

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

ISSUE NUMBER 789

OCTOBER, 2022

Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords

Juyo Bunkazai

Type: Katana

Gakumei: Kunitoshi

Koshirae: Byakudan-nuri saya han-dachi koshirae

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 4 rin (66.8 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 3 rin (2.2 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 1 rin (3.35 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 7 bu 7 rin (20.5 cm)

Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. The blade is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is barely noticeable. There is a large wa-sori, the blade is greatly suriage, and there is a short chu-kissaki which resembles an inokubi style. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, the entire ji is well forged, and there are some areas in the ji with jifu. There are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and some areas strong bo-utsuri. The entire hamon is wide, and is a choji style hamon mixed with gunome and ko-gunome. Vertical variations in the hamon are almost inconspicuous, and some areas have saka ashi. There are frequent ashi and yo, some Kyo-saka ashi, a dense nioiguchi, even abundant fine ha-nie, tobiyaki, nijuba style yubashiri, sunagashi, and kinsuji. The entire hamon has a bright and clear nioiguchi, and the center of the blade has muneyaki. The boshi is midare-komi, and the tip is a sharp komaru. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bo-hi. The omote hi is carved through the nakago, and the ura hi is finished on the nakago. The nakago is largely suriage and the tip is a shallow kurijiri. The old yasurime are kiri, and the new yasurime are katte sagari. There are

three mekugi-ana and two are closed. On the ura around the bottom of the nakago and inside of a frame there is a signature.

The Rai school's founder is supposed to be Kuniyuki, and the two kanji mei Kunitoshi is from this school. Concerning Kunitoshi, there are two theories expressed since historical times: he was the same smith as Rai Kunitoshi, or he was a different smith, and there is still no conclusive answer. However, the two kanji Kunitoshi only has signed work dated in Koan 1 (1278), but Rai Kunitoshi has a signed tachi (classified as Juyo Bunkazai and owned by the Tokugawa Museum) dated Showa 4 (1314) with the statement that he was at the "age of 75 years". In Kowa 1, the two kanji Kunitoshi was supposed to be 38 years old, and if you assume they were the same smith, there is no discrepancy. Also, considering the style, Rai Kunitoshi has wide blades with varied choji midare hamon. On the other hand, the two kanji Kunitoshi has narrow shapes, with gentle suguha style hamon and very clear and defined suguha hamon. From existing work, it appears that the two smiths styles are very similar and almost indistinguishable. In addition, in Japanese sword history, as you know, a smith's hamon style can change. The two kanji Kunitoshi's active period was from the mid-Kamakura period to the late Kamakura period. There are a large number of Rai Kunitoshi signatures appearing during the two Genko wars (the Bunei to Koan wars in 1274, 1281). Around at this time, even in Bizen, smith's styles changed, from the Ichimonji school's wide gorgeous choji midare hamon to the Osafune school's style which showed primarily gunome hamon with less or more minimal vertical variations when compared to the Ichimonji school's work, and also a gentle a suguha style. As an example of this, we can see this same kind of evolution or change in Nagamitsu's styles over his career, which was at a slightly different time from Kunitoshi's. Also, all the early historical sword books listed the two kanji Kunitoshi and Rai Kunitoshi as one generation (and both as being Rai Kunitoshi). The two generation theory only is heard after the mid-Edo period up to the early modern period. Following this history, the same smith or single smith theory is considered to be correct today.

This katana is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is barely noticeable. There is a large wa-sori, a large degree of suriage, and an inokubi style kissaki, so there is a strong mid-Kamakura period shape. The entire jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, which is mixed with what is called "Rai hada", which shows the school's unique jifu. There are also strong nie utsuri, and these details show the school's characteristic points very well. The hamon is the most commonly seen midare hamon among Kunitoshi's several styles. There are muneyaki, and also slight or small saka-ashi which are somewhat emphasized on the ura (this oshigata is of the omote).

These details are typical of Kunitoshi and exhibit his excellent skills. The dynamic shape complements the primarily choji hamon in which in and out (or vertical) variations are inconspicuous but still leave the hamon well balanced. There are ashi and yo hataraki, plus abundant sunagashi and kinsuji, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) is bright and clear, and this is an excellent work which exhibits elegance and dignity.

In investigating this katana's history, we found that in the "Aizu Matsudaira Family Documents" in Kyoho 14 (1729), the page for April says that "In the Tokugawa Dainagon Ieshige's genpuku (the coming of age ceremony held between the ages of 12-18), he changed his formal hair style, and the Shogun presented him with a sake cup and letada's sword: this was the Dainagon's sake cup, a katana with an Aoi mon koshirae, and a horse." In the "Tokugawa Diary" for the same month, the 9th day has a similar entry: "At the 9th generation shogun Ieshige's genpuku ceremony, the Aizu clan's third generation lord Matsudaira Masakata helped with Ieshige's hair style change, and as a reward, received this katana. In the Edo period, this katana was handed down in the Aizu Matsudaira family, and in Showa 12 (1937), under the 12th lord Viscount Matsudaira Morio, this sword was designated as Juyo Bijutsuhin. The viscount's fourth daughter Kazuko married Tokugawa Yoshimitsu whose grandfather was Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the last shogun. After the war in Showa 25 (1950) on September 7th, the Tokyo National Museum Research Division certified this katana as Juyo Bijutsuhin when the owner was Tokugawa Yoshimitsu. Since Showa 13, this blade has belonged to the Hitotsubashi Tokugawa family. In Showa 28 (1953) this blade was classified as Juyo Bunkazai. Subsequently, in more recent times it was owned by the former prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, and it comes with a complete koshirae, in which the kanagu contains the Aoi mon. It is a very well made "Byakudan nuri saya handachi koshirae".

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei To No. 789

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 789 Shijo Kantei To is November 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 November 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 4 sun 5 bu 5 rin (74.4 cm)

Sori: 4 bu 5 rin (1.4 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 5 rin (3.2 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 5 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 4 bu 5 rin (4.4 cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 7 sun 4 bu (22.35 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is wide and thick. There is a rich hiraniku, a shallow sori, and a long chu-kissaki. The jigane has a tight ko-itame hada mixed with nagare hada. There are abundant ji-nie, and chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon has frequent ashi, abundant nie mixed with rough (ara) nie, and is slightly uneven. The top of the hamon has intermittent small yubashiri, which can form nijuba. There are abundant thick nie suji, sunagashi, frequent kinsuji, and a bright and clear nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, and the tip becomes narrow and there is an iriyamagata tip. The yasurime are katte-sagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, under the habaki along the mune side there is a mon, and under this, also along the mune side there is a large long signature.

Juyo Tosogu

Kurama-yama zu (Kurama Mountain design) kozuka

Mumei : Goto Taijo with kao

Taijo was born in Kanei 8 (1631) as the 8th generation Sokujo's fifth son. His older brother Renjo inherited the leadership of the main Goto family's 10th generation. Taijo started the branch Jizaemon family. The Jizaemon family worked continuously from the early Edo Period to the Bakumatsu period. The 5th generation of the Jizaemon family

was Zejo Mitsuhiro, and his younger brother who were the famous Goto Ichijo and Koran.

This kozuka has a shakudo nanako ground, and carved takabori iroo inlay, and shows a scene with Kurama-tengu and Shana-o Yoshitsune who is training in the martial arts. On the ura side, the ground is shibuichi and the Goto family often used this pattern or design.

Many of their tosogu designs used subjects or images from the Genpei war. Many famous scenes were composed with themes such as Sasaki Takatsune and Kajiwara Kagetoshi leading their troops into battle at the Uji river, and Nasu Yoichi at the Yakushima Island battle. In these works, Yoshitsune frequently appeared as a subject. For example, this kozuka's design illustrates his training at Kurama Mountain, and there are scenes on other kozuka illustrating his meeting with Benkei, scenes showing bows floating in the water at Yakushima, Yoshitsune jumping between eight boats, and others which we have no space to list here. This is part of a war chronicle or "Yoshitsune's Story". "Yoshitsune's Story" is supposed to have been created between the Nanbokucho and Muromachi periods. Most of our images of Yoshitsune are derived from this story.

Yoshitsune was separated from his parents and brothers from the time he was very young. He rushed to his brother Yoritomo's aid and raised an army to fight with him. In the end, he had disagreements with his brother Yoritomo, and passed away in a battle at the O-shu Koromo Palace fighting his Yoritomo's army. People at that time were fascinated by this story, and sympathized with the unfortunate Yoshitsune. The tragedy described in Yoshitsune's story generated empathy between people. Yoshitsune became a tragic hero, and images and work involving Yoshitsune became popular at that time. Besides tosogu, Yoshitsune became a popular subject for other areas such as kabuki, No Plays, and painting, and many works used Yoshitsune as the main motif. In the theater plays, Yoshitsune is brilliantly depicted, and afterwards I feel his tragic death is felt even more. A creator and an illustrator are supposed to be very conscious of the story they express, and that is true of work involving Yoshitune.

Yoshitsune received strenuous martial arts training at Kurama Mountain and we know the ending of this story, and in looking at this kozuka, we feel a desire to think about it.

Explanation by Takeda Kotaro

September Token Teirei Kansho Kai

Date: September 10 (second Saturday of September)
Location: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium
Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Kantei To No. 1: Tanto

Mei: Omi Daijo Fujiwara Tadahiro

Length: 9 sun 6 bu

Sori: mu-sori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; the hada is slightly visible; there are abundant dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Hamon: chu-suguha; on the omote, the bottom half is mixed with kuichigai-ba; there is a dense nioiguchi, ko-nie, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight and round; on the omote the return is a kuichigai style; the ura tip is sharp.

Horimono; on the omote there is a sanko fuken; the ura has a shin-no kurikara.

Commentary

This is a nidai Hizen Tadahiro tanto. From the Koto period there are many tanto examples, but in the Shinto period, demand may have decreased, because we see fewer tanto. However, the period's existing characteristic shapes are wide, slightly long, around 9 sun in length, and have a large shape, just like this tanto.

The jitetsu is a tight ko-itame hada, but there is a fine visible hada call "komenuka hada". The hamon has a nioiguchi from the moto to the saki, and in the center it is discontinuous, and there is a belt-like shape, and these are Hizen's characteristic points. Also, one of the elements which helps to make this judgement is the horimono on this blade. The shin-no-kurikara's sanko is short and the claws are simplified. This is a very detailed design which is usually seen on the omote, but this one is on the ura which is unusual. The dragon is facing right, and has a large open mouth and appears ready to attack something, and the center of his body is emphasized which creates a perspective, and a dynamic unique composition.

From the signature this is an example of Yoshinaga's kurikara carving work from around Kanei 18-19 (1642-43). In this case, compared with his teacher Munenaga's work which is only seen on

the Shodai Tadayoshi's swords, his claws are simplified, but on this horimono, the claw's shapes are similar to Munenaga's, and the dragon itself is longer and larger in size, and these details show Yoshinaga's characteristic points.

Examining the three main Hizen generations, the nidai Mutsu no kami Tadayoshi has almost no tanto work, and his jigane are refined and well forged. The Shodai Tadayoshi does not have too many tanto examples either, and they have mitsumune, but among his diverse styles, he has mixed Yamato style kuichigaiba and suguha, and has simple claw shapes, so from this view we also treated him as a correct answer.

From the shape, some people judged this as Rai School work from the end of the Kamakura Period to the early Nanbokucho Period. But the Rai school's jigane is a ko-itame hada and more delicate and fine, and there are clear nie utsuri.

Kantei To No. 2: Katana

Mei: Bizen koku ju Osafune Jiro-saemon-jo Fujiwara Katsumitsu saku
Eisho 6 nen (1509) 8 gatsu hi

Length: slightly less than 1 shaku 7 sun 9 bu

Sori: slightly less than 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; in some places the hada is visible; there are fine ji-nie.

Hamon: The entire hamon is high; there is a choji style hamon mixed with gunome, togariba, and square shaped features. There are frequent ashi, a dense nioiguchi, fine nie, small tobiyaki, and some sunagashi.

Boshi: there is a dense yakiba; on the omote the boshi is straight with a komaru; the ura is a narrow midarekomi with a round return; both sides have a long return.

Horimono: at the koshimoto on the omote there is a kurikara; on the ura there is a mari-shitenson kanji carving.

Commentary

This blade has funbari at the koshimoto, a short length, sakizori, and a somewhat sharp shinogi. The shinogi is slightly high, the boshi has a dense yakiba, and this is an appropriate shape for a katateuchi, and

is a typical uchigatana which we see after the mid-Muromachi period. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and there is a refined hada. The jiba (jigane and hamon) is bright and clear, and you can recognize that this is highly skilled work. In the opinion of many people, Sue Bizen work is first class work. On the omote at the koshimoto, the kurikara carving is very characteristic of the Bizen school, and you can recognize this at a glance. In discussing the shin, gyo, and so styles of horimono, this is a gyo style carving, with a stylized appearance and composition, and the dragon's face is turned sideways, and from above we can see that he holds the tip of a ken in his mouth. This unique horimono enables one to make a major judgement. Also, among the Sue Bizen smiths, it can be said that exuberant or active choji midare hamon are seen in relatively many of Katsumitsu's works, and a majority of people voted for him.

This same kind of horimono is only seen between Bunmei 10 to the Eisho period (1479-1520), or about 30 years. The active smiths in this period can be narrowed down to smiths such as Katsumitsu, Munemitsu, Tadamitsu, and Sukesada (Hikobeijo, Yosozaemonjo). On the other hand, after the Tenmon (1532-54) period, the smith Kiyomitsu has not been confirmed to make this kind of work, and so he not a good choice for the smith.

Also, some exceptions to this design can be pointed out. The dragon's tail wraps around the sankozuka. If it wraps around the sankozuka three times it is from after the Bunki (1501-3) period just like this example is, and if the tail wraps two times around the sankozuka, it is work from before this period.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Mei: Hoei Toko Sa Yukihide
tame chiyakushi (for his son) Ikuma
Meiji 3 nen (1870) 2 gatsu kichijitsu
gyonen 58 sai (58 years old) tsukuru kore

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 1.5 bu

Sori: 3 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada and nagare hada; there are abundant dense ji-nie.

Hamon: gunome midare hamon mixed with choji, square shaped gunome, and togari. There are frequent long ashi, a dense nioiguchi,

frequent large nie, fine sunagashi, and some kinsuji; there is a bright and clear nioiguchi.

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

Commentary

This katana's width at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a large kissaki and a shallow sori. The length is around 2 shaku 1 sun, which is short. The shinogi is sharp, and the blade is not heavy. From these details, it is a bit difficult to judge the period. However, the jigane is looks worn, there are ashi hataraki near the hamon border, so the hamon, from the moto to the saki does not appear to be too old, so from this, you can guess that this is Shinshinto work. This is a Sa Yukihide katana. Usually, most of Yukihide's styles are modeled after either Inoue Shinkai or Go, and are a suguha style with a shallow notare. There are few katana with this type of gunome hamon, but in his work, we can see it intermittently, and although there are few examples like this in his work, we wish to consider this as being one of the styles he made.

As might be expected in the first vote, few people voted for the correct answer. Most people voted for other Soshu Den smiths, especially Kiyomaro school smiths and Unju Korekazu. In examining Kiyomaro's work, many of jigane are itame, there are more strong jinnie, and his jigane produce a strong impression. His hamon are composed of gunome and choji, or mainly consist of square shaped elements, there are strong uneven rough ha-nie, frequent thick kinsuji, and sometimes the hamon can become a two tiered hamon. If this were looked at as work by Kiyondo, many of his hamon are continuous gunome, some areas have a nioiguchi, and are mixed with a hard appearing hamon.

Nobuhide's hamon are composed of square shaped gunome and are midare hamon, and the top of the hamon is mixed with togariba, so it is a complex and active hamon. More than anything, the Kiyomaro school's characteristic points are a poor fukura, and a more sharp appearing shape. Korekazu very rarely has this kind of large kissaki, and his hamon are based mainly on choji.

Considering these elements and looking at this katana carefully, you can clearly see the katana's ko-itame hada transitions into a nagare style, and compared with these other smiths' work it has a dense nioiguchi, the nioiguchi is wide, the ha-nie are abundant and even, and the entire jiba (jigane and hamon) is bright and clear. These are the same characteristic points seen in Sa Yukihide's suguha work.

Kantei To No. 4: Tachi

Mei: ?shu Osafune Kanemitsu

Length: 2 shaku 4.05 sun

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume hada, and the entire jigane is well forged; there are ji-nie, chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: ko-gunome, square shaped gunome, and kataochi gunome with a continuous midare hamon. There are ko-ashi, and a nioiguchi with ko-nie.

Boshi: small midarekomi; there is a round tip and a return.

Commentary

This tachi's funbari is inconspicuous, and you can see that this is suriage. The tip has a moderate degree of sori, the widths at the moto and saki are different, and there is a chu-kissaki. From this, you can judge this as work from around the end of the Kamakura Period. The jigane in places has clear midare utsuri, and obviously this is a Bizen school work. In this period, candidate smiths who made hamon with ko-gunome, with square shaped elements, and kataochi style gunome are Kagemitsu, Chikakage, and Kanemitsu.

This tachi has each different hamon style present, and a continuous midare hamon, and among the three smiths, this kind of hamon is often seen in work by Kanemitsu. In Kagemitsu and Chikakage's long blades, usually their hamon are only based on suguha, and are mixed unevenly with square shaped gunome and kataochi gunome. Their boshi are almost straight lines, and look like a shallow notare, which is a sansaku boshi and this is their characteristic point. This tachi's boshi is a small or narrow midarekomi, and this is often seen as Kanemitsu's characteristic point.

This is a relatively small or narrow hamon for Kanemitsu, and there is an impression of a plain or simple hamon, and there were few correct answers. There were other votes for the Bizen smith Motoshige, the Yoshii group, and Yamato Shikake Norinaga. The Motoshige and Norinaga answers are correct for the period, but if it were Motoshige's work, the top of the square shaped hamon elements fall together in a straight line, the hamon's wide and narrow variations are barely noticeable, and it would look different from this hamon. Continuous midare hamon are consistent with Norinaga's work and have the same kind of style, but the shinogi-ji's width and the height of the shinogi line are different. In the case when a nagare

hada is present, there would be stronger nie, which is a Yamato style, and these are not seen here. The Yoshii school's characteristic point is a unique utsuri which appears like a continuous ko-gunome hamon, and you need to recognize this.

Kantei To No. 5: Katana

Mei: Hankei

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: slightly less than 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada. In places, the hada is visible. There are large abundant ji-nie and chikei.

Hamon: notare mixed with gunome and ko-notare; there are frequent ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, large abundant nie, frequent kinsuji, bo-suji, and sunagashi.

Boshi: the omote is straight, and the ura is a small midarekomi; both points are komaru with a return; the tips have hakikake.

Commentary

When talking about the Keicho Shinto shape, you tend to imagine a Nanbokucho period dynamically shaped tachi with a large degree of suriage. But like this katana, we sometimes see an inconspicuous difference between the widths at the moto and saki. The width itself is not emphasized. There is a slightly long chu-kissaki and there is a slight funbari. From these considerations, we wish to look at this as a Keicho Shinto work. In that period, there was a strong Soshu Den influence, and that style was very popular. Representative smiths in the east were Hankei and Yasutsugu and in the west, representative smiths were the Horikawa school in Kyoto, the Mishina school, Nanki Shigekuni in Kii, and also Iyojo Muneshige in Hizen.

This is a Hankei katana which is Juyo Bijutsuhin. The jigane in places has small hada separations, and in the slightly large pattern itame hada we can see thick chikei which are called "higikihada", or "unique hada". The hamon is mainly notare, and in the bottom half of the hamon, the border between the hamon and jigane is not clear, and this is a characteristic point for Hankei. The entire hamon exhibits Hankei's unique classic feeling.

There were very few correct answers. Beside Hankei, there were votes for Nanki Shigekuni and Dewa daijo Kunimichi. Both smiths

were active in the same period as Hankei, and are highly ranked. But in the case of Nanki's Soshu Den work, his hamon show a partial Yamato style in some places, and his boshi are either yakizume or have a shallow return. In addition his hamon widths gradually become wider along the upper part of the blade. If this were work by Kunimichi, his midare hamon will contain saka-ashi somewhere, and his boshi are a shallow notare with a komaru and return which is called a "sansaku boshi".

Shijo Kantei To Number 787 in the August issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Horikawa Kunihiro.

This is a wide blade with a long chu-kissaki, and there is a small difference in the widths at the moto and saki. From the shape, this could be work from the peak of the Nanbokucho Period, the Keicho Shinto period, or the Shinshinto period. However, the description says the kasane or thickness is 2 bu, and the comments say that "compared with common or frequently seen contemporary blades, the kasane is slightly small". This means that the thickness or kasane for the period is usually larger, so there is a high possibility that this is either a Keicho Shinto or Shinshinto katana.

The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, and the entire hada is visible, and this is the Horikawa school's unique zanguri or roughly forged hada, and the hint refers to this.

Kunihiro's Keicho Period work was modeled after the work of Soshu Den master smiths such as Masamune and Shizu. The hamon is based on notare mixed with gunome, the entire hamon has frequent nie, the nioiguchi is dense and the width of the nioiguchi shows variations. There are kinsuji, sunagashi, and sometimes a worn down nioiguchi.

Around the monouchi area, the hamon's width is greater than in other areas, and there are prominent dense nie, and this tendency can often be seen in Kunihiro's Keicho period work.

One of Kunihiro's characteristic points is supposed to be mizukage at the machi, but that is not seen clearly on this katana.

In voting, a majority of people voted for Kunihiro, and some people voted for Hankei.

Kunihiro worked in the Masamune and Shizu styles. But among the Soshu Den smiths, Hankei's style is reminiscent of Norishige's style.

In other words, Hankei's jigane are a large itame hada mixed with mokume, the entire hada has a large visible pattern, and there are abundant thick chikei called hijikihada. Hankei's hamon are based on notare, and contain gunome. There is a worn down nioiguchi, abundant nie, and frequent thick kinsuji and sunagashi.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai