

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

ISSUE NUMBER 752

September, 2019

Meito Kansho

Examination of Important Swords

Type: Tachi

Mei: Bitchu Koku Masusho ju Sahyoenojo Tsunetsugu
Gentoku 2 (1330) 10 gatsu hi

Owner: Hayashibara museum

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 1 bu 6 rin (73.2 cm)

Sori: 8 bu 4 rin (2.55 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 6 rin (1.7 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 8 bu 3 rin (2.5 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 2 bu 4 rin (18.9 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is somewhat narrow, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a slightly high shinogi, and a strong koshizori with funbari. There is a short chu-kissaki which has the shape of a small kissaki. The jigane shows a tight ko-itame hada, which is mixed with itame hada on the omote, and the entire fine hada is visible. There are ji-nie, some pale and dark jifu type utsuri. Towards the hamon there are suji shaped utsuri, and in places there are dan-utsuri. The hamon is yakikomi at the machi, and above this, it is chu-suguha with a slightly shallow notare shape. There are small ashi, yo, saka-ashi, a tight nioiguchi with slightly uneven ko-nie, and on the ura there are some nie-suji. The boshi on the omote is straight, and on the ura it has a slight notare style. Both tips are an o-maru shape with a short return. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a shallow ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are o-suji chigai and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, towards the mune, there is a long kanji signature formed with small kanji, and on the ura, on the center, below the mekugi ana there is a date.

Today, at the NBTHK, we call Bitchu Koku Aoe work from around the mid-Kamakura period Ko-Aoe, and after this period we call it call Aoe. After the latter half of the

Kamakura period, Aoe work is uniform and it is difficult to classify or date it. But their characteristic points include a more refined tight jigane, we often see sumi-hada, and there are dan-utsuri around this period which is different from the uneven jifu-utsuri we see earlier. The suguha hamon styles are not different, but there is a tight nioiguchi, with saka-ashi. And as you aware, in the Nanbokucho period the hamon become more exaggerated and we see gorgeous saka-choji midare hamon with nioiguchi. Many of these blades have a bright nioiguchi with a more refined jigane than we see in Ko-Aoe work, and the jiha (ji and ha) is clear. It is interesting that in the same period, in the neighboring province of Bizen, the gorgeous choji hamon goes out of fashion, and changes to a notare hamon with prominent nie, or a primarily gunome hamon. Their signatures gradually move from the ura to omote. At the end of the Kamakura Period, from the Showa period (1312-17), besides a date, the smiths add more information about the place they live (e.g. Masu, Koi, and Aoe), and a title (Sa or Uhyoenjo, Uemonnojo, and Gyobu). Their larger kanji signatures along the center of the nakago show a return to the Ko-Aoe period style.

Incidentally, in tachi signatures after the early Nanbokucho's Ryakuo period (1338-41) we see smaller sized kanji on the shinogi-ji towards the mune side, and after the Jowa period (1345-49) this become more obvious. Until the Enbun period (1356-60), a date was written under the mei, which was the same style used by other smiths from the same period.

Saemonnojo Tsunetsugu is one of the representative master smiths from the school at the end of the Kamakura Period, and today his signed works are from Enkyo 3 (1310), Karyaku 2 (1327) and Gentoku 2 (1330). His existing works are only tachi, and his signatures can consist of just two kanji, but there are also longer signatures. His hamon are only based on suguha, mixed with komidare or with ko-gunome, and his Aoe characteristics are well controlled in his work.

This tachi is slightly narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is funbari at the moto, a pronounced koshizori, the tip has sori, there is a short chu-kissaki which resembles a small kissaki, and this is a characteristic shape in this period. Also, this blade is ubu and not suriage, there is one mekugi-ana, and it is in a perfect original condition, with no wear from polishing at the habaki moto. This tachi is very well preserved. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, the fine hada is visible, and we see a "chirimen hada" style. In places at the top of the hamon there are pale suji shaped utsuri, and towards the shinogi-ji, the utsuri, is dan-utsuri. In addition, the chu-suguha hamon has ashi and yo, and we can see some saka-ashi. On the nakago, the yasurime are o-sujichigai yasurime, and the edge side of the mune is thick. From these details, you can recognize Aoe's characteristic points. Also, the signature, the smith's place of residence, his title, and the date are all clear, and this provides important information about the smith. Furthermore, the signature on the omote is along the mune side of the nakago, and on the ura side it is on the center, so the two sides are signed in different locations (on the Karyaku period blade Tsunesugu signed his name on the **omote's** mune side, and the date is inscribed on the omote around the center), and this is valuable information showing the transition of the date's location in the work of the Aoe school's smiths.

Also, this has an origami dated Enpo 8 (1680) by Honnami Kojo, and around the saya koguchi there is a warehouse number written in red ink saying "haru 26 Tsunetsugu".

This tachi has a history as the Date family's hereditary tachi and as being a highly praised work.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

No.752 Tosogu Kanshou

**Ryu zu (dragon design) fushi-kashira
Mei : Shoeiken Jochiku with kao**

Jochiku's work leaves a strong impression, and he designed bold insects such as butterflies and dragonflies as well as fish and shellfish such as red snappers and squid. He used these designs in his takabori-zogan (high relief inlay) work, and used techniques such as raden (inlays of shell). However, he was also skilled at using flowers, birds, and dragons with fine detailed designs. He worked with hirazogan (high relief inlay) and used many types of colored metals like we see on this example.

In the Edo period book about craftsmen "Soken Kisho", the page about Jochiku says "in the beginning he was an abumi (stirrup) zogan (inlay) craftsman, the same as his father. His zogan work is first class and excellent work...". Many of his hira-zogan works were made using a polished shibuichi ground with several different kinds of gold, silver, shakudo, and hi-iro (an old Japanese bright red colored copper). Using either takabori-zogan or hira-zogan, Jochiku's style of work was maintained by his school, and the craftsmen and many of the school's smiths use the "Jo" kanji at the front of their name.

This fuchi-gashira is supposed to be work by the ni-dai (second generation) Jochiku from the signature which is quite different from the shodai's (first generation) signature, kao, and kanji style, and it also has the Sho-ei-ken title. According to books, under the Jochiku school, there is the name Johaku who later received the Sho-ei (second) name, and this Johaku Shoei became the ni-dai Jochiku after the shodai Jochiku passed away. However, some researchers question this theory. There is an opinion that Jochiku's adopted son Jochu became the ni-dai. Further studies are still required to resolve this matter.

This dragon exhibits his nails, and ferociously grips the treasured ball and rules the universe. The sunago zogan (sand-like inlay) between the clouds is effective, and the ascending dragon emitting flame looks impressive. In particular, the flame made with hi-iro red copper inlay is beautiful, and this is a special hi-iro color. We see beautiful tagane (chisel) work and the zogan (inlay). There are very fine lines in the engraving, and the colored metals used enhance the beauty of this work. There is a small unique cosmos which defines the Jochiku school's work.

Explanation Kubo Yasuko

Shijo Kantei To No. 752

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 752 Shijo Kantei To is October 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 October 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: Katana

Length: 2 shaku 5 bu 9 rin (62.4 cm)

Sori: 5 bu 3 rin (1.6 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 1 rin (3.05 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 1 rin (2.15 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 7 bu (17.3 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large sori and a chu-kissaki. The jigane is a refined and tight ko-itame. There are abundant dense ji-nie and frequent fine chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The high and low width variations in the midare hamon are not prominent, and the distance from the valley bottoms to the edge is wide. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, bright, clear and fine kinsuji and sunagashi. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is iriyamagata. The yasurime are o-sujikai with kesho. There is one mekugi-ana. There is a long kanji signature on the omote, from the side of the mekugi ana down to the nakago tip. The ura has a date in a slightly higher location than on the omote. On the side of the date, under the mekugi-ana there is a soe-mei (companion mei) concerning the sword making method.

Shijo Kantei To No. 750 in the July, 2019 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Sa Yasuyoshi.

This is a wide, long, thin blade, with a shallow sori, and from the shape, you can judge this as being from the peak of the Nanbokucho period around the Enbun-Joji period.

Most of Yasuyoshi's work is undated. However, the Juyo Bijutsuhin Choshu-ju Yasuyoshi tanto has the same signature as is usually seen in the work of the two kanji Yasuyoshi, and that tanto is dated Shohei 17 (1362). Since many of Yasuyoshi's shapes are just like this tanto, his active period is supposed to have been around the mid-Nanbokuchō period. Incidentally, Shohei 17 is a date for the South Court, and for the North Court era, it coincides with Joji 1. Besides this example, Choshu-ju Yasuyoshi has signed blades dated in the Oei and Eiwa eras. From the style and signature, his Oei dated work is supposed to a different generation's work and the relationship between the Shohei (1346-69) and Eiwa (1375-78) era works are still being studied.

O Sa's students produced many tanto and hirazukuri wakizashi. Their characteristics are: the jigane has a visible hada and there are chikei, and often whitish utsuri. The hamon are based on notare and gunome, and there are frequent nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi. The boshi follow the teacher's style, and are midarekomi, tsukiage, and the tip is sharp.

Among the Sa school smiths, Yasuyoshi's hamon are a shallow notare mixed with gunome, and almost a nioiguchi type, and there are bo-utsuri toward the hamon side. At the first impression, many of these remind us of Bizen Kanemitsu work.

Yasuyoshi's jigane are itame mixed with nagare-hada, there is a visible hada, there is whitish utsuri, jifu type hada, and there is a Kyushu style characteristic forging. His midarekomi boshi tips are biased toward the hamon side of the point and these are his characteristic points.

Incidentally, among Yasuyoshi's tanto, we infrequently see some which are smaller than his usual size, and less than 9 sun. These are slightly wide for their length, thin, and have a shallow sori. The jigane is a tight itame, there are abundant ji-nie, their whitish color is not prominent, there is a clear jigane, and a little bit of bo-utsuri along the hamon side of the ji. The hamon are konotare mixed with gunome, and there are bright and clear ko-nie. The boshi's midarekomi tip is sharp and biased towards the edge which reminds us of his teacher O Sa's work.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Yasuyoshi, and besides him, a few people voted for Kanemitsu school smiths, such as Kanemitsu and Motomitsu.

These smiths have characteristics similar to Yasuyoshi's work as I explained above, but please pay attention to the fact that their jigane are different.

Also, typical Kanemitsu hamon are mainly a gentle notare hamon, the hamon width has high and low variations, and the top of the highest part of the notare hamon is often mixed with kogunome. In contrast, Yasuyoshi's hamon are mainly a narrow notare hamon with gunome, and high and low variations are not seen in the hamon, and this is a clear difference between their hamon.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

