

# **NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL**

## **ISSUE 791**

### **DECEMBER, 2022**

## **Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords**

### **Juyo Bijutsuhin** **Important Cultural Property**

Type: Katana

Kinzogan mei: Kanemitsu suriage Kotoku with kao

Owner: Eisei Bunko Foundation

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 1 bu (73.0 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

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

Nakago length: 5 sun 1 bu 5 rin (15.6 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

### **Commentary**

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. This is a wide blade, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is barely noticeable. It is thick, and there is a cut located below the yokote. There is a large hiraniku and a large sori. The sori is strong at the koshimoto, and there is a long chu-kissaki. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and some areas are mixed with itame hada. There are frequent fine ji-nie, chikei, and clear midare-utsuri. The entire hamon is wide, and consists primarily of square gunome mixed with kataochi-gunome, gunome, and sharp gunome. There is a slight resemblance to a choji style hamon. Some areas of the midare hamon have saka-ashi, and the omote has a wider midare hamon. There are slight ashi and yo, a nioiguchi based hamon, small sunagashi, and on the ura's bottom half there is uruoi, or a moist appearance around the nioiguchi. The entire nioiguchi appears worn down. The boshi is midarekomi, and the tip is small and sharp. The horimono on the omote and on the ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is largely suriage, the tip is kiri, and the

yasurime are katte sagari. There are two mekugi-ana, and on the ura under the second ana there is a kinzogan Mei or gold inlay signature made by Honnami Kotoku.

Osafune Kanemitsu belonged to the fourth generation of the mainstream Osafune school which was the biggest school in Japanese sword history. Today his confirmed earliest work is at the end of the Kamakura period in Genko 1 (1321), and his latest work is from the mid-Nanbokucho period in Joji 6 (1367), and so his active period was about 46 years. From this long active period, people once thought there was a Shodai and Ni-dai smith. However, there are daimei works in the Enbun (1356-62) and Joji (1362-68) periods, and at that time he was supposed to have attained an old age. Today this information is interpreted to mean that Kanemitsu's entire career was the work of a single smith.

Kanemitsu has primarily two styles. His active period was at the end of the Kamakura to the Nanbokucho period, which was a period when the style of the Japanese sword was changing, especially during the Koei (1342-45) to the Jowa (1345-50) eras. In other words, in the early Nanbokucho period around Koei, Kanemitsu produced tachi and tanto, which had standard shapes for the end of the Kamakura period, and many of his hamon have square gunome, kataochi gunome, and were midare and suguha hamon, which followed his father Kagemitsu's style. However, Kagemitsu's tachi which have hamon like those described above, have square gunome only in parts of the hamon, and continuous kataochi gunome hamon. But Kanemitsu's hamon are uniform from the moto to saki, and have regular square gunome and kataochi gunome, and we can see his original style hamon.

After the Jowa period, Kanemitsu produced many wider blades with a large kissaki, and a conventional style hamon and notare hamon, and he established the Soden-Bizen style. This style is seen in a limited number of signed works, and are mainly uchigatana, small wakizashi, and tanto, and he produced a large number of works. The historical sword book (Noami Hon Meizukushi) stated that "he is good at producing horimono such as ken, bonji, and kurikara". In addition to the above mentioned horimono, he has simple horimono such as gomabashi and all types of hi, and many of his swords have horimono. After the Jowa period he produced prominent kasane bori which are blades with more than one type of horimono. This katana's jigane has a well forged itame hada, the hamon is mainly square gunome and kataochi gunome, and is a wide midare pattern. The entire hamon top is the same height, and in places, the corners of the midare features are sharp and there are saka-ashi. There are interesting hataraki with variations, and the entire nioiguchi is just perfect and sophisticated. Also, the boshi hamon is wide, even

today, and the blade is healthy and attractive, which is a legacy from its heavy dynamic shape. There is a magnificent shape, and the mune has a cut mark which reminds us of bygone days. The nakago has a zogan or inlaid Mei by Honnami Kotoku. A Kotoku zogan is only found to confirm the makers of 20 pieces today, and the connoisseur Kotoku acknowledged this as a masterpiece.

This sword belonged to the Hosokawa family Karei, and the Tsuda Seiichi historic collection, and the NBTHK's first chairman Mr. Hosokawa Moritatsu presented it as a gift from the Tsuda family.

This sword will be shown by the Eisei Bunko Foundation from January 14 to May 7, 2023 at an exhibit: "Hosokawa Masterpiece Swords: Eisei Bunko Kokuho Swords".

Explanation and photo by Imoto Yuki

## **Shijo Kantei To No. 791**

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 791 Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2023. Each person may submit one vote. Submissions should contain your name and address and be sent to the NBTHK Shijo Kantei. You may use the Shijo Kantei card which is attached in this magazine. Votes postmarked on or before January 5, 2023 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 5 bu (71.2 cm)

Sori: slightly over 7 bu (2.2 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 5 rin (21.36 cm)

Nakago sori: none

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 slightly large sori and a short chu-kissaki. The jigane has itame hada visible over the entire ji, and also some strong nagare hada which becomes a masame hada. There are ji-nie, chikei, and midare utsuri. The shinogi ji has masame hada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are ashi, yo, and tobiyaki. The entire hamon is small, and there are saka-ashi. There is a nioiguchi with ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, and the tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, below the habaki and along the mune side between the shinogi and mune, there is a large sized long signature made with a thick chisel.

Many of this smith's nakago tips are a shallow iriyamagata.

## **Juyo Tosogu**

### **Ayu-gyo zu (sweetfish design) kozuka Mei: Mon-Teijo Mitsuyoshi with kao**

This is a kozuka by the Goto family's 15th generation Mitsuyoshi which was judged as Mon-Teijo work. Teijo was the seventh generation Kenjo's second son, and he was born in Keicho 8 (1603). He became the head of the Rihei family's second generation and changed his name to Rihei Mitsumasa. The Goto main family's 8th generation Sokujo passed away at an early age, and his successor Kameichi who later become the 10th Renjo, was only 4 years old, Teijo consequentially inherited the leadership of the main family's 9th generation. When Renjo became 18 years old, Teijo had him inherit the 10th generation's leadership, and appointed a guardian until Renjo become 25 years old. Teijo was recognized for his high level of skill, and he was invited to work for the Kaga Maeda family. He was working with Kakujo's son Enjo and went to Kaga every other year, and he contributed greatly to development of the Kaga kinko.

This is a sukidashi-takabori work on a silver nanako ground. A fisherman is shown in iroe (colored) inlay, and the background is finished in gold. On the right edge there are stakes and logs forming a dam which controls the water flow, and blocks the sweetfish from escaping. This kind of canal fishing arrangement is very old. After the Heian period, permission to set up a canal and to assume fishing privileges was given to people who were involved with shrines. You can recognize sweetfish fishing here since it uses a channel or canal, and was associated with specific actions such as damming rivers, designing flood controls, and water transport.

In the Gion festival, on the “Uradeyama” dashi (a traditional festival float), the god empress Jinko has a fishing pole in her right hand and a sweetfish in her left hand. From her presence, in the Muromachi period, the float was called a sweetfish float, and this story is from a folklore tale. The empress Jinko was also said to rule three areas in Korea. She made declarations of right and wrong, and pronounced judgements in Hizen province’s Matsuura Tamashima river area. Immediately after her judgements or announcements, sweetfish would appear, and the empress was confident of a victory.

Some theories say that the sweetfish kanji’s right side is same kanji as “divination” and derives from this story.

Today we eat sweetfish in season, and even if we just eat sweetfish, all kinds of Japanese stories are still related to them.

In the Edo period, this kozuka was handed down in the Awa Hachitsuka family.

Explanation by Takeda Kotaro

## October Token Teirei Kansho kai

Date: November 12 (second Saturday of November)

Location: The Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Kugiyama Natoko

### Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Mei: Kunitsuna (Ko-Bizen)

Length: 2 shaku 8 sun

Sori: 1 sun 1 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with large itame and some mokume; there is some nagare hada, and the entire hada is visible. There are ji-nie, jifu utsuri and a dark jigane.

Hamon: ko-midare mixed with small choji. There are abundant nie mixed into the hada; there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, and the tip is yakizume.

### Comments

This tachi has funbari at the habaki moto, a large koshizori, and the sori falls down going towards the point (i.e. the sori becomes shallower going towards the point). There is a small kissaki and an ubu tachi shape. From these details, you can judge this as work from the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period. The jigane has a visible itame hada with jifu utsuri. The hamon is mainly komidare, but is a complex midare with nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and the blade has a rustic and classic feeling. From these observations, this sword is possibly work from Ko-Bizen, Ko-Hoki, or Ko-Aoe.

At a glance, the shinogi ji is narrow, there is a visible itame hada with a large pattern, the jigane is very visible, there is a dark ji, and a komidare style hamon. From these details, many people voted for Ko-Hoki work, and for Yasutsuna.

This tachi definitely has a rustic feeling for Ko-Bizen work and has many common points with Ko-Hoki work, and because of this, we treated Ko-Hoki as a correct answer. However, some parts of the jigane are not dark and the hamon nie are bright, and these are Ko-Bizen characteristic points.

Kunitsuna's lineage is unknown, but he is supposed to be a Ko-Bizen smith, and he has several confirmed signed works.

In discussing Ko-Bizen work, we have a definite image: the jigane is a tight itame hada with refined forging and there is a sophisticated komidare hamon. But in some cases, the jigane's hada is visible and the hamon has prominent kinsuji and sunagashi.

If you can recognize this, and you can see that this is a Ko-Bizen example representing one of a wide range of styles, it is satisfactory.

## **Kantei To No. 2: Katana**

Mei: Rakuyo Ichijo Horikawa ju Fujiwara Kunihiro tsukuru  
Keicho 17 nen (1612) 2 gatsu hi

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 4 sun 2 bu

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada, and the entire hada is visible; there are abundant ji-nie, and frequent fine chikei.

Hamon: shallow notare mixed with gunome, and there are sharp shaped elements in the hamon. There are ko-gunome, and the upper half is wide and the hamon becomes larger going towards the point.

There are frequent ashi, nie, small yubashiri, slight tobiyaki and muneyaki, and nie-suji.

Boshi: notare-komi; the tip is round and there are hakikake.

## Comments

This is a wide katana, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is barely noticeable. There is a shallow sori and long chu-kissaki. From these details you can narrow this work down to originating from the Nanbokuchō, Keicho Shinto or Shinshinto periods. However looking at the jigane, we see that the entire ji's itame hada is visible with frequent chikei, and you can recognize this as the Horikawa school's unique rough forging.

The hamon is a shallow notare style mixed with gunome and ko-notare areas, and with frequent nie. Also, the hamon's width increases around the monouchi, some areas have strong nie, and there are areas with large and small nie. These details show Kunihiro's characteristic points very well, and his work was modeled after Soshu master smith work.

On this katana's upper half, the hamon's height is higher than usual for Kunihiro's work, and makes a more spectacular impression. From this observation, some people struggled in voting, but from the period and the jigane, if you look at this as Horikawa school work, it is satisfactory.

Some people judged the notarekomi boshi as a Sanpin boshi, and voted for Iga no kami Kinmichi or for Dewa Daijo Kunimichi. If the boshi were a Sanpin boshi, it would be notarekomi and the tip is supposed to be sharp. However, the boshi tip here is round and there is a return, and this is often seen in Kunihiro's work. Furthermore, if it were Kinmichi's work, his hamon edge would have more frequent hataraki. If it were Kunimichi's work, his hamon width in places would be high and low, with prominent large variations.

Izumi-no-kami Kunisada produced Echigo-no-kami Kunitoshi style notare hamon in his early work, and in this case, his muneyaki was more prominent than usual, and much of his forging work is tight. Iyojo Munetsugu has work similar to what we see here in the upper half of the hamon, but generally has more strong ha-nie, and his jiba (jigane and hamon) has prominent chikei and kinsuji, and there is more Soshu Den style influence seen in his work.

## Kantei To No. 3: Wakizashi

Mei: Bizen Kuni Osafune Kanemitsu

Jowa 2 nen (1365) 12 gatsu hi

Length: 1 shaku 7 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; the hada is slightly visible; there are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and pale utsuri along the mune side.

Hamon: based on notare, and mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji; there are ashi, yo, nie, yubashiri, and kinsuji.

Boshi: shallow notarekomi; the tip has hakikake; on the omote the tip is sharp; on the ura the tip is large and round.

Horimono: on the omote there is a long bonji and kurikara hori; the ura has a long bonji hori, and under this a suken carved into the nakago.

## Comments

This is an Osafune Kanemitsu hirazukuri wakizashi, which was originally made as an uchigatana and is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin. There are old uchigatana examples such as Awataguchi Kuniyoshi's "Nakigitsune" and Kanemitsu's "Suijingiroi" and with this unique style it is hard to judge to the production date. These blades are wide, long, have sori, and are thin, but from the shape we can judge this example as Nanbokucho period work.

The jigane has itame mixed with mokume and there is pale utsuri. the hamon is notare with nie; the boshi tip is sharp and has a return, so there are Bizen characteristics plus some Soshu characteristics, and this is called a "Soden-Bizen" style. The Soden-Bizen style is seen in the work of Osafune mainstream and branch smiths such as Kanemitsu, Chogi, and Omiya. This example has a well forged jigane, the notare hamon has a leisurely appearance, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) is bright and clear, showing the dignity of Osafune mainstream work, and we can narrow down this down to work by Kanemitsu. On the omote kurikara horimono, the dragon's stomach look like it is filled with wind, and this is called a "harami ryu". This is seen in work by Kagemitsu and Kanemitsu and their school, and this detail helps us to make a clear appraisal.

Morikage has a dated Eiwa period (1368-74) uchigatana, his notare hamon have prominent high and low vertical variations, and the valleys in his notare hamon are narrow. Also, in Morikage's kurikara horimono, his sanko have a more rounded shape than Osafune mainstream work, and center ko is shorter than the ones on both sides, and the dragon's shape is different.



## Kantei To No. 4: Tanto

Mei: Rai Kunitoshi

Length: slightly over 8 sun

Sori: uchizori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: tight itame with some jifu areas; there are abundant ji-nie, frequent chikei, and pale utsuri.

Hamon: chu-suguha; there are ko-nie and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, and the tip is komaru.

### Comments

This tanto has a standard width and thickness and is uchizori, and this is a mid-Kamakura period sophisticated tanto shape. The jigane is a tight itame, there are dense ji-nie, and the entire ji shows refined forging. The hamon has a bright nioiguchi and a clear and clean suguha with beautiful ko-nie. The boshi is straight, the point is round and there is a return. Considering the shape and the jiba (jigane and hamon), you can judge this as Rai Kunitoshi's work.

Besides the correct answer, many people voted for Awtaguchi Kuniyoshi and Yoshimitsu. Awtaguchi Kuniyoshi has some standard shapes, but his tanto have a short length for the width, and a thick shape and large size. His jigane are a tight well forged ko-itame hada, with abundant ji-nie and a refined nashi ji hada. Also, Kuniyoshi's hamon borders have prominent nijuba, and Yoshimitsu's hamon have continuous gunome at the koshimoto, and often the width around the fukura becomes narrow.

Some people voted for Sue Seki smiths such as Kanesada. Many Sue Seki tanto have a strong uchizori, a poor fukura shape, and a boshi return which falls down towards the edge.

## Kantei To No. 5: Katana

Mei: Saito Toshinori no motome ni o-ji

Bizen no suke Fujiwara Munetsugu saku kore

Ansei 6 nen (1859) 2 gatu hi

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 3 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada with ko-nie.

Hamon: gunome-choji mixed with choji; there are frequent long ashi, a nioiguchi, and some ko-nie.

Boshi: midarekomi with a komaru tip.

## Comments

This katana is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a large sori and a long chu-kissaki. The blade is thick and heavy, the jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and is almost muji. There is a midare hamon with long ashi which shows Shinshinto characteristic points very well.

The hamon is gunome-choji mixed with choji, and there is a nioiguchi, which is a Bizen Den style. There are focal points which are spaced about 3 sun apart which means the midare hamon pattern repeats eight times, and this is called a "kataoshi" hamon. This is a unique style which is seen in the same school by smiths such as Chounsai Tsunatoshi and Koyama Munetsugu. Considering the Shinshinto characteristic hamon, the strong shape, and muji style jigane, it is possible to judge this as Munetsugu's work.

Some people voted for Chounsai Tsunatoshi. Since he also has kataoshi style hamon, that answer is understandable. But many of Tsunatoshi's swords have short yakidashi, his sori are larger when compared to Munetsugu's, and we often see funbari at the koshimoto.

Some people voted for Hosokawa Masayoshi. Masayoshi's hamon have closely spaced choji which can become juka choji, and in some areas form a fan-like shape. Also, there are frequent ashi which can angle left and right and intersect with each other, and this is a characteristic style.

The nakago photo is 97% of the actual size.

## Shijo Kantei To No. 789 in the October issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To 789 is a katana by Mondo-no-sho Masakiyo.

This is wide, thick blade with a rich hiraniku, and a long chu-kissaki. This style is seen often in Satsuma Shinto and Shinshinto work. The

shape is well known and was strongly influenced by the Satsuma clan's kenjutsu Jigen school.

Many Satsuma Shinto and Shinshinto midare hamon are notare mixed gunome and togariba, there are abundant nie, prominent rough nie, "Satsuma imo-zuru", and thick nie suji and kinsuji, and this is a Soshu Den style.

Among these works, Masakiyo's hamon are notare mixed with large and small gunome and togariba. The midare pattern has variations, the top of the hamon has intermittent nijuba and yubashiri, ha-nie drop into the hamon, and there are deep and shallow variations where they appear, and his boshi have frequent hakikake and can form a kaen pattern. His work has prominent hataraki and displays an energetic style.

Also, in the work of Satsuma Shinshinto smiths such as Oku Yamato no kami Motohira and Hoki no kami Masayuki, in the jigane, there often appears a belt-like shape with a slightly more pale color than is seen in the usual chikei, and this results from a different kind of iron forged into the ji. However, Masakiyo's work rarely has this.

In voting, a majority of people voted for Masakiyo, and a few people voted for Yasutsugu.

The vote outcome was supposed to be determined by the wide and long kissaki shape which was judged as Keicho Shinto, the notare style hamon mixed with gunome, and the mon on the nakago. But Yasutsugu's forging is itame mixed with mokume, the entire ji is visible, there are frequent chikei, and the iron color is darker and is called "Echizen gane". Also, his hamon are based on a notare mixed with a continuous gunome, and yubashiri and nijuba at the edge of the hamon are notably prominent. In some places, the ha-nie move up into the ji. Many of his boshi are midarekomi or notare, the tip is sharp, the return is long and extends past the yokote which is a Sanpin style boshi.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

## **NOTE:**

The page showing the correct answers for the Kantei To has the names listed in each prefecture based on the voter's address. It is not listed according to membership in sword organizations.