

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

ISSUE 793

FEBRUARY, 2023

Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords

Juyo Bunkazai

Style: tachi

Mei: Moriie tsukuru

Owner: Eisei Bunko Foundation

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu (69.4 cm)

Sori: 4 bu 9 rin (1.5 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 3 rin (2.2 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 3 bu 5 rin (4.1 cm)

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

Nakago sori: slight

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. The blade is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki are barely noticeable. It is thick, there is a large hiraniku, a shallow koshisori, and a long chu-kissaki. The jigane is a tight itame hada visible along the entire ji. There are frequent fine ji-nie and clear midare-utsuri. The hamon is mainly choji mixed with large choji, gunome, square shaped features, and togariba. The bottom half of the hamon is mixed with prominent kawazuko-choji, and the entire hamon is a high exuberant midare hamon. On the ura, some areas of the midare hamon have saka-ashi. There are frequent ashi and yo, and a nioiguchi type hamon with a soft nioiguchi. Along the top of the hamon there are pale nijuba, tobiyaki at the koshimoto, some bright kinsuji, and a bright nioiguchi. The boshi is midarekomi. The omote tip is komaru with a small return, and the ura tip is a komaru style and yakizume. The nakago is suriage, the tip is a shallow kurijiri, and the yasurime are katte sagari. There is one mekugi-ana and on the omote, near the

nakago tip, and along the mune side, there is a slightly large three kanji signature made with a thick chisel.

Hatakeda Moriie is listed in the sword book “Genki Gannen (1570) Token Mekiki Sho” as an Ichimonji school smith, and he is different from the Osafune school smith. He supposed to have worked in the Hatakeda area, a neighbor of Osafune.

We cannot confirm the validity of “Hatakeda ju” signatures.

However, there are “Osafune ju” signatures with dates such as “Bunei 9 nen mizunoe-saru 2 gatsu 25 nichi” on a Juyo Bunkazai blade signed “Bizen kuni Osafune ju Moriie tsukuru”. There is another blade signed “Bizen Kuni Osafune ju Moriie (go Hyogo Moriie)” which is Juyo Bunkazai and owned by the Tokugawa museum. This means that Hatakeda could be in the Osafune Tomoe area, or it is a possibility that later they were absorbed by the Osafune school.

Moriie’s style is listed in the “Kaifunki” which says that the “appearance of the hamon looks like Mitsutada’s”, and it is pointed out that his work is similar to Osafune Mitsutada’s work. For example, his choji midare hamon’s vertical variations are not emphasized as in Ichimonji work, and his hamon are mixed with gunome, kawazoko choji (which are narrow in the center), and have a very active midare hamon. However compared with Mitsutada’s work, his hada are visible, and there are more kawazoko choji in the hamon, and these are mentioned as Moriie’s characteristic points. Also, historical sword books list his hamon as having only kawazoko choji around the koshimoto.

Moriie’s signatures have two kanji, three kanji with the “tsukuru” kanji, and rarely, a kao which is unusual in that period, and there are very rare long signatures. Also, in looking at the “mori” kanji’s shape, there are two styles. The first style has a large size, with six strokes touching the main vertical line. The second style has a smaller size, and not all of the six strokes go across the main vertical line, and the kanji is pointed towards the lower left. There are thoughts that the first style is by the Shodai, and second one is by the nidai, and that a long signature dated Bunei 9 (1272) is the nidai’s work.

However, there is another style with features between the two styles just described. This third style is written in a large size with six strokes, not all of which touch the main vertical stroke. These three styles are supposed to have changed in different periods, and one thought is that these mei are all by one smith whose work and styles changed or evolved in different periods. In the Meikan, the Shodai Moriie’s active period is listed as approximately from the Kencho (1249-56) to Shogen (1259-60) periods. There are existing works dated in Bunei 9 (1272) and Koan 3 (1280) without the smith’s mei, but from the style of the signature we can judge these as being

Moriie's work. Going from Kencho to Koan 3 (roughly from 1252 to 1280), it is not impossible to think that these works are by one smith. It appears that we should consider the possibility that Moriie is one person.

This tachi is wide and thick, and is in an excellent healthy condition. The forging shows a visible hada with clear utsuri. The entire hamon width is high, there is a gorgeous midare hamon with a dense, bright nioiguchi, and the bottom half is mixed with frequent kawazuko choji, which clearly shows Moriie's characteristic points. The upper half has round choji mixed with gunome, square shaped features, and a free flowing gorgeous midare hamon, and this is one of his best works.

However, although this sword has a Nidai style signature, these features are not very different from work which has been judged to be the Shodai's since historical times. This means it is difficult to judge the work of different generations just from a signature. This sword provides considerable material for us in trying to clarify the existence of several generations of Moriie.

This tachi has a solid gold habaki with a takabori shishi and is thought to be Goto Tokujo's work. This belonged to a famous collector, Kiyota Nao. After he passed away, this sword along with the "Mure Takamatsu zu tsuba" by Nara Toshinaga, which is a Juyo Bunkazai tsuba, was given to Hosokawa Moritatsu who was the first NBTHK chairman.

This sword is currently being shown from January 14 to May 7, 2023 in the exhibit "Hosokawa masterpiece swords: Eisei Bunko Kokuho swords".

Explanation and photo by Imoto Yuki

Shijo Kantei To No. 793

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 793 Shijo Kantei To is March 5, 2023. 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 March 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 5 sun 5 bu (75.9 cm)

Sori: 2 bu 8 rin (0.85 cm)

Motohaba: slightly less than 1 sun (3.02 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.64 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 6 rin (0.48 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 bu 2 rin (3.7 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 2 rin (18.25 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with a mitsumune. It is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and the saki are not very different. The kasane is just right, there is a shallow sori, and a long chu-kissaki. The jigane has a ko-itame hada mixed with itame, there is some mokume hada, there is somewhat tight forging, and abundant ji-nie and fine chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are some ashi and yo, frequent nie, some tobiyaki, kinsuji, sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, and the tip is a shallow kurijiri. The yasurime are o-suji-chigai. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, along the mune side there is a slightly large seven kanji Mei with a title and inscribed with a fine chisel. The kanji signature is slightly wavy, and on the left side of the kanji, the strokes are emphasized. At the bottom of the mei, the kanji become larger, and the last two kanji are even larger.

Juyo Tosogu

Shichi fukujin zu (seven lucky gods design) tsuba Mei: Omori Terumitsu with kao

The Omori school is derived from the Yokoya school, and they prospered in the times when the master smiths were Terumasa, Teruhide, and Terumitsu, and they had many students. Omori Terumitsu was Teruhide's fifth son, but he is supposed to have become head of the school in spite of having several senior brothers. The school was good at using diverse subjects such as waves, flowers, birds, and people. We have seen some of their sketches and art work with Kano school compositions. From the signature, this is a

dai-saku by Terumitsu's student Omori Mitsutoki. His teacher was Terutoki and the Omori school was living around Asakusa temple. Terutoki has a work signed "Edo Yanagibashi ju" (today that is around Asakusa Bridge), and we can recognize that there were many works where a teacher and student cooperated and worked together.

This is a tsuba that reminds us that "fortune comes and fortune goes". On the omote, seven lucky gods get on their boat with a dragon's head prow, and push through the waves and are moving forward. The ura carvings have Omori style waves with lucky omens such as a crane and turtle. The shibuichi ground with various types of colored metals is attractive. Terumitsu carved the seven lucky gods, and there is a harmonious feeling to this tsuba, and this is a master work.

The seven lucky gods represent fortune, virtue, bestowing favors and gifts, and people worshipped them as one group of gods. Originally, each of the seven lucky gods originated from a different budda and god. Daikoku-ten, Bishamon-ten, and Benzai-ten are Indian gods and they are battle gods, and from this, people believed that they were guards for Buddhism and protected Buddhism and its gods. Hotei's model is the Chinese monk Keihi, Fukuroku-ju and Juro-jin are the Doko religion's original gods of fortune and virtue. Ebisu-ju is the only god with a Japanese origin. The Japanese are a sea going people, and Ebisu came from the open sea and visited Japan. As an island, since historical times Japan has respected cultural relics which came from the ocean. Japan strongly influenced the continent, and maybe the seven lucky gods appeared on a treasure boat judging from this history.

On New Year's, we visit temples and shrines which enshrine each god, and pray to the seven lucky gods. If you didn't go to a shrine or temple yet, you can look at this tsuba instead of visiting the seven lucky gods.

Explanation by Takeda Kotaro

Token Teirei Kansho kai New Year's meeting

**Date: January 14 (second Saturday of January)
Location: The Token Hakubutsukan auditorium
Lecturer: Hinohara Dai**

The Reiwa 5 New Year's Teirei Kansho Kai was held on January 14th at the Token Hakubutsukan auditorium, and about fifty people attended. After the annual single vote for this meeting, the following people won a prize, and after the lecture, they received a gift in recognition of this.

Teni: Maki Toshitaka
Chii: Yoshida Nobuo
Jini: Matsumoto Keinosuke

Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Mei: Tomonari saku

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 1 sun 7 bu

Sori: slightly over 1 sun

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; the hada is visible; there are ji-nie and chikei; the steel color is slightly dark and there are jifu utsuri.

Hamon: mainly ko-midare; the edge of the hamon has fine hotsure; there are uchinoke, ashi, yo, a worn down nioiguchi, abundant nie and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: the hamon's width is narrow, and is straight; the tip is a yakizume style.

Kantei To No. 2: Katana

Mumei: Ko-Aoe

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 4 bu

Sori: 1 sun 5 ri

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: ko-itame hada mixed with ko-mokume, and the entire hada is visible; There are ji-nie, chikei, and jifu utsuri; the steel's color is a slightly dark blue.

Hamon: suguha style ko-choji hamon mixed with ko-midare; there are frequent ashi and yo, a worn down nioiguchi, nie, and small sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

Commentary

In the beginning, I will talk a bit about the fact that in the Koto period we sometimes see smiths with the same name but from a different generation.

In the Shinto period, sword smiths inherited the same name over several generations, and as you know, this was not unusual.

In the token world, from time to time, among Koto period smiths, from style and signature changes, the theory developed that the same name was sometimes inherited over several generations, and this theory became a mainstream idea.

Representative examples are the shodai Nagamitsu vs Sakon Shokan Nagamitsu, and the shodai Kanemitsu vs Enbun Kanemitsu. Beside these, among smiths such as Osafune Chogi, Osafune Kanenaga, Motoshige, and Omiya Morikage such examples are seen.

Concerning this, Fujishiro Yoshio and Fujishiro Matsuo have long had a different theory. In the medieval period or koto period, there is no custom where a craftsman inherited the same name from a previous generation, and the smiths who used a particular name are simply one single person, and the different styles and signatures arose from changes in their work during their careers.

Over the last several decades, both theories were examined by respected experts such as Ogasawara Nobuo, Watanabe Taeko, and Tanobe Michio, and their conclusions were that in the Koto period, smiths did not inherit a family name, but rather the styles of the swords and signatures which we see depended on the period in which the smiths were working. This idea is now accepted and becoming mainstream.

In such a situation, the problem could be that more of the earlier smiths' work was variable, and not that different generations made them. For example, consider the No.1 kanteito by Tomonari. His earliest works are supposed to be in the latter half of the Heian period around the Eien era (987). On the other hand, he has several blades signed in the early half of the Kamakura period in the Katei era (1235-28). After WWII, in examining work from the Heian to Kamakura periods, the idea that a number of smiths inherited their name from a previous generation was a mainstream or accepted opinion. However, the Fujishiro's opinion as I explained above, was that Tomonari was still one person.

Recently, attention was given to Mr. Tanobe Michihiro's discussion in the monthly magazine "Me-no-me" (vision) No. 553 in the October 2020 issue. The title was "Looking at the Japanese sword's Go Kaden (five schools)", and it discussed Tomonari.

Tanobe showed many famous Tomonari signature oshigata, and compared them with each other, and visually showed that these are rather similar.

Moreover, Tanobe discussed a problem: if Tomonari is one smith, his last work is in the Katei period, and his early work is supposed to be from around the end of the Heian period, which appears to be a rather long span of time.

A part of this problem is how we should think about the smiths working in the period when there was a transition going from the chokuto to a curved Japanese sword. In considering this problem, it is a good idea to read Tanobe's article.

Tanobe showed many of Tomonari's mei which varied, and these examples are very valuable. I think that this thoughtful article helps us in thinking about how and when a smith's name was used again in a different generation during the koto period.

My introduction has become a bit long. Tomonari's different styles are to some extent differences seen in different periods, and among these examples, older appearing or older style works are like the No.1 kanteito we have today. The entire hamon is komidare, and there are almost no prominent ko-choji, and the sword presents a very antique appearing style. A short time later, Tomonari's work appears with a Ko-Bizen style hamon with ko-midare mixed with ko-choji. Also, a Juyo Bunkazai Tomonari owned by Kitain Temple in Saitama, which I never seen, has a hamon with a suguha style and with ko-choji mixed with ko-gunome, which is a much more modern style.

The No.1 katana's length is 2 shaku 1 sun 7 bu, and it is long and wide compared with Tomonari's usual work. The widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a large koshizori with funbari, and the tip has no sori. The shape is precisely what we would see at the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period in a tachi shape, and we can judge this as being from around that time.

Many Ko-Bizen sword's jigane have a brighter steel color than Ko-Hoki and Ko-Aoe work. It has been pointed out that Tomonari's forging sometimes has a visible hada, a slightly dark steel color, and no utsuri. Even when utsuri does appear it is pale when compared to the usual Ko-Bizen work, and the tachi shows these characteristics.

The entire hamon is almost komidare, ko-choji are almost inconspicuous, the hamon edge has frequent hotsure and uchinoke hataraki, there are nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and this is a conspicuous older style.

The No.2 sword is a mumei Ko-Aoe katana with a standard Ko-Bizen and Ko-Aoe hamon from the early Kamakura Period, and we put this here for a comparison with Tomonari's work.

The Ko-Aoe hamon has round top small choji and we can see each group of choji and the hamon's shape clearly. Tomonari's ko-choji hamon has almost no choji groups or clusters, and in the entire hamon, details are small and complex and there is a small midare pattern. In addition, there are frequent hotsure and uchinoke, and the entire katana has a dignified appearance, and you can see an older style here more readily than in the Ko-Aoe work.

Up to now, the mainstream theory or thought was that Tomonari's active period was around the earlier Eien period, and older than most Ko-Bizen work. I think the reason for this was that the appearance of Tomonari's work appears older and more dignified than the usual Ko-Bizen work.

Kantei To No. 3: Tachi

Mumei: den Norishige

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 1 bu

Sori: slightly over 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; the entire ji is tight, but the hada is visible; there are abundant ji-nie, frequent chikei, and the steel color is slightly dark.

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

Boshi: on the omote and ura the boshi is straight; the tip is komaru, and there are fine hakikake.

Kantei To No. 4: Tachi

Mei: Yasutsuna

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 6 sun 4 bu

Sori: 9.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; there is some nagare hada; the entire hada has a large visible pattern; there are ji-nie, frequent chikei, jifu, a dark steel color, and jifu utsuri.

Hamon: there is yakiotoshi at the moto; above this, it is ko-midare mixed with ko-choji and some ko-gunome; there are small hotsure and uchinoke at the hamon's edge. There is a worn down nioiguchi, abundant nie, and inside of the hamon, the hada is visible; there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: on the omote ura the boshi is straight and is a yakizume style.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura there are bo-hi with a square finish.

Commentary

The No.3 tachi is ubu and mumei, has been judged as being a Norishige tachi, and is Juyo Bijutsuhin.

This is a Bizen Ikeda family heirloom tachi, and the story is that the head of Ikeda family received it from the third Shogun Iemitsu. It is accompanied by a Honnami Kochu origami.

Since historical times, time people used to say that Soshu Masamune and Etchu Norishige modeled their work after Ko-Bizen and Ko-Hoki classic ko-midare hamon, as well as Soshu Den notare style hamon, and this is one of them.

However, if you exhibit them at a kantei to, until the 2nd and 3rd rounds of voting, many different opinions are given.

After listening to the commentary, people understand the above opinion, but usually many people look at this and say "as a story we understand it, but actually this could be a wide Ko-Hoki work."

In some ways this is a reasonable comment. For a comparison here, we put the No.4 kantei to, a Chofu Mori family heirloom Yasutsuna tachi which is a typical work.

First, looking at the shape, the Yasutsuna is long, the widths at the the moto and saki are different, there is a large koshizori, and not much sori, and there is a small kissaki. It is from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period, and has a typical shape.

On the other hand, on the Norishige, the widths at the moto and saki are different, it is wider than the Yasutsuna, it is thick with a chu-kissaki, and is a heavy blade, Also, the sori at the tip is not prominent, and there is koshizori. The center of the sori is slightly higher than the Yasutsuna. From this, we can judge this work from the latter half of the Kamakura Period.

The Norishige's jigane is itame, but there are no clear jifu utsuri which are seen in Yasutsuna's work, and this is the biggest difference. Norishige's jigane has some dark areas that look like jifu

utsuri, but this is in the jigane and looks simply like dark areas in the steel.

The hamon on both are ko-choji with ko-midare, but the Norishige hamon is slightly wider, and is a prominent ko-choji hamon. Also the choji clusters are slightly bigger.

The Norishige hamon has more bright nie than the Yasutsuna, and the hamon is bright and clear. From these details, you can understand that this is not a wide Ko-Hoki work, but a Norishige work modeled after them.

Kantei To No. 5: Katana

Mumei: Aoe

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 3.5 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

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

Hamon: notare style hamon mixed with saka-choji; there are frequent ashi and yo; there are frequent nie; the hamon is bright and clear; there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi; the omote has a sharp komaru and a long return the ura has a slightly square shape, and both sides have kinsuji and hakikake.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are futatsuji-hi carved through the nakago.

Commentary

This is a large suriage, mumei blade and has been judged to be an Aoe katana. From the jiba (jigane and hamon), you can judge this as work from around the late Kamakura Period to the early half of the Nanbokucho Period.

The habaki-moto funbari is small, and some signs of the original hamon can be around the middle of nakago, so you can recognize this as a suriage katana.

However, the original shape is slightly wide, the widths at the moto and saki are not too different, and there is a long chu-kissaki.

Originally there was a large koshizori and the tip has sori. From this you can judge the period is from around the late Kamakura Period to the early half of the Nanbokucho Period.

This sword has a rich hiraniku, and from this, you can recognize its classic look and well preserved condition.

The jigane is itame mixed with mokume, the entire hada is fine and visible. There is a chirimen hada, the jigane's color is a clear dark blue, and there are frequent chikei, which looks a like typical Aoe jigane. With a saka-choji hamon, like we see on this katana, the utsuri are not dan-utsuri which seen on many suguha, but is midare utsuri.

The hamon is based on notare mixed with frequent and distinct "Aoe saka-choji", and there are frequent delicate appearing ashi and yo hataraki, and there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki.

From the edge of the hamon to the inside of the hamon, there is a whitish clear color, and this kind of hamon appearance is common on suguha work too, and this is a one of Aoe's characteristic points.

In voting, people voted for Aoe, and many voted for Tsuguyoshi and Tsugunao, who were peak Nambokucho period Aoe smiths.

This is large, suriage and mumei, and either name is an almost correct answer. But if it were peak Nanbokucho period Aoe work, the shape would be wider with a large kissaki, the top of saka-choji hamon would have high and low vertical variations, and there would be a more active hamon.

From the slightly gentle shape, and the fact that the top of the saka choji hamon is not prominent, it seems to be better to look at this as work from the late Kamakura Period to the early half of the Nanbokucho Period.

Shijo Kantei To 791 in the December, 2022 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To 791 is a katana by Musashi Daijo Korekazu.

This katana's length is 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu which is a standard uchigatana size, the hamon is choji-midare with midare utsuri, the boshi is midarekomi, with a komaru and return. From this, almost no one missed voting for the Ishido school smith. In voting, an overwhelming majority of people voted for Korekazu, and as another correct answer, few people voted for Tsunemitsu and the Fukuoka Ishido school's Koretsugu.

This has a slightly large sori for a Korekazu katana, the choji hamon is relatively gorgeous, so from this, the Koretsugu opinion is understandable. But Koretsugu's hamon are often mixed with what are called "squid heads", the center of the hamon is slightly expanded or wide, the tip is narrow and sharp, and there are saka-ashi and a unique saka-choji hamon. Koretsugu's boshi are mainly midarekomi, with a long return.

Also, Tsunemitsu and Mitsuhiro's forging, if you look carefully, sometimes has fine masame hada inside of the midare utsuri. Basically their jigane are a tight ko-itame hada, and do not show a clear masame hada, so please note this.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai