

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

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Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords

Tokubetsu Jujo Token

Type: Tanto

Mei: Sagami no kami Fujiwara Masatsune

Owner : NBTHK

Length: 9 sun 9 bu 7 rin (27.8 cm)

Sori: none

Motohaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 8 bu 3 rin (11.6 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a hira zukuri tanto with a mitsumune. It is wide, slightly thick, and long. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and the entire ji is well forged. There are abundant ji-nie and chikei, and the lower half has pale shirake utsuri. The hamon is a narrow suguha, and the hamon width has wide and narrow variations. There are slightly uneven ko-nie, some hotsure, and kuichigai-ba which forms some nijuba in places. On the ura by the machi and above the machi there is muneyaki. The boshi is straight with a round point and a long return. The horimono on the omote and ura are wide koshi-hi, and inside the hi there is a gyo style kurikara made with a sukashibori design (the carving is openwork, or in places goes completely through the tanto). The nakago is almost ubu, the tip is kiri-jiri, and the yasurime are a slightly exaggerated kate-sagari. There are two mekugi-ana, and on the omote on the center there is a seven kanji signature made with a thick chisel.

One of the three best Owari master smiths was Sagami no kami Masatsune, whose was a member of the Nodo family. There are Bodai Ji temple records concerning him, and people have studied his personal history since historical times. There are some differences in dates depending on which sword books are referred to, but some of Masatsune's personal history is clear. In Tenbun 10 (1567), he was born in Mino Koku's Nodo village (in Seki City's Sen-nen Cho), and was a member of the Nara school, one of the seven Seki schools,

and Taro Kanetsune was also active in this school. Masatsune's father Noda Sukeemon Kanetsune was a member of the Senjuin school and was the eighth generation Kanetsune. Kanetsune's second son's name was Noda Sasuke Kanetsune. In Eiroku 4 (1567), the son, Kanetsune moved to Owari's Komaki village, become an independent smith, and changed his name to Tarosuke. In Tensho 12 (1584), during the Komaki-Nagakute war, Masatsune made 100 yari for Ieyasu, and received his payment in silver coins. In Tensho 19 (1591), the Kanpaku Toyotomi Hidetsugu who became Kiyosu's lord selected three sword smiths from his territory. The smiths were Masatsune, Ujifusa, and Nobutaka. The following year on May 11th, Masatsune received the title "Sagami no kami" as a result of Hidetsugu's recommendations, and he is then supposed to have changed his name to Masatsune. According to one theory, he received the "Masa" kanji from the Komaki lord Ikeda Terumasa. In Keicho 5 (1600) for the Sekigahara battle, he supplied many weapons, and in November of 1600 when Ieyasu's 4th son Matsudaira Tadayoshi took possession of Kiyosu castle, Fukushima Masanori summoned him to move to in Kiyosu. Three years later on Keicho 8, he became Matsudaira Tadayoshi's okakae smith and received a 100 koku stipend. In April of Keicho 12 (1607), when Tadayoshi passed away and his younger brother Tokugawa Yoshinao (Ieyasu's 9th son) became Kiyosu's lord, Masatsune retired and made the Nidai Masatsune head of the family. However, only two years later, the Nidai passed away, and Masatsune resumed working again, but from that time, he included "Nyudo" in his mei. The following year, Keicho 15, when Ieyasu ordered the construction of Nagoya castle, Masatsune moved to be near Nagoya castle, and in Genna 5 (1619) on February 28, he passed away at the age of 84. His tombstone still exists at Saiko temple in Nagoya City's Showa-Ku.

Masatsune produced excellent large sized tanto, hirazukuri wakizashi, yari (many of them have a hira or triangle cross section), and naginata,. However, shinogi-zukuri katana and wakizashi are very rare in his work. In the case of many hirazukuri wakizashi, there is a very shallow sori which is almost inconspicuous. Many of his jigane are itame hada, and there are some with ko-itame hada mixed with his ancestral Mino's characteristic nagare hada, and the entire ji is strong and clear. His hamon are comparable with other of the Owari three master smiths, and are based on Nobutaka's gunome and Ujifusa's notare. Masatsune was good at making suguha hamon, and has many excellent works. In this case, he has produced a very rare, clean and well defined suguha. Most of his suguha hamon are mixed with hotsure and small midare hamon, and most of his suguha works contain uneven abundant nie, sometimes some ko-ashi, and can look like they are mixed with a ko-gunome style hamon.

However, his naginata hamon are based on notare. There are more large nie, sunagashi and kinsuji, with emphasis on a midare style hamon. Many of his works reflect the period's strong Soshu Den influence. Many of his works have simple horimono, such as suken, goma-bashi, koshi-hi, and bonji.

The tanto is slightly wide and long, and shows his characteristic dynamic style. The jigane is a well forged itame hada, and some areas are mixed with a quiet nagare hada, which is a characteristic point. Also, the narrow suguha hamon border has hotsure mixed with kuichigai-ba and nijuba, and the small hataraki makes the hamon interesting. A prominent detail is the sukashi-bori horimono which is rare for him. This kind of horimono is very rare in sword history. There are a few examples seen in a Bungo Yukihiro tanto (the No. 60 blade classified as Juyo), and in an Oei period Nio Morikiyo tanto (classified as the No.19 Juyo token). Sword smiths active in the same period as Masatsune were Horikawa Kunihiro , Higo daijo Shimosaka (Echizen), Harima daijo Shigetaka, Etchu no kami Takahira (in Kaga), and Kotetsu (around the Meireki period). However, the tanto's kurikara composition is a dragon winding around a ken and holding the point of the ken, with his face turned to the side, and this is rather similar to Sue -Bizen work, and makes for interesting speculation about what served as a model for this work.

After the war, in the Yoshida cabinet, Mr. Kimura Tokutaro, who was secretary of a Japanese agency and minister of justice, presented this tanto along with many other masterpieces such as the Kokuho Ryumon Nobuyoshi to the NBTHK in Showa 47(1972).

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei To No. 782

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 782 Shijo Kantei To is April 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 April 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: slightly over 2 shaku 5 bu (62.2 cm)

Sori: 5 bu 5 rin (1.6 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 5 rin (2.85 cm)

Sakihaba: slightly less 7 bu (2.05 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly over 1 bu (0.4 cm)

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

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

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. The width is standard, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. The length is short, there is no hiraniku, the tip has sori and there is a chu-kissaki. The jigane has itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and the hada has ji-nie and a whitish appearance. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon has nie, sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, the tip becomes narrow, and there is an iriyama style kuri-jiri. The yasurime are a shallow katte-sagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, along the mune side, there is a kanji signature.

Tosogu Kansho

Juyo Tosogu

Juzu (string of beads) sukashi tsuba

Mumei: Haguro

This is a well forged large iron tsuba. The design is a juzu based (string of beads) shape made using mikubori (three dimensional carving) and sukashi. There are many juzu or beads which form the outer circle or shape of the tsuba, and the individual beads show slight variations in their shape and size. The top and bottom (on the perimeter) of the tsuba have one round large juzu, and from there, there are smaller juzu formed continuously and down to the seppa dai. This is a dynamic and powerful Haguro tsuba, and a bit different from iron tsuba we see from makers such as Nobuie and from Owari tsuba (many iron tsuba are named after the places they were produced, such as Owari).

This kind of juzu sukashi tsuba is supposed to have been made by Haguro mountain priests, and even today are called Haguro tsuba, but the actual makers are unknown.

In Yamagata prefecture, near the center, there are three continuous or joined mountains: Gassan, Yudono-yama, and Haguro-yama. These three mountains are called the Dewa sanzán (the three Dewa mountains). Along with Omine Yama in Yamato, Kumano Sanzan in Kii, and Hiko Yama in Buzen, these are all prominent holy monastic areas. During the middle ages, the Dewa Sanzan was a major center for the training of apprentices and soldier monks. Even in the Edo period, they received support from the Tokugawa Shogun and prospered. In Ōu, the Kanto, Shinetsu, Kai, and Mikawa, many devotees and followers were produced.

In the mountains, apprentices trained under life threatening conditions, and people believed that they developed special powers not present in ordinary people. From the early Kamakura Period there are narratives or stories such as the “Ujui Monogatari” in which an apprentice prayed and was able to bring back a boat from the opposite shore of a lake. An apprentice who had this kind of power, when asked to chant an incantation and pray, used finger motions or positions (kuji-kiri) to pray for relief from nine different types of disaster, and recited the dharani text. He also preached his faith going from house to house. When reading Buddhist chants and praying, they rubbed juzu (beads) called “Iratka nenju” which made a sound. The sound was supposed to have the power to shake off evil influences which might cause a disaster. For people at that time, this was science and therapy. Possibly this kind of incantation and prayer was connected to the juzu or beads, so people called this type of tsuba “Haguro juzu tsuba”.

Explanation by Takeda Kotaro

February Token Teirei Kansho kai

Date: February 12th (second Saturday of February)

Location: The Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kugiya Natoko

Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Tokubetsu Juyo

Mei: Rai Kunitsugu

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 4 sun 4 bu

Sori: slightly less than 1 sun 1 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame; there are some areas with jifu type hada; there are frequent ji-nie, fine chikei, and bo-utsuri.

Hamon: suguha style; some areas have a notare type ko-choji and ko-gunome. There are ashi, yo, ko-nie, fine kinsuji and sunagashi, muneyaki at the koshimoto, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru tip.

This is Tokubetsu Juyo Token Rai Kunitoshi tachi with an ubu nakago and signature. The tachi has funbari at the koshimoto, the shape is slightly narrow, there is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a wa-zori tachi shape. The jigane is a tight ko-itame, there are abundant ji-nie, refined forging, some jifu type hada areas which are call Rai hada, and nie utsuri. The hamon is a suguha style, there are ashi, in some places and the ashi tips point in the nakago's direction and are called Kyo-saka-ashi. There are muneyaki at the koshimoto, and Rai school characteristic points are present everywhere.

Rai Kunitsugu's work is seen from Gentoku 2 (1330) and Shokyo 1 (1332) (shown in the photo). There is Shokyo 1 work present today, and a sai-ha, work dated Karyaku 2 (1327) is confirmed as being Rai Kunitsugu's. From this evidence, his active period was at the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nanbokucho Period. Among the Rai school smiths, he is known to have strong Soshu Den features in his work and is counted as one of Masamune's "jutetsu" or ten excellent students.

Rai Kunitsugu's extant works include a relatively large number of tanto and wakizashi, and there are only ten tachi extant today. His tachi styles are wide when compared to the standard work at that time. Many of his hamon are an intricate suguha style mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome, and have nie. However, among these existing tachi, some, like this tachi, remind us of his teacher Rai Kunitoshi's work.

As I explained above, this is a rare tachi with a more gentle shape than usual, and it is very difficult to narrow this work down to an individual smith. Therefore, at this time, if you looked at this as Rai School work from the end of the Kamakura Period, it is good enough,

and Rai Kunitoshi, Rai Kunimitsu and Ryokai are all treated as correct answers.

In voting, some people voted for Ko-Aoe work. From the jifu style and the hamon, it is an understandable opinion. If it were Ko-Aoe work, there would be koshizori, the tip falls down going forward (i.e. the curvature becomes more shallow going towards the point), the jigane would be itame mixed with mokume, there would be a fine visible hada, maybe chirimen-hada, and jifu utsuri would be present.

Kantei To No. 2: Tachi

Juyo Bijutsuhin

Mei: Unji

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 4 sun 5 bu

Sori: 9.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada and the hada is slightly visible. There are dense ji-nie, chikei, and jifu utsuri.

Hamon: wide suguha style hamon, mixed with gunome, choji, square shaped gunome, and in-no togariba. There are ashi, yo, some saka ashi, a tight nioiguchi with ko-nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, with a round point, and a large return.

This is a Juyo Bijutsuhin Unji tachi. The funbari has disappeared at the koshimoto, there is a standard width, a clear wazori shape although the blade is suriage, and a chu-kissaki. From this you can see that this is work from the latter half of the Kamakura Period. The jigane is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, the hada is visible, and there are jifu utsuri. The hamon is a wide suguha style, mixed with gunome, choji, and square shaped features. The upper half of the hamon is a gentle hamon compared with the bottom half, and in some places, the valleys of the midare hamon have what looks a wedge or spike going into the hamon, called "in-no togariba". In addition, the boshi tip is large and round. If you recognize these characteristic points, you can narrow this tachi as being Unrui work.

Among the Unrui school smiths, work by Unjo and Unji are similar, and at this time we treated Unjo as a correct answer. Unjo has no dated work, but from his style and signature, his work appears to be older than Unji's, and his shapes are more gentle, and the nie appears gentle. Unji has dated blades with dates from the Showa,

Bunpo and Kenmu periods. Compared with Unjo's work, his shapes are dynamic, there are strong nie, and there is a tendency to see prominent ashi and yo inside of the hamon. Unju has blades dated in the Bunwa, Joji, and Oan periods. His blades are wide with a long kissaki, and are similar to Nanbokucho styles.

In voting, some people voted for Rai Kunitoshi. His work would be wazori, the jigane would have utsuri, and there would be a suguha style hamon, so this guess is understandable. But if it were Rai Kunitoshi's work, the utsuri would be nie-utsuri, there often is muneyaki, and the boshi would be straight with a komaru. Some people also voted for Motoshige. Motoshige's utsuri are midare utsuri, his hamon have vertically stretched square gunome, and the boshi would have a sharp tip and return.

Kantei To No. 3: Wakizashi

Juyo Token

Mei: Dewa daijo Fujiwara Kunimichi

Length: 1 shaku 3.5 bu

Sori: 2.5 bu

Style: hira zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada; the entire hada is visible; there are fine ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: the hamon is wide; there are gunome mixed with togari; it is notare, and the entire hamon has a gyaku (reverse) orientation.

There is a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, some nie-kuzure, yubashiri, tobiyaki, muneyaki, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: notare komi; the tip is togari; there are hakikake, and a slightly long return.

This is a Juyo Token Dewa daijo Kunimichi wakizashi. It is wide, there is a large sori, and it is thick. From this you can judge this as Keicho Shinto period work. The jigane is itame, the entire ji is visible, and the Hosokawa school's unique zanguri (rough) forging is present. The hamon is high, and contains gunome mixed with a notare and a large midare pattern. Some areas at the top of the hamon have a saka orientation. Furthermore, the boshi is notare komi and the tip is sharp which puts it in the Sanpin boshi style. If you noticed these

characteristic points, it is possible to judge this as Dewa daijo Kunimichi's work.

From the sanpin boshi, strong nie kuzure, and strong hamon, some people voted for Iga-no-kami Kinmichi and Etchu-no-kami Masatoshi, If this were Iga-no-kami Kinmichi's work, some areas in the hamon would have square shaped features, there would be inconspicuous saka (reverse) oriented features in the midare hamon, the boshi would be nie-kuzure, and there would be frequent hakikake. If it were Etchu-no-kami Masatoshi's work, the hamon would be more complex, and appear different from this hamon, and the boshi would be a typical sanpin boshi.

In voting, many people voted for Soshu Hiromitsu. They seemed to see this as a hitatsura work. If it were Hiromitsu's work, it would be thinner, the sori would be shallower, and choji with a dango-like shape (a shape like a round cake) would be prominent.

Kantei To No. 4: Katana

Mei: Sakuyo bakka-shi Hosokawa Masayoshi

Tempo 13 (1842) Mizunoe Tora

Saodatakakatsu (棹田孝勝) nokonominiyottekorewokitau

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 5 sun 5 bu

Sori: 8.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: choji midare; some areas have square top choji, and togari and there are frequent ashi, ko-nie, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi with a komaru.

The widths at the moto and the saki are different, and there is a large koshizori with a chu-kissaki. The blade is heavy in the hand, it is wide, the shinogi-ji is narrow, the jigane is a tight itame hada, and from these details, you can judge this as Shinshinto period work. The hamon is primarily choji, and it is a Bizen Den style. However, looking closely, we see that the choji loops are close each other, and this appears to be a juka style hamon. Features at the top of the hamon are oriented in various directions, and some details in some areas spread across the surface like a fan. Also, in the hamon there are ashi, and some of these cross over each other, and these details show Hosokawa Masayoshi's characteristic points. Hosokawa

Masayoshi's shapes are often supposed to be a koto tachi shape with a large sori, and this katana has a large sori.

In voting, besides voting for Hososawa Masayoshi, a majority of people decided this was Shinshinto period work. Among Bizen Den smiths, they voted for smiths such as Koyama Munetsugu, Taikei Naotane, and Unju Korekazu. If it were Koyama Munetsugu's work, usually the hamon would have mainly choji, and a very regular pattern repeating itself at 3 sun to 4 sun intervals would be visible. If it were Taikei Naotane's work, the jigane would have prominent midare utsuri, the hamon would be based on square shaped gunome and togariba, and there would be prominent saka shaped features. If it were Korekazu's work, many of his choji and features would be grouped together, and there would be abundant nie

Kantei To No.5: Wakizashi

Juyo Token

Mei: Bizen kuni ju Osafune Sakyo-shin Munemitsu
Jiro Saemon-jo Katsumitsu
Eisho 5 nen (1508) 2 gatsu kiuchijitsu

Length: 1 shaku 7 sun 6 bu

Sori: 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada with midare utsuri.

Hamon: open valley gunome mixed with choji, and square shaped elements. There is a nioiguchi with ko-nie, kinsuji, sunagashi. The nioiguchi is bright and clear.

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

Horimono: at the koshimoto on the omote there is a kurikara. The ura has a shiketsu-rendai (a Buddhist symbol).

This is a Juyo Token Sakyo-shin Munemitsu and Jiro Saenono-jo Katsumitsu gassaku wakizashi (i.e. the work was made collaboratively by Munemitsu and Katsumitsu). The wakizashi is 1 shaku 7 sun in length which is a short length. It has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and the saki are different. There is a saki-zori and this is from the latter half of the Muromachi Period around the Eisho and Taiei periods with a katate-uchi uchigatana shape. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, there is refined forging, and midare

utsuri. The hamon is composed of open valley gunome mixed with choji. There is a bright and clear nioiguchi, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) show Sue-Bizen characteristic points. Also, the Hamon's open valley gunome and prominent choji means you can recognize this as work by Katsumitsu. This is a gassaku (collaborative) work by Katsumitsu and Munemitsu, so either name is treated as a correct answer, but since this work shows Katsumitsu's characteristic points, Katsumitsu is more likely to be the smith.

The blade has horimono. On the omote side there is a kurikara. On the ura side there is a shiketsu and rendai jubori (2 different horimono). The kurikara's shape is a Sue-Bizen unique characteristic style and this could be helpful to identify the maker in voting.

In voting, people noticed the above characteristics, and a majority of people voted for Katsumitsu. Other good answers were Tadamitsu and Yoso-zaemon Sukehiro. Tadamitsu has many suguha hamon, and if it were work by Yoso-zaemon Sukehiro, the hamon would be an open valley midare hamon which would appear like a painted picture, and his choji hamon are not really striking.

Shijo Kantei To No. 780 in the New Year, 2022 Issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tachi by Rai Kunimitsu.

This is a wide, large wazori blade even though it is suriage, and there is a chu-kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as being work from the latter half of the Kamakura Period to the early Nanbokucho Period.

A tachi with a wazori shape is a Rai school characteristic point. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and there is the often seen Rai school nie-utsuri. The hint says "the school's unique hada" and refers to this "Rai-hada".

The hamon is choji mixed with gunome, and at the top of the hamon there are intermittent yubashiri and ko-nie, and the hamon is bright and clear. The boshi has a komaru shape, and from these details, a majority of people voted for Rai Kunitoshi. Besides him, some people voted for Rai Kunishige.

For another acceptable answer, a few people voted for Rai Kuniyuki.

Kuniyuki also made wide tachi shapes, but he worked around the mid-Kamakura Period. When there is a wide shape, many of his chu-

kissaki become an inokubi kissaki. The hamon would be choji mixed with ko-midare, and is a more classic style, but is a complex hamon, and often there are intermittent yubashiri at the top of the hamon.

In the same Rai school, a long chu-kissaki shape and a choji hamon mixed with prominent gunome are elements seen in work from the latter half of the Kamakura Period work, so please note these details.

In pursuing studies of Japanese swords, many people have no objection to holding a sword in their hand, and think this is the best way to study them.

However, all types of swords are seen, with real and fake signatures, and could be typical work or outstanding work. It can often be difficult to evaluate a sword, but if you can look at a sword with a clear explanation about important points to observe on a sword, along with opinions from experts, your efforts to study and learn would be more productive.

There are existing opinions and explanations for all types of items. A sword is the same way, but if someone sees a sword for the first time, he may not be aware of any existing information and commentaries about that sword. Even if you are handed a sword, you may not know the best way to handle and study that sword. Sometimes a person will hold the sword with both hands and rotate it often to examine it. However, after you begin to study sword appreciation, you would learn that a sword has to be held vertically upright to look at a sword's shape.

The next thing to learn is that if a sword has enough funbari, it would be likely to have an ubu shape: a sword's funbari can disappear when it suffers from extensive suriage or shortening. You will be able to see this type of detail.

Next, a tachi has a narrow shape, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a small kissaki, a large koshizori, and a tip falling down going forward (the curvature becomes more shallow going towards the point). From these details you can understand that this is an early Kamakura Period work.

Going further, you will be able to judge specific features. If a tachi has been carefully preserved and stored, it may have a rich hiraniku and be in a healthy condition. However, if this sword has been polished too much, the niku will be reduced, and the shape will be thin, and this indicates it has become thin through excessive polishing.

Continuing to study, you will learn to recognize many informative details seen in a sword, and you will learn to identify a sword using this information.

When you can recognize many kinds of details which you could not see at the beginning, you be able to evaluate and identify a sword. Even when people are looking at the same katana in front of you, what a beginner and experienced observer will see can be quite different.

However, I believe that after you learn to recognize a world of details you haven't noticed before, you will become even more interested in swords.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai