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Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bijutsuhin

Type: Katana

Mei: Kuniyasu

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu (69.1 cm)

Sori: 4 bu 8 rin (1.45 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)

Sakihaba: 9 bu (1.45 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 2 sun 1 bu 6 rin (6.55 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 1 bu 4 rin (18.6 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

Commentary

This is a kata-kiriha zukuri katana: the omote is kiriha-zukuri, and the ura is shinogi-zukuri. There is a mitsumune, the blade is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki show almost no difference. There is a standard thickness, a shallow sori, and a large kissaki. The jigane shows itame hada mixed in some places with mokume and nagare hada, and overall, the hada is barely visible. There are abundant ji-nie and chikei, and on the omote by the machi there is a mizukage-like utsuri. The hamon overall has a high yakiba, and is a large notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-notare, and hakoba gunome. There are ashi, yo, abundant slightly uneven nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and small tobiyaki and yubashiri. The boshi is a shallow small notarekomi. The omote has a komaru and short return, and the ura has a togari, a komaru, and a slightly long return. The horimono on the omote are futasuji-hi with marudome, and under the hi there is a kasane-bori (different kinds of horimono) with bonji, rendai, and kuwagata. The ura has futasuji-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu, the tip is ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are gyaku o-sujikai. There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote, under the mekugi-ana, and along the mune side, there is a large size two kanji signature.

According to the "Tanaka kakeizu", Horikawa Kunihiro is the oldest son. Next are Kunimasa, Kunitsugu, and the youngest son Kuniyasu whose common name was Saburo-tayu. There are few examples of Kuniyasu's work compared to Kunihiro. Because Kuniyasu's style, nakago, and mei are similar to Kunihiro's, it is thought that

Kuniyasu works were dai-saku and dai-mei for Kunihiro (i.e. they were signed by Kunihiro). From Kuniyasu's signed work, we can tell that he was a very highly skilled smith. His signatures are composed of only two kanji, there are no titles, and his yasurime are either gyaku sujikai, or gyaku o-sujikai and these are supposed to be his characteristic points. His jitetsu is either a tight refined and excellent jigane, especially in his wakizashi, or are the Horikawa school's unique jigane, called "zanguri," which is a rough Horikawa-hada. With this style, more hada is visible, and it has a strong and irregular appearance.

Kuniyasu's hamon are notare mixed with gunome, and midare and modeled after Soshu-den master smiths such as Shizu. Notably, around the monouchi area we see hakoba (box-like) features which are high wide square shaped gunome. There are rough nie mixed with mura (rough nie), and prominent sunagashi, and among the school's smiths his work is judged as wild or irregular, ambitious, and as having a rustic beauty.

This katana is kata-kiriha zukuri, and during Kuniyasu's active period, primarily during the Keicho era, there were many copies of Nanbokucho period large suriage shapes. Among these, this style was popular for many smiths and was modeled after Sadamune and Kaneuji examples. It is seen especially in work by Myoju, the Horikawa school smiths, the Mishina school's Masatoshi, in the work of Echizen Shodai and Nidai Yasutsugu, Sadakuni, Masanori, Kunikiyo, the Hizen school's Nidai Tadahiro and Munetsugu, and in the work of Teruhiro, and from later smiths such as Kotetsu.

This katana is listed in some sword books as "meibutsu kiriha Sadamune utsushi". Looking at the shape, the styles on the omote and the ura have the opposite arrangement seen in the work by Sadamune, but the horimono design is a copy of the "meibutsu Atagi Sadamune" (lost sometime in the past). Other smiths such as Echizen Yasutsugu produced many works in this style. This is a wide blade, and the widths at the moto and saki show almost no difference, and there is a large kissaki and a dynamic shape. For its width, the thickness (kasane) is appropriate, there is a comfortable weight, and the condition is excellent. Also, the jigane is a typical "Horikawa hada" with a pleasing charm, and the dynamic hamon with a relaxed feeling has the characteristic square shaped gunome on the omote and ura around the monouchi area. There are a lot of sunagashi and kinsujji, and in addition, you can recognize wide and narrow areas in the nioiguchi, along with strong and weak nie. This katana shows the school's characteristic points, and exhibits Kuniyasu's true characteristics.

The shape, the jigane, and the hamon are all in good balance, and also the kata-kiriha shape and the horimono produce a more powerful feeling. This is one of the best works we can see in the work of the Horikawa school's outstanding smith Kuniyasu.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

Issue No. 750 Tosogu Kanshou: appreciation of tosogu

**Okina-yasuri Odawara fukurin tsuba
Mumei: Hikozo**

This tsuba shows a drop of water falling onto the water's surface, and ripples spreading from that. This tsuba expresses a feeling of one moment in quiet surroundings. Hirata Hikozo is son of Matsumoto Inaba no kami, and during his father's generation, the family started working for Hosokawa Sansai Tadaoki in Kyoto. Hikozo started working as a gold smith following Sansai's directions. When the Hosokawa family moved to Higo, he followed them, and he received a mansion in Yashiro Fukuro Machi, and in Kanei 12 (1635) he passed way when he was around 45 years old. As you know, Higo kinko craftsmen (gold smiths) founded the Hirata school, and the school produced four major schools (including the Hirata school) which were the Shimizu, Nishigaki, and Hayashi schools. All of these were influenced by their daimyo Sansai, but each smith established his own style, and after Sansai passed away they maintained their own styles from generation to generation. In the Tosogu gold smith world, Higo is a truly unique area, and it produced very attractive work.

In the book "Higo Kinko Roku", Hikozo stated that "he works in a classic style and does not express any vulgar (everyday or ordinary or average) taste". This tsuba exhibits this idea. This reminds us of the tea ceremony master Rikyu's student Sansai's "wabi"(i.e. austere refinement). If I understand it, this is just like a moment we call "ichigo ichie" (a once in a lifetime feeling).

After a long period of aging, the soft copper and okina-yasuri (a type of file work) have blended together very well on the tsuba's surface and the urushi penetrates into the chisel marks. The mimi (rim) is a metal rim or fukurin, and this Odawara style fukurin is praised as Hikozo's original work. Also, the tsuba has silver mixed with shakudo, and is a valuable work.

Art work reflects the period's culture. The Momoyama period culture displayed a harmony of motion and quietness, and of gorgeousness and wabi (refined and sophisticated taste), and this tsuba displays this type of feeling. This shows Hikozo's unconventional sophistication.

Explanation Kubo Yasuko

Shijo Kantei To No. 750

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 750 Shijo Kantei To is August 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 August 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 was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

Information:

Type: Tanto

Length: 9 sun 2.5 bu (28.03 cm)

Sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)
Motohaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)
Motokasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)
Nakago length: 3 sun 7 rin (9.3cm)
Nakago sori: slight

This is a hirazukuri tanto with an ihorimune. It is wide and long (sun-nobi), and thin for the width. There is a shallow sori. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and the hada is slightly visible. There are abundant dense ji-nie and fine chikei. The mune area has whitish utsuri and the hamon area in the ji has bo-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. In the hamon, there are small ashi, nioiguchi type ko-nie, some kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri, and the yasurime are sujikai. There are two mekugi-ana. On the omote under the original mekugi-ana, along the center there is a mei.

Teirei Kanshou Kai June 2019

Date: June 8 2019 (2nd Saturday of June)
Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium
Lecturer: Imoto Yuki

Kantei To No. 1: katana

Orikaeshi Mei: Unsho

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihori-mune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; some places are mixed with itame, and mokume hada. There are frequent ji-nie, fine chikei, clear jifu utsuri, and there are some suji shape utsuri.

Hamon: based on a wide suguha mixed with gunome, square shape gunome and ko-gunome. There is a midare hamon with some slanted features, and there are some togari. There are frequent ashi and yo, some saka-ashi, and ko-nie.

Boshi: notarekomi; the tip is o-maru and there is a small return.

The Ukan school smiths use the “Un” kanji, and have names such as Unsho, Unji, and Unju, and because of this, people refer to the school as the Unrui school. They are Bizen smiths, but their work shows influence and characteristics from the Rai and Aoe schools and this katana shows these influences. There is a standard width, the large sori is a wa-zori style, the jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and the suguha hamon has ko-nie just like Rai school work, and some people voted for Rai work. But if this were

Rai school work, there would be a gentle suguha hamon with muneyaki, and the jigane would have nie utsuri. The jigane has clear dark jifu utsuri which appear as though they were put in place by being pushed by a finger, and from these details you cannot judge this as Rai school work. Also, in some places, the midare hamon has slanted features. there are prominent saka-ashi, and some areas have pale suji shaped utsuri, and from these details some people voted for Aoe work. This is a reasonable opinion, but if it were Aoe work, the shape would be different, the jigane would be mixed with sumihada, and the boshi would be sharp.

Both school's influences are seen in the Unrui school's characteristics. Carefully examine the hamon and notice that there are a lot of "yo" type hataraki, and in some places we see the school's characteristic "shadow togariba" which appear like they were put in place by being pressed in by a wedge. Also, the "Kokon-meizukushi" describes their boshi as being round with a small return", and the school's boshi are large, round, and have a short return, and you should not miss this characteristic point.

Usually, Unsho's hamon are supposed to have less hataraki and be simple suguha, and Unji's hamon have many ashi and yo. But both smiths have similar work, and both names are considered correct at this time.

Some people voted for Motoshige. If it were Motoshige's work, his jitetsu often have prominent masame hada, and the boshi are sharp with a return.

Kantei To No. 2: wakizashi

Mei: Echigo no kami Fujiwara Kunitomo

Length: 1 shaku 3 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: 4.5 bu

Style: unokubi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jitetsu: itame hada; some areas are mixed with a small size mokume hada; along the hamon edge there is some nagare hada; the entire ji is tight, but the hada is barely visible. There are abundant ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: straight with a yakidashi at the moto; based on a shallow notare hamon, and contains gunome; there are ashi, nie type fine sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: shallow notarekomi with small hakikake; the tip is komaru and there is a long return.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura there are koshi-hi with soe-hi carved through the nakago.

This is a wide, long, and thick blade with a large sori and with sakisori. This type of shape is seen at the end of the Momoyama period (around the Keicho, Genna, early Kanei eras). It is unokubi-zukuri with a yokote and large kissaki. Echigo-no-kami Kunitomo is supposed to have been Horikawa Kunihiro's nephew, and is supposed to have taught the school's youngest brother Izumi-no-kami Kunisada (Oya-Kunisada). Many of the Horikawa school's jigane are itame mixed with mokume, the hada is visible,

and there are chikei, a rough unique forging, and the hamon is primarily a midare hamon modeled after Soshu master smiths such as Sadamune, and Shizu.

However, Kunitomo is somewhat individualistic, as we see in this wakizashi. His jitetsu is itame mixed with mokume, there are frequent chikei, and the entire ji is tight and refined. His hamon have a tight nioiguchi, and the entire hamon is a gentle notare hamon, or sometimes is a gunome midare hamon. His work is supposed to modeled after Sue-Seki work, especially Kanetsada's. There is a straight yakidashi at the koshimoto and a worn down nioiguchi, and these are Kunitomo's characteristic points. From these details, many people looked at this as Kunitomo's work.

For an almost correct answer some people voted for Oya-Kunisada and he does have some work which is similar to Kunitomo's. But many of Oya-Kunisada's styles have choji and gunome with the elements grouped close together in a midare hamon. Also, in his characteristic hamon, around the mitsukado (or mitsukashira) there are tobiyaki and muneyaki. These characteristics are seen in many of Kunitomo's works, but this wakizashi does not show these characteristics. If you consider this is a Kunitomo style Oya-Kunisada work, it would have muneyaki, and an "acorn eye" kurikara horimono inside a hitsu (frame).

Kantei To No. 3: Wakizashi

Mei: Uda Kunihisa

Length: 1 shaku 1 bu

Sori: slight

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: itame hada mixed with mokume hada; some areas have a strong nagare hada; the entire hada is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, straight utsuri at the machi, the upper half has whitish utsuri, and the steel color is dark.

Hamon: suguha style mixed with some ko-gunome; there are some ko-ashi and yo, frequent nie, some hotsure, uchinoke, and the upper half has some nijuba; there are some kinsuji and sunagashi, and nie suji.

Boshi: the omote is notarekomi, and the ura is a suguha style; both have some hakikake; on the omote the tip is a little sharp, and on the ura the tip is ko-maru.

This Uda Kunihisa wakizashi is from around the O-ei period (1394-1427). The shape is wide and long, it is a little thin, and has little sori. From these details many people looked at this as Nanbokucho period work. The thin shape makes it difficult to judge the period. But this is long for the width, and the sori is sakizori, so I would judge this shape as being an early Muromachi work from around the O-ei period. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, some areas show a strong nagare hada, the entire hada is strongly visible and there is a dark steel color. This is a Hokuriku area characteristic jigane and is distinctive.

The Etchu Kuni Uda school was founded by Ko-nyudo Kunimitsu in the Kamakura period around the Bunpo era (1317-18). Kunimitsu moved to Etchu from Yamato Kuni's

Uda county to Etchu Kuni's Utsu, and he established the school which became the biggest school in the Hokuriku area. The school is known to work in many styles, but just like we see on this wakizashi, a hamon with hotsure, uchinoke, and nijuba are key elements in judging work from the school.

There are strong nie around the monouchi, but we do not see "bright nie" which you could almost count individually by eye. The historical book "Shinkan Hiden Sho" says that "there are strong nie at the edge of the hamon" and this is supposed to describe their nie. A Samonji characteristic tsukiage style boshi is seen sometimes in the school's work, and this is an important element.

Besides votes for the Uda school, there were many votes for Sa Yasuyoshi. This probably came from the sharp boshi and whitish utsuri. If it were Yasuyoshi's work, his sharp boshi and return are characteristic, the nie are gentle and transform into a nioiguchi.

However recently, observations and studies of the Uda school have been progressing, and we now know that Uda Kunifusa has straight white utsuri on some blades.

Kantei To No. 4: katana

Mei: Tairyusai Munehiro tsukuru kore
Ganji 1(1864) 3 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada in a mu-ji hada style. There are fine ji-nie and midare utsuri.

Hamon: primarily a choji hamon mixed with some gunome. There are frequent long ashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

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

This is a wide blade and, the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. There is a poor hiraniku, the blade feels heavy, and there is a long kissaki. The jigane is a tight ko-itame which is almost mu-ji. the midare hamon's ashi are long and extend toward the edge of the hamon. From these details, a majority of people looked at this as Shinshinto work. The hamon has a tight nioiguchi and is primarily composed of round top choji mixed with gunome, and is a Bizen-den style. Carefully examine the midare hamon, and you can see that over the entire hamon, there is a continuous repeat distance in the pattern with a 3 sun 5 bu distance between the repeat elements. This is called a "kataoshi" or characteristic hamon. From this feature many people voted for Koyama Munetsugu and Tairyusai Munehiro.

Since they had a master and student relationship, they have similar styles of work, but this katana's mitsumune is Munehiro's characteristic point and you should not miss this. Also, on the jitetsu, utsuri appears regularly or periodically between the mune and the hamon like a row of narrow bands, and this characteristic utsuri is called wash board utsuri. This is a strong element in identifying Munehiro's work.

On the other hand, many of his teacher Munetsugu's midare hamon tops have high and low variations and there are almost no examples of utsuri.

Beside these smiths, some people voted for Suishinshi Masahide, but many of his choji hamon have a smaller size, and around the koshimoto, his hamon are soft.

Kantei To No. 5: tanto

Mei: Ryokai

Length: 8 sun 2 bu

Sori: uchizori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; the upper half is mixed with nagare hada and the hada is barely visible. There are abundant dense ji-nie, and white utsuri.

Hamon: based on a chu-suguha mixed with gunome and ko-choji; and some areas have a ko-midare style hamon. There are ashi, some yo, a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, some small yubashiri, some sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight; the tip is komaru and there is a long return.

This tanto has a standard width, and both, the length and thickness are in proportion. It is uchizori and has a late Kamakura period tanto shape, and is Ryokai's work. A few people looked at this as Muromachi period work. If it were Muromachi period work, it would be thicker, and going towards the tip, it would suddenly become thin, and there would be a more pronounced uchizori.

There is a tight ko-itame hada, there are abundant dense ji-nie, and a refined hada. The hamon is suguha mixed with gunome, there are frequent nie, the boshi is komaru and has an elegant return, and from these details, people concentrated on Rai school names.

The tanto has more nie, more gunome and a ko-choji hamon, and more variations from the usual Ryokai work. Because of this, many people missed the Ryokai name and voted for Rai Kunitoshi and Rai Kunimitsu. These votes are understandable, so we gave some points for this.

Ryokai work is similar to Rai Kunitoshi's weak jiba (jigane and hamon), and he is known for a tighter nioiguchi and a simple suguha hamon. But Ryokai has a tachi with a suguha style hamon mixed with ko-choji, ko-gunome, and komidare. Also, the Kurokawa Kobunka Kenkyujo (an organization which pursued cultural and history studies) owned a Ryokai tanto with a gunome style midare hamon with a dense nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, and a bright and clear jiba. Thus, you can think of this tanto as being a rare example showing Ryokai's unusual work.

This tanto is hard to judge, but the upper half has a jigane that is mixed with masame hada, there are strong white utsuri, and these are usually Ryokai's characteristic points. Some observant people recognized this and voted for Ryokai, and I was impressed.

Other people voted for the same period's Shintogo Kunimitsu.

If it were his work, the jigane would have chikei and the hamon would have kinsuji, which are signs of Soshu Den elements.

Shijo Kantei To No. 748 in the May, 2019 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Hosho Sadaoki

This tanto has an almost standard length, a standard width, and is uchizori, and from the shape, you can judge this as work from around the latter half of the Kamakura period.

The forging is a Hosho school characteristic style and is entirely masame hada. The hamon is a suguha style shallow notare with hotsure at the hamon edge, nijuba, and kuichigaiba. There are bright, clear, and frequent nie, kinsuji, and fine sunagashi, and this shows the period's characteristic Yamato work.

Many of the Hosho school's boshi are yakizume with frequent hakikake. Also, often the machi edge shows a yakizume shape at the beginning of the hamon, and the jigane's masame hada there turns down towards the hamon and this is one of the school's characteristic points.

In voting, vote, majority of people voted for Sadaoki, and some people voted for other Hosho school smiths such as Sadayoshi and Sadakiyo.

Their styles are very similar, and it is hard to specify an individual name, and so we treated all Hosho school smiths' names as correct answers.

Many of Sadaoki's tanto are small, and the hints referred to this. On the other hand, Sadayoshi's tanto are notably larger, and Sadakiyo has tanto which are large and small.

At this time, I will change the subject and discuss the shapes of naginata naoshi.

The photo shows an NBTHK Juyo Bijutsuhin Aoe Sanetoshi wakizashi. This was originally a naginata, the nakago was cut short, and the upper half of the mune was filed down, and these changes can alter the shape into a katana or wakizashi. This type of alteration produces a shape which is called a naginata naoshi katana or a naginata naoshi wakizashi.

The time before last, I wrote that even blades with similar features such as being wide and having a large kissaki, are often from the Nanbokucho period's Enbun-Joji era and have large suriage shapes without any defects or problems, but they are different from Shinto and Shinshinto blades.

Also, many blades from the Nanbokucho period or older are naginata naoshi, and they do not have defective or worn shapes, and we do not see this in naginata naoshi from later periods. But as I mentioned before, it is difficult to judge a period only from a shape.

You can see this type of blade would usually have a shape with no excess nikuoki, and the hamon side would show a clear line going from the upper half of the blade to the kissaki.

I mentioned last time, that blades made before the Nanbokucho period are much older, and naturally have been polished many times. During these polishing efforts, the niku or

the contours on the sides of the blade can be altered or worn away. However, old masterpieces can be polished by excellent polishers for generations, and this can preserve their shape, and so we can sometimes see and appreciate excellent old swords in excellent condition.

The oshigata is from "Hie Shrine Token" by Kashima Susumu and was published in Showa 55 (1980). It shows oshigata of Kamakura to Muromachi period naginata shapes.

Looking at these oshigata and comparing them, we see that before the Nanbokucho period, naginata shapes were originally very different from Muromachi period naginata. If you change these examples of naginata to naginata naoshi, we can observe the differences in their shapes.

These differences can be recognized and understood by looking at and studying many of these swords.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai