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Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Jujo Bijutsu Hin

Type: Katana

Mei: Dewa no Kuni Taikei Shoji Naotane (kao)
Bunka 12 Kinoto I-toshi (1815) Chushu (mid-autumn) oji (accepted)
Sugihara Gunki Masakane nozomu tsukuru kore

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu 7 rin (69.3 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 1 rin (2.15 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 bu 5 rin (3.8 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 2 bu 6 rin (22.0 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are slightly different. The blade is slightly thick, there is a large sori at the bottom half, and a long chu-kissaki. The jitetsu is a tight ko-itame hada, and on the omote, some places are mixed with mokume hada. There are ji-nie and midare utsuri. The hamon is a ko-choji style hamon mixed with ko-gunome, gunome, togariba, square gunome, and some saka-ashi, and there are small variations in the height of the hamon. There are frequent ashi, nioi-guchi type ko-nie, and around the koshimoto the hamon is soft. The boshi is a small midarekomi with a togari style komaru and a return. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is a shallow ha-agari kuri-jiri. The yasurime are sujichigai and fuku-shiki kesho yasuri (a type of decorative yasurime). There is one mekugi-ana, and on the ura, on the shinogi-ji there is a small long kanji signature with a kao. On the omote mei, written on both sides of the shinogi, there is date and the name of the person who ordered this sword. Naotane passed away in Ansei 4 (1857) at the age of 79 years. That means he was born on Anei 8 (1779), in Yamagata in Dewa no Koku (it is thought that his family's profession was forging sickles and farm tools).

Naotane's given name was Shoji Minobei, and his sword smith name is Taikei. Around Kansei 10 (1798) when he was twenty years old, he is supposed to have become a student of Suishinshi Masahide.

His earliest confirmed work is from Kansei 13, when he was 23 years old, and by the time he passed away, his career spanned about 60 years. Among the Edo Shinshinto smiths, he produced many swords along with Koyama Munetsugu. In the beginning he lived in Nihonbashi Horie-Cho, next to Kanda Izumi-Bashi. Around Bunka 9 (1812), at the age of 34 years he moved to Shitaya Kachi-machi. The year before that in Bunka 8 (1811), he became the okakae (a craftsman who worked for a daimyo) smith for his home province clan lord's Akimoto family. In Bunsei 4 (1821) at the of age 43 he received the Chikuzen Daijo title, and on Kaei 1 (1848) at the age of 70 years, he received the Minosuke title.

As people know, from his stamps and inscriptions, he made swords in various remote places far away from Edo: The east is Nikko and the west end is Bizen, and he forged swords mainly in three areas. The first time he did this was from Sagami to Ise; the second time he did this was from Shinano through Osaka to Bishu; and the third time he did this was after he received the Minosuke title when he traveled to Osaka, Kyoto, Bichu and Tango when he was around 70 years old.

Regarding Naotane's travels, our former teacher Sato Kanzan wrote: Naotane departed in Koka 2 (1845) and traveled on a 5 year long journey, and we are amazed at his efforts. Even though he used kago and horses, he was over 70 years old, and he traveled to many areas, and continued to make many swords. Even if he was physically strong and received his titles, he constantly traveled to learn about subjects such as iron making. However, without his extensive friendships and the high degree of popularity his work commanded, he could not have done this. His activities were made possible because of his fame and skills.

Naotane's styles faithfully followed those of his teacher Suishinshi Masahide, who talked about returning "back to classic swords and sword making". Naotane followed each school's style skillfully, and he had a high level of skill, and in particular, he had many master works from Bizen Den such as Ichimonji, Kagemitsu, Kanemitsu utsushi (copies), and from Soshu Den. Among his works there are a mix of both schools' styles, and it has been said that he was truly the best and most skilled student in the Suishinshi school.

His shapes in his Soshu Den work are wide with a long kissaki. In his Bizen Den work, the width is standard, and there is a large sori. Naotane faithfully copied each school's shape. His jitetsu are correct and depend on the school, and can be ko-itame, itame, and masame hada. Sometimes his itame hada were mixed with a unique a mokume hada called "Uzumaki-hada," and this is one of his characteristic points.

This katana's hamon has saka-ashi in some places, and different large and small areas in the irregular hamon, and some vertical variations. We could say that this is a Kagemitsu or Kanemitsu utsushi hamon, and there is clear midare utsuri, and a soft bright clear nioi-guchi. This work shows the style and a high level of perfection for a Bizen Den work, and shows his success in working in this style. The funbari is not prominent, but the bottom half has a prominent large sori, and with the hamon's composition, this has a strong feeling of a classic style and followed his teacher Suishinshi's ideas. Also, this katana has several distinct and characteristic points: in

some places there are long ashi which extend almost to the edge of the hamon and this is a Shinshinto period characteristic. There is a soft nioi-guchi at the koshimoto, and this is a Suishinshi school characteristic. Some areas in the upper part of the hamon continued upward to become to utsuri, and this type of cloudy appearing area is a characteristic of Naotane. The katana is dated Bunka 12 (1815) when Naotane was 37 years old, and among his usual utsushi work, this is considered to be one of his best master works.

The person who ordered this sword “Sugihara Gunki Masakane”, in Tenpo 12 (1841) published “Kawagoe Han Bungen-cho” which was a list of the Kawagoe clan’s samurai. Masakane himself was listed as “on-toshiyori, 400 koku, Himeji-toritane, Sugihara Gunki, segare (son of) Sugihara Sukesaku” and “toshiyori 400 koku Sugiura Gunki’s servant” and since this overlaps with Naotane’s sword making period, there is a high probability that he was the Kawagoe clan’s Echizen Matsudaira family’s fourth generation clan lord Naritsune’s servant, but this conclusion needs more study.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

No.745 Tosogu Kanshou

Juyo tosogu

Rekko kigo-zu daisho tsuba

Daisho mei: Shin Harada Shigesuke kinhai (with gold kao)

Ansei Tsuchinoe Uma(1858) no natsu (summer)

motte Naka-Minato satetsu toko (smith) Chikanori

Uyayashiku kitae Yo wo tsutsushinde horu

(Chikanori politely forged and engraved.)

In the Bakumatsu period, the Mito clan’s Tokugawa Nariaki was known as an outstanding daimyo, and his nickname was Rekko (and hence the name of the daisho tsuba). We can recognize Nariaki’s achievements, and when we pick up this tsuba, we can see the excellent material and the high perfection of the work. Rekko was a lord who had a profound knowledge of art, and was known for his cultural sensitivity. Also, he urged the clan to pursue political reform, and worked with brilliant scholars such as Fujita Toko, and used his power to reform the Mito clan. Reflecting the Bakumatsu period’s turbulence, the Mito clan expended resources to develop a type of iron making furnace. One of the persons involved in these efforts was Oshima Takato, who is famous in Japanese iron making history.

With this background, the Mito clan is thought to have had a serious interest in tsuba design. These tsuba have mei which say they were made using Naka Minato satetsu (iron sand). The forging is very refined, and strongly transmits the iron’s texture and warm feeling.

Harada Narihiro was Rekko’s close subordinate who exercised power during Nariaki’s clan reforms. The dai-sho tsuba reflects the upheaval in the Mito clan’s history, and its

concern for iron and for iron's practical uses. We can actually feel that a tsuba is an effective historical material from looking at this perfect work.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 745

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 745 Shijo Kantei To is March 5, 2019. 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, 2019 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's name was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

Information:

Type: Wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 6 sun 4 bu (49.7cm)

Sori: 3 bu (0.9 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 bu 5 rin (3.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 1 sun 2 bu 2 rin (3.7cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly less 1 bu 7 rin (0.5cm)

Kissaki length: 5 sun 1 bu 2 rin (15.5cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 8.5 bu (14.7 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri wakizashi with an ihorimune. It is wide, and there is almost no difference in the widths at the moto and saki. There is a shallow sori and a large kissaki. The jigane shows a tight ko-itame hada, and on the omote side at the koshimoto there is a large hada pattern visible. There are abundant ji-nie, and fine chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In the hamon, there are thick or wide ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi, and the jiba (jitetsu and hamon) is bright and clear. The horimono on the omote and the ura are futasuji-hi with maru-dome. On the omote, under the hi, there are bonji; on the ura, inside of a frame at the koshimoto there is a Daikokuten ukibori (relief). The nakago is ubu, the nakago yasurime are sujichigai with kesho. On the omote below the ubu nakago ana and along both sides of the shinogi line there is a long kanji signature. The ura has a kinzogan (gold inlay) saidan mei (cutting test).

The NBTHK's 70th Anniversary, The Tatara's 40th Anniversary, and the Second All Japan Nyusatsu Kantei-to

Date: Heisei 30 (2018), November 24 (Saturday)

Place: Dai-ichi Hotel, Ryogoku, Tokyo

The customary single vote nyusatsu competition was held on the first day of the All Japan 70th Anniversary meeting at 12:00-16:00 pm at the Daiichi Hotel Ryogoku's 4th floor meeting area.

The 5 blades described below were the subjects of the kanteito. Many people competed, and three prizes were awarded. The winners received a certificate of merit and a gift. The prize winners were:

Ten-I (1st prize): Miyano Teiji

Chi-I (2nd prize): Maki Dochi

Jin-I (3rd prize): Mike Yamasaki

Kantei To No. 1: tanto

Mei: Uda Kunihisa

Length: 9 sun 1.5 bu

Sori: uchizori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: ko-itame hada; the entire ji is tight, and on the mune side there is a little nagare hada. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, whitish utsuri, and towards the hamon there are suji utsuri.

Hamon: suguha with slight notare, mixed with ko-gunome, kuichigaiba, and some rough nie.

Boshi: slight notarekomi; the tip is a tsukiage style komaru, and there is a long return.

This is an uchizori shaped tanto, and the jiba is bright and clear, and the entire blade is well made. The first impression reminds us of work from the end of the Kamakura period.

But, if you examine this tanto carefully, the shape is slightly long for the width and the boshi falls toward the edge, and from these details, we wish to judge this as early Muromachi work from around the Oei period. After deciding on the period, on the omote and ura side, the hamon is mixed with kuichigaiba, and from this, not just a few people voted for Sue-Tegai school smiths. These smiths are a good answer, but if this tanto were that school's work, it would usually be thicker, and so you would need reconsider this.

In this period, the Yamato school's characteristic point is firstly the nie. Looking at the nie carefully, you can recognize individual strong bright rough nie, and from this, the Etchu Uda school's name comes to mind. Additionally, the boshi is a tsukiage style komaru with a long return, and this characteristic is seen in many Uda school works and this is hard to miss. The school's work has few outstanding characteristics, and in a kantei vote, people can miss the maker. However, a few people considered these characteristic points, and voted for Uda school work.

Furthermore, looking at this carefully again, the jitetsu is bright and refined, and the jiba is clear as is seen in many of the works of Kunifusa and Kunihisa. Kunimune's jigane tends to be darker and the hada is visible, and from this perspective, votes for Kunifusa and Kunihisa are preferable.

Explanation Ishi Akira.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Bishu osafune ju Kagemitsu

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: 6.5 bu

Style: Shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: there is a tight ko-itame hada, abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, jifu, midare utsuri and a clear jitetsu.

Hamon: suguha mixed with gunome, kaku-gunome, and ko-choji. There are frequent ashi and yo, some saka-ashi, nioiguchi type ko-nie, fine sunagashi and a clear and tight nioiguchi.

Boshi: small midarekomi, komaru and return.

This is an ubu signed Kagemitsu tachi. The differences in width at the moto and saki are almost inconspicuous. There is a large koshizori, and a long chu-kissaki, and from the shape you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Kamakura period. The jigane has midare utsuri, and from this, it is possible to judge this as Bizen work. Actually, in voting, a majority of people voted for the correct answer Kagemitsu, or an almost correct answer of Nagamitsu. A few people voted for Chikakage and Motoshige. The Nagamitsu votes may have come because of the smaller than usual hamon with closely spaced round topped plump choji. But the hamon is not the same as Nagamitsu's kaku-gunome, especially around the center which has larger kaku-gunome, and which bears a resemblance to a kataochi style hamon with saka-ashi. On the other hand, on the omote, the entire hamon is small with straight fine ashi. In other words, the vote was divided into two, depending on the main focus of the voter, and whether the focus was on the omote or the ura side.

The Chikakage answer may have come from the fact that the boshi pattern starts before reaching the yokote. The Motoshige answer may come from the fact that the hamon in some places is mixed with kaku-gunome. But I wish to consider the forging.

The tachi's tight ko-itame clear jitetsu does after all come from the Osafune mainstream, and from a famous master smith known for his forging. The important point in judging this blade is to understand the jitetsu.

Explanation by Kubo Yasuko

Kantei To No. 3: katana

Mei: Kurihara Chikuzen no kami Taira Ason Nobuhide
Meiji 9 nen (1876) 8 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 7 sun

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: itame hada, and the hada is slightly visible; there are abundant ji-nie, and chikei.

Hamon: the entire hamon is high with gunome choji, large gunome, and gunome which forms a midare hamon; some parts of the midare is formed from square shaped gunome; the top of the hamon is a mix of ko-gunome and small togariba and this forms a fukushiki shape. There are ashi, yo, prominent shimaba, a slightly dense nioiguchi, ko-nie, and long kinsuji; the entire hamon has fine sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi; on the omote, the tip has a square shape; the ura tip is slightly forward towards the edge, and shows a sharp style; both sides have a long return.

This blade is slightly wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is not prominent. There is a large kissaki. Besides being 2 shaku 7 sun long, the blade is thick and heavy, and the fukura is poor, and this is reflected in the Shinshinto period shape very well. The jiba is strong, the hamon has thick long ashi which come almost to the edge of the hamon, and these are the period's characteristic points.

The jigane's itame hada has abundant ji-nie and chikei. Inside of the hamon there is masame hada, prominent kinsuji, sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi, and these characteristics are strong reflections of the Soshu Den style, which is seen in this Shinshinto period master smith's work. In addition, the hamon shows Nobuhide's strong characteristic points, and from this many people voted for the correct answer.

In the characteristic hamon, the tops of the square shaped large gunome and the gunome choji, are split small by ko-gunome and small togariba, and this forms the fukushiki or doubled shapes. The entire hamon is composed of square shaped elements. There are gentle nie, and the nioiguchi extends up to the tip of the sword. The entire interior of the hamon is a bright pale white color, and the tip of the boshi is almost a square shape.

Considering the square shaped gunome choji hamon, some people voted for Taikei Naotane and Hosokawa Masayoshi. Both smiths produce hamon which are soft at the koshimoto, but we do not see such continuous long kinsuji. If this were Naotane's kataochi gunome midare hamon, we would see some utsuri. If it were Masayoshi's juka-

choji hamon, it would contain fan shaped elements and ashi which are slanted and sometimes cross over each other.

Explanation by Ooi Takeshi

Kantei To No. 4: Wakizashi

Mei: Izumi no kami Fujiwara Kunisada

Length: 1 shaku 2 sun 3 bu

Sori: slightly less than 4 bu

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

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

Hamon: based on notare mixed with gunome; there are ashi, abundant nie, kinsuji, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight and with a komaru; there is a slightly long return, and frequent nie.

Horimono: on the omote there is a hitsu (inside of a frame) kurikara; on the ura there are bonji and goma-bashi.

This is the Shodai Kunisada's work. Among Kunihiro's students, the Shodai Kunisada and the Shodai Kunisuke were among his later students. From the signature and the style, Kunisada is supposed to have apprenticed with Echigo no kami Kunitoshi.

This is a wide blade with a large long kissaki and a Keicho Shinto shape. Based on a loose or free notare hamon, at first impression, this looks like Kunitoshi's work. From this you can recognize a very close relationship between Kunisada and Kunitoshi. This style is seen relatively often in Kunisada's early period work. In this style, we often see muneyaki which is seen in Kunisada's later work as a characteristic point, and this wakizashi appears to have some pale muneyaki.

Kunisada's well detailed horimono is characteristic, his kurikara dragon's eyes are called "acorn eyes" and this is a characteristic point we never see in the work of Kunitoshi and Kunisuke. This is an important characteristic.

Some people voted for Ikkanshi, but his hamon are toran midare mixed with choji, and his kurikara shape is different. In this work, besides Kunisada's jiba characteristics, we wish to note the horimono's characteristic points.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

Kantei To No. 5: Tanto

Mei: Kanemoto

Length: 8 sun

Sori: uchizori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jitetsu: tight ko-itame hada; there are abundant dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and pale whitish utsuri.

Boshi: straight, and the tip is round or omaru with a return; the point is forward towards the tip of the blade.

This is a Magoroku Kanemoto tanto and one of his few Rai utsushimono examples.

For Seki school Rai utsushi work, the forging is especially refined. There are abundant dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and the whitish utsuri is not seen very often.

The suguha hamon is bright and there is a classic nioiguchi with a classic appearance, and because of this, many people voted for Koto work such as from the Enju school.

At the tip the blade is thin, and because of this, opinions suggesting this is Koto work are understandable. But the boshi tip is round and large and has a falling shape: i.e. it falls towards the edge of the kissaki, and this is a characteristic point to look for in Seki Rai utsushi work.

Also, the tanto does resemble Kamakura period Koto work with the large pattern hada, nagare hada, and areas in the ji which do not show much hada and are well forged.

This details are helpful in judging this as later work.

Many people voted for Kanesada and that is completely understandable. This is an outstanding example of Seki Rai utsushi work.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

2019 New Year's Teirei Kanshou Kai

The Heisei 31 new Year's Teirei Kansho Kai was held in the Token Hakubutsukan 1st floor auditorium, and 78 people attended besides NBTHK members.

The swords discussed below were shown in the January, 2019 meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. As usual for the new year's meeting, there was a single vote allowed, and prizes were awarded after the lecturer discussed these blades.

Meeting date: January 12, 2019 (2nd Saturday of January)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Prizes:

Teni (first prize): Miyano Teiji (Tokyo)

Chi (second prize): Matsumoto Hirono (Tokyo)

Jini (third prize): Ota Shiro (Tokyo)

Kantei To No. 1: wakizashi

Mei: Bitchu Kuni Mizuta ju Oyogo Shigekuni

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 4 sun 8 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: unokubi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: ko-itame hada, and in places the hada is visible

Hamon: straight yakidashi at the moto, and above this, there are o-gunome midare mixed with ko-gunome, and yahazu style choji. There is a dense nioiguchi, abundant ara-nie, kinsuji, bo-suji, frequent sunagashi, and prominent mune-yaki.

Boshi: on the omote the boshi is straight and the tip is sharp; on the ura the boshi is straight and there are kuichigaiba and the tip is sharp. The kaeri (return) continue along the mune and the tip has hakikake.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are koshi-hi and wide soe-hi grooves.

The wakizashi's jiba (ji and hamon) emphasizes prominent nie, and from this, it is obviously a Soshu Den work. Based primarily on o-gunome, the large hamon is not Koto period work. Considering work after the Shinto period, with this much ara-nie from the moto to the tip and a dense nioiguchi, there are two schools which come to mind, Satsuma or the Bitchu Mizuta school.

In the center of the blade, there are thick vertical lines, and some people looked at this as "Satsuma imozuru" and voted for Satsuma smiths such as Motohira. However, Satsuma work has abundant kinsuji which is different from the nie-suji we see here where the nie form suji or lines. If this is supposed to be a Satsuma hamon, the characteristic togariba are not seen, there is a less dense nioiguchi and this does not seem right. This blade obviously has intentional muneyaki, a slightly worn down nioiguchi, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi, and you can see these characteristics in Mizuta school work.

Besides Satsuma smiths, other votes were for Dewa Daijo Kunimichi and for the slightly later period smith Kiyomaro. In the case of Kunimichi, his jihada towards the hamon are mixed with nagare-hada, the midare-hamon in some places will have saka-ashi, and his boshi are a shallow notare, with a komaru and return called a Sanpin-boshi, and these are his characteristic points. In the case of Kiyomaro's work, his gunome choji style hamon are close to a midare hamon, and his nie are not evenly distributed from the moto to saki like on this sword, and there are uneven nie along the nioiguchi, and these are different characteristics.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Bichu Kuni-ju Tsugunao
Enbun 6 (1361) 6 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: tight ko-itame hada and some places are mixed with itame and mokume hada. There are abundant dense ji-nie and chikei. On the ura side at the koshimoto there is a jifu type jihada, and towards the hamon there are suji. Along the shinogi-ji side there are midare utsuri which change into dan-utsuri.

Hamon: based on chu-suguha; some areas are a very shallow notare style mixed with ko-gunome. There are frequent ashi, yo, some saka-ashi, a nioiguchi with some ko-nie, a tight nioiguchi, fine sunagashi, kinsuji, and a bright and clear hamon.

Boshi: straight, and on the omote side it is yakizume; on the ura side it is sharp with a komaru, and return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura, the bo-hi near the point are low. They are finished with kaku-dome.

This is a wide blade and there is a long large kissaki and a dynamic shape. From the jiba style and the low tips of the hi, (although this is different than the No.4 tanto), you can judge this as being Nanbokucho period work.

First, I can say that an important part of the judgement for this tachi is the unique utsuri. Towards the shinogi-ji there are small jifu type midare utsuri. Going down towards the hamon there are suji (line-like) intermittent utsuri from the moto to the saki. This type of utsuri is seen in Bitchu Aoe school work from around the end of the Kamakura period. There are two types of hamon during the Nanbokucho period: one is saka-choji midare, and the other is suguha like this tachi. In particular, the utsuri called "Aoe dan-utsuri" are seen in suguha style work and this tachi shows this characteristic point.

The forging is a tight ko-itame hada called "chirimen-hada", which is the school's characteristic jihada. Also, on the ura side, you can recognize the mu-ji type hada call "sumihada". What's more, looking at the hamon carefully, some places show saka-ashi. In Nanbokucho Aoe work there are two styles: choji midare and suguha. There is a very small amount of nie, and the hamon usually have a nioiguchi. In addition, not only the nioiguchi, but also the entire hamon is bright, right to the tip. The jiba is bright, and you can't miss this unique characteristic Aoe point in this period. From these characteristics, the majority of people voted for Aoe representative smiths such as Tsugunao, Tsuguyoshi, and Moritsugu, and these are not mis-judgments.

However Enbun 6 is when we see Tsugunao's last dated sword. In Tsugunao's tachi, mei are written as "Kaki-kudashi mei" which means that the entire mei is a single line. This tachi is signed on the omote and the ura sides, and for studies of this smith's mei, this is an important reference material.

Kantei To No. 3: wakizashi

Mei: Sagami no-kami Masatsune Nyudo

Length: 1 shaku 9.5 bu

Sori: very slight

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jitetsu: ko-itame mixed with nagare hada and mokume hada; the hada is slightly visible; there are ji-nie, chikei and pale whitish utsuri.

Hamon: chu-suguha mixed with ko-gunome. There are ko-ashi, a nioiguchi, and the upper half of the hamon has ko-nie.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

Horimono: on the omote side there is a suken; on the ura side there is a kakinagashi or a straight groove.

This is over 1shaku and is a hirazukuri sun-nobi wakizashi. This reminds us of Nanbokucho work, Keicho Shinto work, and Shinshinto work. The blade is thick, and the jiba is not as fresh looking as Shinshinto work, and from this it is not too difficult to judge this as Keicho Shinto period work.

The jigane has ko-itame hada mixed with clear itame hada and nagare hada, and work like this is often seen in the Seki school. Among these smiths, a relatively whitish jitetsu is seen in Owari work. In the Keicho period Owari representative smiths are Hida no kami Ujifusa, Hoki no kami Nobutaka, Sagami no kami Masatsune who were famous as the "Owari san saku" (the 3 Owari smiths). Masatsune's favorite hamon is suguha, and he made many masterpieces. In his suguha hamon, sometimes there is a small amount of ko-ashi, and as a result, the hamon can look like it is mixed with ko-gunome just like this blade. Many of Masatsune's works are large sized tanto, hirazukuri wakizashi, naginata, and yari, and katana are rare. With his hirazukuri wakizashi, like this example, often the sori is very slight, and almost imperceptible. Also, many of his wakizashi have simple horimono such as suken, goma-bashi, and koshi-hi. Considering these characteristic points, you should vote for Masatsune.

Among other smiths from the same period, some people voted for Yasutsugu and Tadayoshi. Yasutsugu's jigane are darker, and many of his nioiguchi are rough. Usually Tadayoshi's jigane are a tight ko-itame, with fine visible konuka-hada, have a more refined jihada, and his nioiguchi are denser and wider than this.

Kantei To No. 4: tanto

Mei: Bizen Osafune ju Chogi

Oan 2 nen (1369) 9 gatsu hi

Length: slightly over 8 sun 7 bu

Sori: slightly less than 1 bu

Style: hira-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: itame mixed with mokume; in some places the hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie and chikei, and the bottom half has pale utsuri.

Hamon: the entire hamon is high, and is a notare mixed with gunome and square gumome. There are also ear shaped gunome. There are ashi, the upper half has abundant uneven nie, and there are kinsuji, sunagashi, and yubashiri.

Boshi: midarekomi, the tip is a tsukiage style or sharp, and there is a long return.

The tanto's length is under 1 shaku, and thin for its width. There is a shallow sori, and from the shape, it is not difficult judge this as Nanbokucho period work. In this period, Soshu Den became popular all over Japan. Bizen Koku work had a nioi-deki style hamon (the nioiguchi was composed of nioi) but there were exceptions. Most notably, Chogi's work is described as "Bizen work, although it never looks like Bizen work". Chogi emphasized more nie and a dynamic style. His characteristic hamon contain "ear shape gunome", where two gunome fuse together to become one gunome. In other words, there is a high notare hamon where the tops of the gunome can appear to be split into two sections. This tanto's omote and ura upper halves have his characteristic wide hamon, the boshi is tsukiage (sharp), i.e. the tip is sharp; there is a strong return, and a sharp boshi. From these features, and considering the period, a majority of people voted for Chogi.

Beside Chogi, some people voted for other smiths from the same period, such as Soshu Hiromitsu and Akihiro, and Joshu Hasebe. If it were Soshu work from these two smiths, the blades usually have a standard thickness, and we usually never see such a thin blade for the width. Usually their hamon have "dango choji", with a narrow bottom and round top, and their styles are different from this blade. A vote for Hasebe because of the shape is understandable, but many of his jigane are itame hada, the entire ji is visible, and the hamon and mune areas show nagare hada. The hamon are low and mainly notare. The boshi are o-maru, with a long return to around the machi area and have muneyaki, and are different from this tanto. Also, the tanto boshi return is very tight, and remained the same as Daisa's work, and this is an interesting point

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: oite Nanki Shigekuni tsukuru kore

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 3 sun 4 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: ko-itame hada; on the ura side there is itame hada mixed with nagare hada and mokume hada. There are abundant dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei and a clear jitetsu.

Hamon: shallow notare yakidashi style at the moto, and above this there is gunome mixed with ko-gunome, ko-notare, and togari. There are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, frequent large nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi; on the omote side there are tobiyaki, and the entire nioiguchi is bright and clear.

Boshi: there is a yakikomi (a bump or small shallow gunome) at the yokote; the omote is straight with a round point; the ura is an ichimonji style; both sides have a small return and are a yakizume style.

This katana's sori is not too pronounced and is just right. The katana is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. The chu-kissaki is long, and the blade is thick, and from this, you can judge this as Keicho Shinto work.

Looking at jiba (jitetsu and hamon), there are frequent ji-nie and ha-nie, and the hamon has hataraki such as kinsuji and sunagashi. Obviously, this is a Soshu Den style work, but among the many smiths who worked in the Soshu Den style in this period, we should notice that the jiba is bright and clear and that this is excellent work. Now look at each element carefully: the shinogi-ji is wide, the jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and on the ura side the ko-itame hada is mixed with nagare hada. The boshi on the omote and ura are yakizume. Thus this work is based on a Shoshu Den style, but has some Yamato Den elements.

This is a Nanki Shigekuni katana. He has two styles: one is a Soshu Den style like this work, and the other is an ancestral Yamato Tegai suguha style. In case of a Soshu Den style, as explained above, either the jigane or hamon is mixed with Yamato characteristics in some areas. The early Suruga uchi (swords) with a large kissaki are obviously a Keicho Shinto shape. Many of them have a gentle shape for the period, just like this one. What's more, the jihada is mixed with mokume hada (especially on the ura side) and the mokume elements are wide, and sometimes the boshi on the omote and ura have different shapes just like we see here, and these are important characteristics to help focus on Nanki work. From the moto with a yakidashi, some people voted for Kotetsu and Shin-Kunisada. If it were Kotetsu's work, the hamon would have large and small gunome and one pair of Hyotan-ba, or a continuous gunome juzuba, and yakikome at the yokote which was a characteristic. Oya-Kunisada's hamon are mainly based on choji, and are different from this hamon.

Shijo Kantei To No. 743 in the December, 2018 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Omi daijo Tadahiro.

The nidai Tadahiro's tanto are very rare. The shape is often either standard or is slightly wide, long, and thick, and has uchizori. This has a relatively short length for a nidai Tadahiro tanto.

The Omi daijo's jigane are frequently a tight ko-itame, and there are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and Hizen's unique komenuka hada, and the hints refer to this.

The nidai's hamon are the style established by the shodai Musashi daijo's Tadahiro period, and which were produced on a large scale. They have the Hizen characteristic

suguha with a belt-like nioiguchi. The boshi are parallel to the fukura, and are komaru with a return, which is often seen in Hizen work.

The nidai's suguha often have kuichigaiba and nijuba just like we see on this tanto.

The nidai Tadahiro's nakago tips are iriyama-gata, his yasurime are kiri, but we sometimes see kate-sagari. Many of his signatures on a hirazukuri tanto are on the omote side towards the mune edge, with long kanji signatures, and we see few two kanji signatures.

In voting, the majority of people voted for the nidai Tadahiro, and a few people voted for Musashi daijo Tadahiro (the shodai Tadayoshi).

As explained above, the shodai Tadahiro has many of these suguha works, his nakago tips are iriyama-gata, and his yasurime are kiri. There are a few nakago with kate-sagari yasurime. Because of this, at this time, a shodai Tadahiro vote is treated as correct answer.

But during his (the shodai's) Tadayoshi mei period, his nakago tips were kurijiri, and the majority of his yasurime were shallow kate-sagari, or kate-sagari, and we do not see this kind of suguha work.

As an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Shikkake Norinaga. From the late half of the Kamakura period to around the Nanbokucho period, there are few signed Norinaga tanto. His suguha hamon are often mixed with ko-gunome, and along the hamon we can see kuichigaiba and nijuba. His boshi have frequent hakikake, and are clearly a Yamato-den style. His mei are on the omote side along the center, there is long kanji signature, and most of his signed work has a date.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai