

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Jujo Bunkazai

Type: Tachi

Mei: Nagamitsu (name: go Shonai Nagamitsu)
Owner: Okayama Prefectural Museum

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 7 rin (72.95 cm)
Sori: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 1 rin (1.85 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 2 rin (0.65 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)
Kissaki length: 8 bu 7 rin (2.65 cm)
Nakago length: 5 sun 9 bu 9 rin (18.15 cm)
Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. The blade is slightly thick, there is a large koshizori, and a short chu-kissaki which resembles an inokubi style kissaki. The jigane has ko-itame hada mixed with itame and mokume hada, and in some areas, the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, midare-utsuri and dark jifu, and especially on the ura side, the utsuri is clear. The hamon shows choji mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, ko-notare, and square shaped gunome, and the hamon's vertical variations are not prominent. There are abundant ashi, ko-ashi, and yo, in some places there is a dense tight nioiguchi, and there are some kinsuji. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi; on the omote, the hi are finished with kaku-dome, and on the ura the hi are carved through. The nakago is suriage and the nakago tip is a very shallow ha-agari style kurijiri. The original yasurime are not visible, and the newer yasurime are katte-sagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, around the nakago tip, towards the mune side, there is a small two kanji signature.

The Bizen Osafune school is represented by the master smith Nagamitsu who became the head of the school after his father Mitsutada. Nagamitsu was highly regarded and established the school's foundation, and the school was flourished just after the

Ichimonji school. He has more signed works than any other Kamakura period smith. Most of his swords are tachi, but there are ko-tachi, naginata, tanto, and ken, so he made all types of blades. His signatures begin on Bunei 11 (1274), although some people have questioned this, and some people think the mei is a tsui-mei made later than the sword. His last dated signature is from Kagen 2 (1304), so he was working for about 30 years, and during this period the shapes and styles in his work changed.

In his early work, his hamon remained close to those of his father Mitsutada's: they have choji mixed with kawazuko-choji, and there is a high yakiba, with a prominent active hamon. During the middle of his career, the widths of his hamon are just right, and they are based on choji with round top gunome, and these are examples of Nagamitsu's unique hamon. During the last part of his career, his yakiba are a controlled low suguha mixed with a small midare pattern showing ko-choji, or are a suguha style. You can see that over his career, his hamon evolved from a gorgeous active style to a more ordered calm style. Along with changes in his hamon, his tachi shapes changed from a wide blade with an inokubi kissaki to a dynamic shape, to a standard shape, and then to a relatively narrow sophisticated shape. As you know, the transition period is supposed to have been after the Mongolian invasion around the Sho-o (1288-93) period.

Besides these transitional works, noteworthy works that we see today are four tanto dated Koan 8 (1285), Einin 2 and 3 (1294 and 1295), and an undated one. These tanto have kataochi-gunome hamon, and this became the next generation Kagemitsu's primary hamon style. These tanto are considered important historical material because Nagamitsu was a pioneer in making and refining his hamon.

This tachi has a large koshizori even though it is suriage, the tip has sori, there is a chu-kissaki, and a dynamic shape, and these details strongly remind us of a mid-Kamakura period dynamic tachi shape. The jigane reminds us of Mitsutada's refine ko-itame hada, and the jigane's midare-utsuri is clear and abundant, especially on the ura. In addition, the dark areas in the ji extend well over the shinogi-ji, which is unusual in this period. The omote boshi is a shallow notare and a sansaku style. The hamon is primarily a round top choji style. The hamon width is not very notable, and this is considered to be one of Nagamitsu's characteristic works, however, unexpectedly, there are few examples of this style of work. This tachi is similar to the 22nd sword classified as Juyo Token, with the meibutsu or name "go Horio Nagamitsu".

This sword belonged to the Dewa Shonai Sakai family's chief vassal Suge family, and is their heirloom tachi. That is the source of the "Shonai Nagamitsu" name. It is uncertain when the Suge family owned this. In the Bakumatsu period, the Suge family's Sanehide earned the trust of lord Tadazumi and was selected as a close associate. After this, he received the Juyo Bunkazai classified blade "Mikaeri Motoshige", and it is possible that he received this tachi from his lord. Incidentally, after the Boshin war (1868-69), the Shonai clan was blockaded by the Meiji government, but after paying a 70 million ryo fine, the blockade was removed. The final payment to the government was reduced to 30 million ryo. Compared with the ruthless treatment of the Aizu clan, this was a generous treatment. This treatment and relief from the onerous fine is supposed to have been due to Saigo Takamori. Subsequently, Lord Tadimitsu and Suge Mitsuhide visited Kagoshima, and met Saigo. In Meiji 22, Sadahide published Saigo's thoughts under the title "Nan-shu-o ikun". Even today Tsuruoka city and Kagoshima city are sister cities.

Explanation and illust by Ishii Akira

No.741 Tosogu Kanshou

Tokubetsu Juyo tosogu

Ahiba (reed leaf) Daruma-zu kozuka

Mei: Yasuchika

Yasuchika is praised as one of the Nara-sansaku smiths. His name was Yagohachi, and he was born in Kanbun 10 (1670) and was the son of a Shonai clan samurai Tsuchiya Chuzemon. He produced many master works, and in tosogu history he is considered a great master smith.

On this kozuka, a daruma priest calmly crosses over the Yosuko river (in China) on a leaf of reed. Images of the daruma are seen from the earliest times in Japan. For example in the "Teio hen nenki" (a 14th century book listing all of the emperors and their histories), the Suiko emperor, the following story is shown for the entry on 21 nen 12 gatsu (12th month of the 12th year).

The Umayado-no-ouji (the same title used by prince Shotoku, but we do not use this name as a historical term) went to play at the Kata-oka-yama Mountain, and he saw a starving or hungry person. The prince interchanged poems with him, but shortly afterwards the person passed away. The prince heard about this, and was very sad, and said "the hungry person I met the other day was not an ordinary person". Later, he learned that the person was a daruma priest, and he was the third son of the south Tenjiku province's Kochi king and had the reputation of a Daruma priest.

From this kind of story, with the daruma priest's distinctive face on the kozuka you can recognize Yasuchika's thoughts. Yasuchika's high level of skill is clear from the appearance of the daruma's cloth shirt blowing in the wind along with his gold and shakudo eyes. This kind of rich presentation shows Yasuchika's high skill.

Later, the daruma priest went to Shorinji (temple), and devoted himself to training as described in a famous story "Menpeki 9 nen" (sitting against a wall for 9 years and learning about life). From his effort to illustrate stories from the daruma priest's life, we can recognize Yasuchika's skill, and we feel that this is a masterpiece kozuka.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 741

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 741 Shijo Kantei To is November 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 November 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: Katana

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu (68.2 cm)

Sori: 6.5 bu (1.97 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 7 rin (3.25 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 4 rin (2.25 cm)

Motokasane: slightly less than 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 3 bu 4 rin (4.05 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 3 bu (16.06 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is a little wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. There is a poor hiraniku, the tip has sori and there is a long chu-kissaki. The jigane is itame mixed with nagare-masa and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, and whitish utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In the hamon, in some places, ashi run to the edge of the hamon, there is a tight or dense nioiguchi, and there are nioiguchi type ko-nie. The nakago is ubu, the nakago tip is iriyama-gata, and the yasurime are takanoha. There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote side between the mekugi-ana, towards the mune edge, there is a two kanji signature. Many of this smith's boshi are midarekomi.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For September, 2018

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

Meeting date: September, 8, 2018 (2nd Saturday of September)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Imoto Yu

Kantei To No. 1: Naginata naoshi wakizashi

Mei: Sanetoshi

Length: 1 shaku 9 sun 8 bu

Sori: 2.5 bu

Style: naginata naoshi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: ko-itame hada with some itame, mokume and fine hada. The hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie, frequent chikei, some jifu, and pale jifu style utsuri.

Hamon: based on chu-suguha with some notare; at the koshimoto there are some gunome and saka-choji; there are frequent saka-ashi, a tight dense nioiguchi and ko-nie.

Boshi: straight, and the tip is yakizume.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura at the koshimoto, and on the omote along the shinogi-ji there are hoso-hi (narrow hi), and on the ura on the shinogi-ji there are koshi-hi. Both hi are carved through the nakago.

This is a Sanetoshi wakizashi which is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin. Originally this was a naginata, and later was modified or converted into a wakizashi. After the Muromachi period, many naginata had a large fukura and a strong sakizori shape. But when we consider this wakizashi's original shape, we do not see this kind of shape in later periods.

The wakizashi's jigane is ko-itame hada mixed with abundant mokume, and the entire fine hada is visible, and is called an Aoe chirimen-hada. However, some areas are mixed with dark blue jifu (sumi-hada), and you can see the unique jigane. Concerning the jigane's pattern, a historical sword book, the "Kuchusai Hiden Sho" says "Even if you look at this as a Bizen work, if you see the sumi-hada, this should be confirmed as Aoe work". The hamon has a tight nioiguchi, and is suguha with ko-nie, and there are abundant saka-ashi, and a saka-ashi midare-hamon at the koshimoto. The jiba (jigane and hamon) show typical Aoe characteristic points.

From this, many people voted for end of the Kamakura period smiths, such as Yoshitsugu and Tsunetsugu in the first vote. Some voted for Nanbokucho period Aoe smiths such as Tsugunao and Tsuguyoshi. Both answers understood the importance of the jiba, and judged this as being as work from after the mid-Kamakura period. But if it were Aoe Nanbokucho work, the saka-choji hamon would be more prominent and there would be more variations in the hamon's width. Also, the shape in that period would be long and have a large naginata shape. If you consider these characteristic points, we would say that this Aoe work from no later than the end of the Kamakura period.

At the Juyo Bijutsuhin certification meeting, this was classified as "Katayama Ichimonji". But the style is precisely Aoe's style, and more information about the geographical connections between these schools would be of interest for future studies, and at this time, we treated this blade as Aoe work.

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mumei: Ko-Senjuin

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 6 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight itame-hada; some places show nagare and masame hada; there are frequent fine ji-nie, chikei and a slightly dark jigane.

Hamon: fine suguha, there are some ko-gunome and some ko-midare. There are frequent nie, frequent hotsure, kuichigai-ba, uchinoke, and around the monouchi there is a long nijuba style hamon; there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with some hakikake, and the tip is komaru.

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

This is a large suriage mumei katana, judged as Ko-Senjuin work, and classified as Juyo Token. Because of the missing funbari, we believe the original shape was narrow with a large koshizori, and the tip has a fusari form or curvature with a small kissaki. From these observations, we could conclude that this sword originally had a classic tachi shape.

There is a tight itame hada, relatively refined forging, and primarily a suguha hamon. From these details, some people voted for Ko-Kyoto and Ko-Bizen work. Recognizing that period's shape and form is correct and good a perspective. But if were from these schools, you would see a clear midare hamon with ko-midare and ko-choji, and prominent hataraki such as ashi and yo.

Focusing on the katana's hataraki, and looking parallel to the suguha hamon, there are hotsure, uchinoke, nijuba, and kuichigaiba, and you can recognize frequent so-called "vertical hataraki". Again looking at the jitetsu, you shouldn't miss the tight forging mixed with strong nagare and masame hada. Considering these jiba aspects, hopefully the style would be judged as Yamato-den. From the bright refined forging, this would be mainstream Yamato work, and from one of the five schools.

Considering that four schools, except Senjiin, were active from the latter half of the Kamakura period, it is possible to judge that this school was active before that period, and that this classic work would be Senjuin.

In voting, many people could not decide among the five Yamato five schools. Probably, this is because there are not many opportunities to see a Senjuin blade in a kantei-to. From this experience, we hope you will remember the Senjuin style, with a classic shape and midare hamon when compared to the other four schools' work.

Kantei To No. 3: tanto

Shu-mei: Masamune

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: none

Style: hira-zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; there is a small amount of nagare-hada and the steel is well forged; there are abundant chikei and pale nie-utsuri.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is o-maru with strong hakikake; the boshi shows a bit of crumbled nie and a short return.

Horimono: on the omote there is sankotsuka-ken; on the ura there is a long bonji and gonabashi. The hi are carved through the nakago.

This tanto is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin and judged as Masamune's work.

Since historical times, there have been stories about the Masamune Juttetsu (10 master smiths who were his students), and before Masamune we do not hear about the "beauty of nie" in the established Soshu Den style. At Masamune's time, you can imagine that this must have had a tremendous influence on the sword making world, and the value of the work of the innovator Masamune has affected many fields, not only in Japanese sword history, but also in Japanese history and art history.

This blade is a little wide for the length, and has an almost mu-zori shape, and from this you can judge this tanto as being work from the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nanbokucho period. The jigane is itame, and there are frequent chikei. The hamon is primarily a narrow ko-notare mixed with gunome. There is a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, and on the upper half, the nie become larger, and the nie and the nioiguchi are integrated and bright. There are frequent sunagashi, in places there are frequent kinsuji hataraki, and the jiba has typical Soshu Den characteristics. Also, some yubashiri hataraki, appear like nie extending up from the hamon boundary, and these yubashiri exhibit all kinds of shapes. A historical sword book talked about a "tanzaku (a card with a poem) showing a half moon, a fan, and a plover" and this image is supposed to have represented Masamune's characteristic points. With this feeling of motion and quiet but unrestrained hataraki, we see no bad midare hamon in the Soshu's master smith's work. We can also say that the special scenery or image can not be said to represent the work of the Juttetsu (Masamune's ten master smith students).

In voting, some voted for Sadamune and Shidzu Kaneuji, and the later period smith Soshu Hiromasa. Many of Sadamune's hamon are a shallow notare and have a gentle style, and we do not see this sense of motion and quiet in a midare hamon. Kaneuji's style is supposed to be close to Masamune's among the Juttetsu, but his active period was during the Nanbokucho period, and his shapes are supposed to have a shallow sori. In the early half of the Muromachi period, the Soshu smiths' hamon were mainly choji, and small midare hamon were mixed with tobiyaki and mune yaki and approach a hitatsura style. Also, there is sometimes a mixture or combination of a well defined tight hamon with a different midare style hamon.

This tanto has been handed down in the Mino-kuni Ogaki clan lord's Toda family.

Kantei To No. 4: tanto

Mei: Kanesada

Length: slightly over 8 sun 7 bu

Sori: uchizori

Style: hira-zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jitetsu: itame hada with some strong nagare hada, and the hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie, whitish utsuri, and a bright jitetsu.

Hamon: chu-suguha with some notare; there is a tight nioiguchi and this is a nioiguchi type hamon.

Boshi: straight, with a komaru and a long return.

In the latter half of the Muromachi period, Mino province's Seki smiths became a major source of swords and exceed the "sword kingdom" of Bizen. Among the Seki smiths, the best skilled smith was Izumi no kami Kanesada.

At this time, Seki work was wide, long, the tip had sori, and there were large sized tanto. Another style of tanto had a narrow shape and a relatively standard width with uchizori, just like tanto from the latter half of the Kamakura period. Many of these tanto have itame hada or ko-itame hada, the hamon is a neat or clean suguha, the boshi is straight, and the tip is komaru with a return. In the sword world, people, call this style a Sue-Seki Rai utsushimono (copy) or "Kyo utsushi".

This is an example of this style with a standard width and with uchizori. The jigane is itame, the hamon is a neat or defined suguha, the jiba (jihada and hamon) are bright, and you can recognize Kanesada's work.

But compared with tanto from the latter half of the Kamakura period by tanto master smiths such as Rai Kunitoshi, Awataguchi Yoshimitsu, and Shintogo Kunimitsu there are differences. Kanesada's jigane have itame hada mixed with a strong nagare hada and whitish utsuri. His hamon are suguha and narrow bands of nie and hatarak is poor compared to master smiths of Kamakura period. Also their boshi are straight and the tips are komaru with a return. The boshi also fall towards the edge, but the Seki style boshi is different from Rai Kunitoshi's Mt. Fuji shaped boshi. From these differences, we wish to judge this tanto as being characteristic Seki work from the latter half of the Muromachi period.

In voting, a majority of the people saw the Sue-Seki characteristic points, and voted for Sue-Seki smiths such as Kanesada and Kanesaki in the first vote. We appreciate the sharp observations made by this group.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Hojoji Tajima no kami Tachibana Kunimasa

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame; there are abundant ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: based on chu-suguha and mixed with gunome and ko-gunome; there are frequent ashi, a dense nioiguchi and abundant nie.

Boshi: straight, and the tip is komaru.

This is a one of the Edo Hojoji school smith's Tajima no kami Kunimasa's work. This has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a

shallow sori, a short chu-kissaki, and a typical Kanbun Shinto shape. In addition, you can recognize the fine masame hada on the shinogi-ji, and among the same period's smith, it is possible to think about the Edo smiths.

In early half of the Edo period, the juzuba style hamon in the Edo area was prevalent among the Kotetsu school. Many Edo smiths such as the Edo Hojoji school's Kazusa no suke Kaneshige and Nakasone Okimasa used this style.

Around the Kanbun period, a common style was a Kanbun shinto shape, a tight ko-itame jigane, and a continuous gunome juzuba (string of beads) style hamon. In voting, people concentrated their votes on these smiths.

But as it is always pointed out, carefully examine the swords, because each smith has different characteristics. Looking at the katana again, the hamon is chu-suguha mixed with gunome, there are no vertical variations in the top of the hamon, and the top of the hamon is almost a straight line. The entire hamon has small size gunome and these are formed like a string of beads or juzuba, and this is a notable feature. This kind of style is the Edo Hojoji school's specialty, including Kunimasa's, and this is characteristic point you shouldn't miss.

If it were work by Kotetsu, there would be large gunome in the hamon, the jiba would be clearer, his boshi at the yokote would show have gunome but the edge of the hamon would be straight, the tip would have a komaru and return or be the so-called Kotetsu boshi. Kazusa-no-suke Kaneshige's hamon would have some repeat elements using one and two gunome. If it were Okimasa's work, in many of his hamon, inside of the juzuba hamon, we would recognize a two gunome repeat pattern and there are active hataraki, such as yubashiri and ha-nie extending into the ji.

Later generations of Kunimasa became the Tokugawa bakufu's okakae sword smiths, and until the end of the Edo period they worked for the bakufu along with the Yasutsugu family and the Ishido family. In the Edo Hojoji school, Kunimasa was the main line of smiths representing their lineage.

Shijo Kantei To No. 739 in the August, 2018 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a wakizashi by Harima no kami Teruhiro.

This is a wide blade and the widths at the moto and saki are almost the same. It is thick with a large kissaki, and from the shape you can judge this as Keicho shinto period work.

Many of the Keicho Shinto period smiths are supposed to have modeled their work after examples from the latter half of the Kamakura period to the early half of the Nanbokucho period by Soshu Den smiths. Many of their hamon are a notare style, and appear to be modeled after Soshu Den master works and have individual characteristic points resembling that school.

Among these works is this wakizashi, which has a shallow ko-notare hamon mixed with ko-gunome with quiet hotsure at the hamon's edge and yubashiri. There is a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, and a bright and clear hamon, and these are details seen in the Umetada school's smiths such as Umetada Myoju, Higo no kami and Harima no kami Teruhiro, and the Shodai Tadahiro.

This wakizashi has this kind of characteristic notare hamon, and in addition, the jigane is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and the hada is visible and there is a clear jigane. The hamon is based on notare, there is a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, a bright and clear hamon, kinsuji and fine sunagashi. Considering these characteristics, it is possible to look at this as Harima no kami Teruhiro's work.

Teruhiro's nakago tips are kurijiri, the yasurime are sujichigai, and many of his mei on wakizashi and tanto are on the omote side under the mekugi ana, towards the mune edge, and have a long kanji signature made with a slightly thick tagane. His signatures are "Harima no kami Teruhiro" with 5 kanji, "Harima no Kami Fujiwara Teruhiro" with 7 kanji, and often with 6 kanji like on this wakizashi.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Harima no kami Teruhiro, and few people voted for Higo no kami Teruhiro.

As I explained above, Higo no kami Teruhiro has hamon similar to Harima no kami's notare style hamon work. In this case, it is difficult to judge the differences between them, and at this time we treated Higo no kami Teruhiro as a correct answer.

If you compare them carefully, Harima no kami Teruhiro's has a denser nioiguchi, the jiba is clear, and the work is more sophisticated than the Higo no Kami's hamon, and there is a strong influence from Myoju's style.

Higo no kami Teruhiro is famous as a master smith, he has many yari and naginata, but not many katana and wakizashi.

Besides the correct answer, a relatively large number of people voted for Dewa Daijo Kunimichi and Hida no kami Ujifusa.

Kunimichi's jigane is itame, the entire hada is visible and shows the unique rough forging of the Horikawa school. Many of his hamon are notare mixed with gunome, with vertical active hamon, but some of his early period hamon are a shallow ko-notare mixed with ko-gunome. His nakago tips are a pronounced kurijiri and the yasurime are o-suji chigai.

Ujifusa's nakago have common elements with Teruhiro, but usually his hamon are based on a wide gentle notare midare hamon. There are nie, and some areas have uneven large nie, and the work appears bold.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai