot of variations or activity, and the open valley hamon details are not very prominent. If it were Oei period work, the sori would be a little shallow, and usually we would see itame hada with a well forged and clear hada pattern. There would be jifu like dark jigane areas, and that is different from the very tight ko-itame hada wakizashi we see here, and from these details I would hesitate to judge this as Oei Bizen work.

So, among Muromachi period Bizen work, where the hamon shape has variations and there is an excellent choji midare hamon, the first smith to come to mind is Katsumitsu, and half of the people voted for him in the second vote. However from the narrow waisted clear kawazuko-choji, more than a few people looked at this as a Kamakura period ko-tachi from someone like Hatakeda Moriie.

But if it were a Kamakura period ko-dachi, the standard tachi shape would be present, but just in a reduced size. the shape of this sword is different from this. The hamon would have high and low areas, the small and large choji clusters would show more variations, the nioiguchi would have lighter and shadowed areas, and appear different from this.

Today, Yoshimitsu has very few blades, and this could have been due to a short career, or because this work shows such great workmanship and extraordinary skill, it could be considered to be daisaku work, with someone such as Katsumitsu.

Kantei To No 5: wakizashi

Mei: oite Nanki Monju Kanesuke Shigekuni

Length: 1 shaku 7 sun 4.5 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Design: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame hada; in some places the hada is barely visible; there are jinie and fine chikei.

Hamon: the entire hamon is high; there is a choji style hamon mixed with kogunome, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi; the upper half of the hamon has a small midare pattern. There are ashi, yo, a nioiguchi and ko-nie.

Boshi: straight with a komaru; the ura has some hotsure; there is a long return.

In this wakizashi, the rich variation in the choji style hamon is striking. However, for the height of the hamon, the hataraki is not prominent compared with old blades. From this, you can judge this wakizashi as being a Shinto period Bizen Den work, and likely Ishido school work. In the Keicho period, Bizen Den which was out of fashion for a short time, was revived by each area's Ishido school such as those in Edo, Osaka, Kishu, and Fukuoka.

From the jiba's (jihada and hamon) appearance, a majority of people voted for an Ishido smith from different areas. Paying attention to the yakiba, we see that the entire hamon is a high midare, but variations in the hamon are not very prominent. For the yakiba's width, the amount of hataraki is insufficient. Also the entire nioiguchi has a tight, hard appearance. From these characteristics, we wish to look at this as Kishu Ishido work.

Mitsuhira's and Tsunemitsu's hamon are a variation of large and small, and high and low elements. There is a soft nioiguchi, and a much more classic appearance. In their work, we do not see a small size or narrow hamon, which also contains saka-ashi. Due to these characteristic points, people voted for Musashi Daijo Korekazu. Also from the tight nioiguchi, Nagayuki is reasonable. But if it were Korekazu's work, the jigane would be a strong nagarehada, and almost masame hada. If it were Nagayuki's work, places in the hamon would show an open valley Sue-Bizen style midare, and usually the boshi would be more or less midarekomi. The Fukuoka Ishido school's Koretsugu's and Moritsugu's hamon have large sized prominent choji clusters, and some of them form a diamond shape called a "head of a squid". The entire hamon would be larger, and you could point out each of the smith's different characteristics.

This is a Monju Shigekuni wakizashi. Usually the school's work is based on Yamato Den, and is either suguha or a large size gunome, and there is a dense nioiguchi and sunagashi. This kind of Kishu Ishido style choji midare hamon is very unusual. On the other hand, among the Kishu Ishido work, some smiths were obviously influenced by Monju work, and we see this kind of work. This wakizashi shows that there were some technical exchanges between the schools, and this is a valuable reference material concerning this.

Shijo Kantei To No. 734 in the March, 2018 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Naoe Shidzu Kanetomo.

This blade is wide, long, thin, and has a shallow sori, and from the shape, you can judge this as Nanbokucho work.

At first, the tanto's most noticeable point is the hamon. The shallow notare hamon mixed with prominent large round top gunome and gunome-choji is a characteristic midare hamon.

At the first examination, the hamon reminds us of a Seki hamon, but the tanto is a Nanbokucho period shape as I explained above. The ji has frequent chikei, the hamon has abundant nie, kinsuji, and frequent sunagashi. This is a higher class and older period work than Seki work, and more likely is a strong Soshu Den style.

But if it were Shidzu Saburo Kaneuji work, in the case of 6 sun and 7 sun short length tanto, his hamon would be a shallow notare mixed with ko-gunome, and have either hotsure and kuichigaiba at the edge of the hamon, or a notare hamon mixed with slightly large gunome. Either style would show a Soshu Den master smith characteristic containing abundant bright beautiful ha-nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and more strong Soshu Den sophisticated elements.

Naoe shidzu is between Shidzu Kaneuji and Seki period work, and was a transition style between the two schools, and this is a characteristic point for Naoe Shidzu.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Naoe Shidzu smiths such as Kanetomo and Kanetsugu. As an almost correct answer, some people also voted for Shidzu Kaneuji and Yamato Shidzu Kaneuji.

Naoe Shidzu signed work is very rare, and the smith's styles are close to each other, and it is difficult to judge a specific smith's name. So all Naoe Shidzu smiths' name were treated as a correct answer.

Incidentally, during a shijo kantei and voting kantei, I think that many people are not looking at a blade step by step or systematically.

First, look at the shape, and then think about the shape, and this seems to be standard for many people. After that, for example, utsuri in the ji along with a choji hamon could lead one to judge something as Bizen Den work. A refined jigane would lead one to judge something as mainstream smith work. Round choji hamon mixed with gunome along with a sansaku boshi lead to a judgement for Nagamitsu's work. Sometimes, people judge step by step like this, but this does not always seem to be the case.

Rather, during the process of looking at a sword, sometimes a feature catches your eye as being a particular smith's characteristic point, and most of the time this feature seems to a hamon. If so, then, you can name a particular smith.

Next, many people seem to confirm if their ideas are reasonable by comparing the work to a relevant smith's jiba style and shape, and then decide on a particular smith's name.

For example, if the height of kaku (square shape) gunome are high, the valleys in the hamon have a tusk or tooth-like shape, and there are togariba, the sword could be by Motoshige. If the jihada has utsuri and looks like Bizen work, the itame hada is visible and mixed with jifu type different colored iron, it would seem to be a branch (rather than mainstream) Bizen work. If the boshi is also midarekomi and sharp, then we might guess it is work by Motoshige.

In this case, the first thing to look for is each smith's individual or characteristic points. In voting, the important point is to understand the characteristic points for each smith, including a typical characteristic style which can be remembered from personal experience or hands-on examinations in the past.

But some people have only studied swords for a short time, and have not seen many typical works, or much work from specific local areas, many people have not had many opportunities to study typical examples in excellent condition. In this case, you keep with you a sword reference or book listing the main sword smiths' typical work and oshigata. These books are visible during votes and while viewing swords. This can help in understanding a smith's characteristic style.

If a sword book is for intermediate students, and difficult to understand, or to use to understand an individual sword's hamon, it would be better to look only at many oshigata.

Looking at many oshigata drawn by a good artist showing typical styles and also looking at photos of meito could be very helpful in examining swords. Actually it is not rare that a person with good intuition, basing a decision on a good oshigata, could vote for the correct answer with a specific smith's name, even if he has never actually seen the smith's work in person.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai