

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

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Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords

Tokubetsu Juyo Token

Type: Tachi

Mei: Fujiwara Sadaoki

Koshirae: Gold nashiji kiku-mon makie-saya itomaki no tachi koshirae

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 9 bu 8 rin (66.6 cm)

Sori: 5 bu 3 rin (1.6 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 3 rin (2.5 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 3 rin (1.6 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 8 bu 4 rin (17.7 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. The sword is narrow, the widths at the moto and saki are different, the shinogi line is slightly high, the shinogi ji is wide, and it is somewhat thin. Although the blade is suriage and there is a koshizori, and a small kissaki. The jigane shows a well forged masame hada, and there are ji-nie. The hamon is chu-suguha. There are hotsure, uchinoke, kuichigaiba, nijuba, yabashiri, frequent sunagashi, and frequent nie. Around the monouchi there are muneyaki. The boshi is straight, and on the omote is komaru. The boshi on the ura is yakizume. There are small hakikake on both sides. The nakago is suriage, the tip is kiri, and the yasurime are sujichigai (the new yasurime) and higaki (the old yasurime). There are three mekugi-ana, and on the omote around the nakago tip towards the mune side there is a four kanji signature.

The Hosho school is one of the five Yamato schools, and the Hosho school smith Sadayoshi signed "Takaichi gun ju-nin - - -". From this information, the school is thought to have been located in the

southern part of the Nara basin which is Kashihara City today. Also, from the end of the Kamakura period, their signatures include dates such as Bunpo (1317-18), Genko (1321-23), and Karyaku (1326-28), and so the school's active period is clear. In addition, in the school's mei we see the "Sada" kanji in names such as Sadayoshi, Sadakiyo, Sadaoki, and Sadamitsu. In the "Meikan" (a historical compilation of mei) Sadaoki's active period is listed as around the Gentoku (1329-31) period. He was Sadamune's son and belonged to the Sadayoshi school. His existing works have two types of mei, one has a two kanji signature, and the other includes the Fujiwara name.

In the school's work, characteristics of the five Yamato five schools are very distinctive. The major characteristic point is the regular masame hada. Sometimes the hada shows a slight gap or irregularity in the masame hada (i.e. a masa-ware), and conventionally people do not treat this as a defect, but as an interesting detail, and this is known as a one of the school's characteristics. The suguha based hamon has a dense nioiguchi, and the area from the monouchi to the boshi has more large nie. There are hataraki entangled with the hada from the moto to the saki along the entire blade, such as hotsure, uchinoke, yubashiri, kinsuji, and kuichigaiba. The boshi are yakizume with frequent hakikake. The school's work shows a strong character, and there is an unmistakable difference from the other Yamato schools. Furthermore, many of the school's signed works are tanto. Their nakago jiri are kiri, the yasurime are higaki, and many of the signatures are written with gyaku (reverse) strokes. These are prominent characteristics of the school.

Currently confirmed Hosho school tachi include a Tadatsugu with a two kanji signature in a blade classified as Juyo Bunkazai, a Kareki 3 dated "Yamato koku Takaichi gun ju-nin Saemojo Sadayoshi" blade classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin, and this Sadaoki tachi, so there are only three blades which makes examples from this school very rare.

This is a narrow tachi with a small kissaki. The well forged masame hada has abundant large ji-nie; the chu-suguha hamon has hotsure, uchinoke, nijuba, kuichigaiba, and yubashiri entangled with the hada; the omote boshi has hakikake and the ura boshi is yakizume. All of these details or characteristics are very typical of the school. The nakago has some higaki yasurime, and this adds to the list of the school's characteristic points. The jigane and hamon are in concert, and this is an elegant master work, not only as an example of Sadaoki's work, but also as an example of the Hosho school's tachi. Consequently, in view of these facts, this tachi is a very important example.

This tachi's koshirae is a "gold nashiji kiku kiri mon makie saya itomaki no tachi koshirae". From the kiku kiri mon (chrysanthemum

and paulownia crest), it likely belonged to a prestigious distinguished family.

This tachi will be exhibited in the “Tokubetsu Juyo Token Classification System: a 50th Anniversary Exhibit of Japanese Sword Master Works” exhibit until December 22, 2021.

Explanation by Ishii Akira, and photo by Imoto Yuki

Shijo Kantei To No. 779

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 779 Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2022. 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 January 5, 2022 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 3 sun 4 bu 5 rin (71.0 cm)

Sori: 3 bu 5 rin (1.0 cm)

Motohaba: slightly over 1 sun (3.05 cm)

Sakihaba: slightly less than 7 bu (2.1 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

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

Nakago length: slightly less than 7 sun 3 bu (22.0 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. There is a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a shallow sori and a short chu-kissaki. The jigane has a tight ko-itame hada, and there are abundant ji-nie. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon has a straight yakidashi at the moto, and above the yakidashi there are five large peaks in the notare hamon. There is a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, kinsuji, and

sunagashi, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) are bright and clear. The nakago is ubu, the tip is iriyamagata. The yasurime are o-sujichigai, with kesho yasurime. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, under the mekugi-ana along the mune edge there is a long kanji signature. On the ura, slightly higher than on the omote side, and along the mune edge, there is a date.

Tosogu Kansho

Juyo Tosogu

3 Shishi zu (three shishi (lion) design) kozuka

Mei: Mon (crest) Sojo, (Honnami) Koju with kao
has Koju origami dated Houei gan-nen (1704) with a daikin
(value) of three mai.

The head of the Goto family's second generation is Sojo. He was a master smith, and his name is mentioned in the classic rakugo (comedy) story "Kin mei chiku". According one theory, he was born in Chokyo 1 (1487) and lived until Eiroku 7 (1564). He inherited the leadership of Yujo's original Goto family, developed the family's foundation, and worked for the Muromachi shogun.

This is supposed to be the Goto family's traditional subject with the different shapes of three shishi or lions. The eleventh generation Goto Tujo judged this as Sojo's work and made this kozuka using these shishi with exquisitely placed gold crests. This is dated Houei 1 (1704) in a Honnami Koju origami or certificate.

These shishi are dignified and dynamic, and show flowing graceful shapes. Each shishi's individuality is emphasized, but at the same time the three of them fit harmoniously together, and exhibit the Goto family's tradition and their highly skilled work. Tujo made the gold ground and used shakudo, and his design made the presence of the three shishi stand out.

There are many examples of shishi, and from generation to generation this was a classic Goto subject. Therefore for posterity, Tujo found an item made by Sojo with Sojo's characteristic carving technique and in excellent condition, and used it to make this kozuka.

This is a master work, and the second generation Sojo and the eleventh generation Tujo collaborated across generations and time to produce this work.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

November Token Teirei Kansho kai

Date: November 13th (second Saturday of November)

Location: The Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ooi Gaku

Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Mei: Koretomo (Ko-Aoe)

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun

Sori: 8.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume, and there is a fine visible hada. There are abundant ji-nie, jifu, clear jifu utsuri; on the omote around the monouchi area there are pale bo-utsuri; there is a slightly dark steel color.

Hamon: choji mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, komidare and slight variations in the hamon width. There are ashi, yo, a soft nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, small tobiyaki, yubashiri, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with frequent hakikake; the tip on the omote is a yakizume style, and on the ura the point is a komaru with a short return.

This tachi has a characteristic Ko-Aoe feeling with a komidare hamon on the bottom half of the omote. The other parts of the hamon are a midare hamon with choji mixed with gunome. Notably, on the ura side at the koshimoto, variations in the hamon's width are prominent. Therefore, it may be difficult to arrive at the correct answer on the first vote. So, at this time, Ko-Bizen, Ko-Ichimonji and Fukuoka Ichimonji were treated as proper answers for the style.

At first glance, this tachi does not look like Ko-Aoe style work. But there are several examples of this type of work, such as Yasutsugu's Kokuho tachi and Juyo Bijutsuhin work, and Tametsugu's Juyo-Bijutsuhin work. In the "Honami Koho book of secrets" it says "For example even if something is judged as Bizen work, if a characteristic sumi-hada is present, it should be considered as possible Aoe work". In the Edo period, people seem to have recognized that Aoe work was similar to Bizen work.

Besides the hamon shape, looking at it more carefully, this is a wide blade, with a large koshi-zori, the tip has sori, the entire overall shape has a large sori, and there is a chu-kissaki, which is a mid-Kamakura period shape. The jigane is slightly dark near the bottom, there is itame mixed with mokume, there is a fine visible hada which has a chirimen style hada, there are jifu (sumi-hada), clear jifu utsuri, and prominent gunome and choji shaped dark areas which resemble something which could appear if a finger was pushed on the ji.

On the omote side around the monouchi area, there are jifu utsuri near the edge and pale suji-utsuri. The hamon has strong ha-nie. These characteristics are typical Ko-Aoe typical points. The nakago has a wide or pronounced machi, the hamon side of the nakago is thick, there are o-sujichigai yasurime, many gyaku-tagane strokes in the mei, and a strongly incised thick large signature which is typical of Ko-Aoe work.

(the nakago is shown at 88% of the actual size).

Kantei To No. 2: Wakizashi

Mei: Rakuyo ju Fujiwara Kunihiro
Keicho 15 nen (1610) 10 gatsu hi

Length: 1 shaku 6 sun

Sori: slightly over 2 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada; there are abundant ji-nie, fine chikei, and at the machi there is mizukage.

Hamon: the bottom half is chu-suguha, the upper half is a gentle notare, and under the yokote the hamon has a single ko-notare peak. There are small ashi, a slightly dense nioiguchi, ko-nie, fine hotsure, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: notare; the tip is komaru and there is a short return.

Horimono: on the omote there is a Daikokuten and bonji; on the ura there is a kaen bonji and rendai.

This wakizashi has Kunihiro's favorite horimono, a "Daikokuten". It is rare to see a shinogi zukuri wakizashi in Kunihiro's work. The width, length, and kissaki are well balanced, and from the shape, it is difficult to judge this as Keicho period work. In addition, in the jigane we do not see the Horikawa school's characteristic zanguri hada

(rough hada), so with these unexpected details, many people voted for Nakasone Kotetsu who is well known for his Daikokuten horimono.

Kunihiro's suguha works have no visible hada, so of course we do not see zanguri hada, although some of the suguha work has a tighter forging than we see here, and there are abundant ji-nie, fine chikei, and a bright nioiguchi. In addition, this hamon is different from his midare hamon. Furthermore, if you examine the details carefully, from around the monouchi area to the boshi the hamon becomes gradually wider and the nioiguchi becomes thicker. The boshi is notare, with a komaru and return. It is a bit difficult to see, but under the habaki area, there is mizukage below the machi and these are all clearly Kunihiro's characteristic points.

Kunihiro's Daikokuten horimono were carved mostly on hirazukuri blades, and except for this example, the horimono were carved on the ura side, and the dates are only from the Tensho period. This example is unusual because the horimono is carved on the omote side. The figure is oriented in a diagonal position, but there is one example with the figure oriented vertically. Kunihiro carved kurikara, bishamonten, and fudo-myoo on the omote side, and this is interesting. Kotetsu's Daikokuten are skillfully designed and carved, notably the straw bag's composition and size, but the Daikokuten's sitting position and depth of the carving are different.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Kinzogan mei: Sadayoshi sho-meiji ari Mori Motoyasu shoji (owned by) yoru touri Umetada suriage kore (made suriage by Umetada)

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada and the hada is visible. Some places have a "masame wara" (a loose or somewhat open line or seam in the jihada). There are abundant dense ji-nie.

Hamon: chu-suguha; some areas are mixed with gunome and a komidare style hamon. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, hotsure, uchinoke, frequent yubashiri, kinsuji, and nie-suji; there are yubashiri on the shinogi ji and the mune

Boshi: straight with frequent hakikake, and yakizume.

This blade has a high shinogi and a wide shinogi ji, uniform masame forging, and a suguha hamon with abundant hataraki. The boshi has

strong hakikake and is yakizume. From this style, in voting, people focused on either Koto Hosho school smiths or Shinto Sendai Kunikane.

This blade has almost no sori, and even for a Kanbun shinto blade the sori is too shallow. In addition, there is no funbari at the koshimoto. If you can recognize this, you would understand that this is a large suriage katana, and you can imagine that the suriage, or later the sori, was removed by the owner.

There is a strong visible masame hada which is visible, and in some areas, we see masame ware, and a wild or undisciplined appearance. There are yubashiri, not only at the edge of the hamon, but also in many other places. The characteristic hamon nie are stronger in the tip area when compared to the moto area, and it seems like there was no intention to produce a clean or uniform finish like we would see on a Shinto work, and this is a Hosho school utsushimono or inspired work.

If this were Kunikane's work, the hada would be a tight masame hada, and even if the hada were visible, it would not be strong. Many of Kunikane's hamon have a uniform width and has relatively tidy or organized nie. Compared to Hosho work, many of his jiba (jigane and hamon) are more calm, and the some of the works of the shodai and nidai have mizukage.

In shinogi zukuri Hosho school work, the shinogi-ji's masame hada gradually disappears around the beginning of the yokote area. But Kunikane's masame hada extends past the are yokote area, and the flat shinogi-ji area, above the yokote and kissaki rapidly turns up to the mune, and this is one of his characteristic points.

The owner of this sword, Mori Motoyasu, is Mori Motonari's eighth son and passed away in Keicho 6 (1601) . Sendai Kunikane was about 23 years old, in Keicho 19 (1614), when he moved to the capital and become student in the Etchu Masatoshi school, so Kunikane was young when this sword was made.

Kantei To No. 4: Katana

Mei: Hoshu Takada ju Fujiwara Munekage

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu

Sori: 6.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada, and in some areas this is mixed with nagare hada; there are abundant large ji-nie, fine chikei, and a dark ji with whitish areas.

Hamon: wide suguha mixed with ko-gunome; there are frequent ko-ashi and nezumi-ashi, somewhat small shimaba, a tight nioiguchi, some ko-nie and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi, some hakikake, and yakizume.

This katana is Koto period Takada work, but the last name of the smith is not Taira, so this is more likely Shinto period work when the name Fujiwara was more often used. There is a Munekage Mei which is the same as this work and is dated in the Bunroku period (1592-95). This was the end of the Muromachi period, and already some smiths were using the Fujiwara name. In this period, it is hard to find differences in Munekage's work from the same period's Taira Takada work, and so at this time we treated all Taira Takada smiths' name as a correct answer.

This blade is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different, although it is clearly widening going towards the moto from the tip, and from this you can recognize this is either ubu or close to ubu. In addition, there is a high shinogi and wide shinogi-ji, and the overall sori is slightly large. However, from the koshimoto the nakago sori is shallow, and there is a prominent sakizori. There is a large kissaki and long nakago which are often seen around the Eiroku to Bunroku periods, and there is an Azuchi Momoyama period shape. In this period, famous smiths who made hamon based on a wide suguha are Sue-Bizen smiths such as Kanefusa, and Taira Takada. At this time, a few people voted for Kanefusa, and the majority of votes were for Taira Takada and Osafune Kiyomitsu.

From the jigane which has nagare hada and a whitish color, some judged this as Kanefusa work and the jigane is relatively beautiful and the whitish areas look like utsuri, so some people judged this as Kiyomitsu's work. But both of these smiths' work do not show the type of tight nioiguchi we see here, and they do not have sharp ashi and yo which appear "like the tip of a needle". If it were Kanefusa's work, it would have strong nie. Also his katana, sometimes after being used, have a kissaki which can lean toward the mune edge, and many of his boshi have a long return. Many of Munekage's boshi have a rather standard return, or are yakizume. If it were Kiyomitsu's work, there would be prominent mokume forging, frequent yo, and an effect in the hamon which is called "Kiyomitsu's drool".

Kantei To No. 5: Katana

Mei: Kanemoto (Magoroku)

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly over 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame and nagare hada, and the hada is slightly visible; there are ji-nie and a whitish color.

Hamon: The width of the entire hamon is low; the pattern is based on togariba and mixed with ko-gunome, gunome, and some sanbonsugi. There are ashi, a nioiguchi with ko-nie, and some sunagashi.

Boshi: straight and the tip is komaru; on the omote the boshi drops slightly toward the hamon edge.

This katana is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not different. The tip has sori, there is a long chu-kissaki, and the shape is similar to work made after the Eiroku (1558-69) period. However, this blade is slightly short, and there is a short nakago which is suitable for a katate-uchi. This kind of shape appears gradually after about the Eisho (1504-27) period, and from around the Kyoroku to Tenmon (1528-54) period this shape become popular. Also, it is thin, there is a poor hiraniku, the flat shape looks very sharp, and this kind of blade is seen often in Sue-Bizen work.

This katana's signature is different from Kanemoto's signature from around the Kyoroku period with square shaped kanji. The kanji shapes here are more rounded and closer to styles seen from the Taiei (1521-27) period and also slightly similar to the Shodai's signature around the Meio period (1492-1500), and is possibly from before the Taiei period.

However, in addition to the shape, the jigane has nagare hada, a whitish color, the midare hamon has prominent togari, and the boshi looks like it is slightly biased toward the hamon side. These are Sue-Seki typical jiba (jigane & hamon) characteristics. In particular, for the width, the Hamon's height is low, the togari features in the midare hamon are mixed irregularly with gunome and ko-gunome, and there are areas with some sanbonsugi, which shows the characteristic points of Magoroku Kanemoto very well, and a majority of people voted for the correct answer.

A few people voted for Nanbokucho period work. Work from that period with this kind of length should be largely suriage and without funbari. Kosori work has a low hamon, and is mixed with many types of features, but because the midare hamon's height and size are

somewhat constant, the midare pattern should be slightly smaller or confined.

Shijo Kantei To No. 777 in the October, 2021 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Minamoto Hidetoshi, which was Kiyomaro's early name, and is dated Tempo 5 nen (1834).

The first characteristic features expected on a work by Masao or Kiyomaro from the Yamaura school are: the shape has a poor fukura and is sharp looking; the jigane is itame with frequent chikei; the hamon are based on round top gunome and choji; there are long ashi, there are nie, there is a bright and clear hamon; some places have strong bright rough reflective nie; there are frequent black or reflective kinsuji and sunagashi; the boshi is midarekomi; and the tip is sharply pointed and has hakikake.

This is a Kiyomaro tanto made when he was 22 years old, so is an early work, and the above characteristics were not yet conspicuous. But this blade has a poor fukura, is a sharp looking shape, and based on strong nie, the gunome hamon has frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and the boshi is midarekomi with a sharp tip. You can already see the characteristic details we expect to see in his later years. In voting, a majority of people voted for Hidekazu, Masayuki, and Kiyomaro.

Kiyomaro is representative of the Yamaura school, and one of the characteristic points is that inside of the hamon there are frequent black reflective or luminescent-like long kinsuji. Looking at the kinsuji with a magnifying glass, we can see many examples of continuous kinsuji going from the moto to the saki.

Possibly there will not be many kinsuji extending continuously from the moto to saki. However, long black reflective or luminescent kinsuji are seen in the jigane. If you examine them carefully from one end to the other, some parts of the kinsuji form straight chikei and visible in the jigane, or become white nie-suji, or can almost disappear.

I am not sure from what period today's general sword making techniques began. There is one theory, that today's methods began in the Shinshinto period and use the same techniques.

Kiyomaro's tsukurikomi method (the method used to form the steel bar or stock to make the blade) is supposed to be hon-sanmai or similar to it. Today's tsukurikomi technique is the same, and smiths

start with a block or bar-shaped piece of steel and forge this out to form a sunobe or sword length bar. The final sword shape is formed using hizukuri forging to shape the edge, ji, and shinogi-ji.

If a sword were made in Kiyomaro's period by a smith using these same techniques, the initial bar of steel used to form the sunobe would have contained some variable high carbon areas, and then when the bar was forged out to shape, these high carbon areas would be forged out along the full length of the sword. After forging, these high carbon regions could extend along the entire length of the blade, and after yaki-ire these hardened high carbon regions would form kinsuji and nie-suji.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai