

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

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MEITO KANSHO

Examination of Important Swords

Tokubetsu Juyo Token

Type: Tachi

Mei: Bizen Osafune Tomomitsu
Oan 4 nen (1371) 3 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 4 bu 9 rin (74.2 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 3 rin (2.2 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

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

Nakago length: 6 sun 4 bu 4 rin (19.5 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 rin)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. The widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a standard thickness, a large koshi-sori with funbari, and a long chu-kissaki. The entire jigane is a tight ko-itame hada mixed in places with itame and mokume hada. There are jinnie, fine chikei, and pale utsuri. The hamon's is high, based on a notare pattern, and mixed with gunome, togariba, and angular shaped features. There are ashi, yo, a nioiguchi with uneven ko-nie and small kinsuji. The boshi on the yokote has a yakikomi while the boshi on the omote is a small

midare komi, and the tip is pointed or has a togari shape. The ura boshi is a large notare-komi, the tip is round, and on both sides, the return is long. The horimono at the koshimoto on the omote is a gyo style kurikara, and on the ura is a bonji. The nakago is ubu, and the tip is ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote, above the second mekugi-ana (the original) along the mune area there is a small sized long kanji signature, and the ura has a date.

The Bizen Osafune area was prosperous, even in the Nanbokucho period. The school started with the Osafune mainstream Kanemitsu school, and with eminent master smiths such as Chogi, Morikage, and Motoshige who produced many masterpieces. Among these smiths, Tomomitsu is supposed to be either Kanemitsu's younger brother or his student. We can confirm his signatures on tachi, tanto, and long hirazukuri wakizashi, mainly during the Enbun period (1356-60), and many of these works have a large size reflecting the period.

In particular, his masterpiece is supposed to be the large Futasan Shrine's tachi which is over four shaku long, and is Kokuho. Tomomitsu's name is well known from this work in the sword world. Most of his hamon styles are based on either notare or ko-notare patterns, and we sometimes see mostly angular shapes in the hamon. In a historical sword book, it says that the work of Tomomitsu and Moromitsu is similar to Kanemitsu's, and notably, that Tomomitsu's work is very similar, and we can say his work most closely follows the Kanemitsu's style.

Also, examining his work, there are no blades without horimono. Including simple horimono, Tomomitsu has some kind of horimono present, the same as Kanemitsu. In the case of tachi, under a bo-hi at the koshimoto there are kurikara and bonji, In the case of small size hirazukuri blades, there are kasane bori, such as katana hi (futasuji-hi), bonji, koshi-hi (goma-bashi), and relatively elaborate examples. Beside these horimono, he has another, not often seen unique style, the same as Kanemitsu, which is a kurikara where the area around the dragon's stomach

projects out with a shape resembling a holly leaf, and we can find characteristic points in his horimono. From these details, we can recognize his close relationship to Kanemitsu.

This is one of a few legacy Tomomitsu signed tachi. The widths at the moto and saki are not very different, there is a koshi-sori, the upper half has sori, there is a long chu-kissaki, and the dignified shape reflects his active period. Also, almost the entire jigane's ko-itame hada is very refined and shows his ability as an Osafune mainstream smith's work. In addition, the hamon is based on a Kanemitsu style notare, and this is a properly distinctive hamon for the large tachi.

The gyo-style kurikara at the koshimoto is a custom started by Nagamitsu and which was continued by Kagemitsu and Kanemitsu. It is also sometimes seen in work by Chogi, Masamitsu, and Hidemitsu. We also see it in work by the Oei-bizen smith Morimitsu, and basically we can say that this is a mainstream Osafune school traditional horimono. The composition with the thick and extended dragon's torso are slightly different, but is called a "harami ryu" (pregnant dragon). In many horimono, the dragon's face is positioned horizontally, but on this tachi, the dragon's face is positioned diagonally, and this is a rare example.

The original tachi's appearance is unaltered, the jigane has no defects or rough areas, the hamon has no soft or worn areas at all, the boshi is wide and healthy, there is little wear on the horimono, and the very healthy condition produces a feeling of being fresh or new. However, this blade also has an ubu nakago, a signature with a date, and shows the Osafune mainstream smith's high level of skill. It also shows a continuous extension from Kanemitsu's style and this is an exceptional work.

Commentary and photo by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei To No. 800

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 800 Shijo Kantei To is October 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 October 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: Wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 0.1 bu (30.6 cm)

Sori: slightly less than 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Motohaba: slightly less than 9 bu (2.65 cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 1 bu (0.35 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 8.5 bu (11.7 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is hirazukuri blade with a mitsumune. It is wide, long, and notably thin, and there is a shallow sori. The jigane is itame mixed with large itame and large mokume. Along the hamon and the mune sides there is masame hada, and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie and frequent chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon is hitatsura, and in places, there angular shaped features, and a yahazu style hamon. There are strong nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. Inside of the hamon there are prominent marks visible as a result of the forging work (tansetsu-me) which consist of visible color irregularities. The boshi has frequent hakikake, the ura point is a large round style, the long return intermittently continues from the muneyaki to the machi. The nakago is slightly (about 5 bu) machi okuri, and

short for the blade. The tip is slightly narrow and kurijiri, and the yasurime are a shallow katte sagari. There are four mekugi ana. On the omote, under the mekugi ana (the ubu or original ana) on the center, there is a slightly large five kanji signature. (the smith is known for especially large sized works and does not have many small sized works compared with the same period's other smiths.)

Juyo Tosogu

**Kigyū rika zu (riding home on a water buffalo theme)
tsuba**

Mei: Joshū Fushimi ju Kaneie

Kaneie is representative of master tsuba smiths from the end of the Muromachi to the Momoyama period. He is called one of the Momoyama period's three best master smiths along with Nobuie and Umetada Myōju, and since historical times, knowledgeable people and tsuba lovers who were experts have praised him as a master smith. There are no confirmed documents concerning him, and his origins and the places in which he lived are not clear. He is supposed to have created a style reminiscent of suiboku-ga (black and white pictures), or picture style tsubas with a thin iron ground by carving with a chisel. His signatures show two styles, a "Joshū mei" and a "Yamashiro Mei", and from his styles, the Jo-shū mei are supposed to be his earlier works.

This subject is No. six, , that is "riding back home on a water buffalo", and is picture number 6 of the ten water buffalo pictures. The ten pictures are illustrations of writings by two Rinzaishū monks, the Roan zen monk wrote the "Ju" section, and the Jien zen monk wrote the "Jo" section. They divided ascetic practices into ten stages, and illustrated them using pictures containing water buffalo. This picture shows the stage when the herdsman finally obtained the buffalo (this refers to the enlightenment of one's own mind), and are

returning back home, relaxed on the back of a buffalo, using a small branch as a whip, and singing a song. This means the practitioner has reached enlightenment, and has calmly surrendered to enlightenment in a calm environment, and without doubt, now has a completely innocent mind. Kaneie illustrated this zen world on his tsuba with his original mode of expression and his highly skilled work. The iron ground has exquisite chisel marks, the mimi (rim) is a gentle uchikaeshi style (thin metal stretched over the rim of the tsuba), and on the omote, the image is a buffalo herdsman and his hermitage or retreat. The ura shows miscellaneous trees and a wild goose. Kaneie focused on the subject and expressed it clearly, and large blank spaces have chisel marks illustrating movement which produces a spacial depth, and generates an atmosphere surrounding the herdsman. This tsuba is a view of the world in a period with a strong zen culture, and with Kaneie's excellent skills, it produces a strong impression. After a long period, the iron's color has changed naturally, and with its patina, it has become an elegant masterpiece.

Commentary by Kugiyama Natsuko

Shijo Kantei To No.798 in the July, 2023 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by the Shodai Hizen kuni ju Tadayoshi.

In the Tadayoshi signature period, we see the ju-nin signature from Keicho 18 (1613), and he used this form frequently until Genna 10 (which is also Kanei 1 or 1624) when he received the Musashi daijo title and changed his name to Tadahiro. This katana's signature seems to be from around Keicho 20 nen (which is also Genna 1 or 1615) from the style. In considering the ju-nin mei, most of these signatures are "Hizen kuni ju-nin Tadayoshi saku", forming an eight kanji signature. Beside this, there is the "Hizen kuni

ju-nin Tadayoshi” Mei without the “saku” kanji, all together again forming an eight kanji Mei. There are wakizashii signed “Hizen koku ju Minamoto Tadayoshi saku”, and this also has eight kanji. Nine kanji are used in single Buddhist prayers, but the term for 9 kanji is “ku kanji” and the sound of “ku” means pain, and this smith seems to avoid using nine kanji.

An order for a sword in the Nabeshima family’s records lists details such as a “narrow suguha hamon similar to Shidzu work”, “the shape should have the form seen in the provided wood dai-sho”, and the “Musashi Daijo, signature should be Hizen kuni ju Fujiwara Tadahiro”. Besides these details, there were also details discussing things such as the forging style.

Hizen blades have a reputation for being well balanced with an excellent shape, a slightly large sori, the shape of the sori, variations in the widths, and kissaki size, and these characteristic points appeared more pronounced after Tadayoshi’s Kanei period work.

After Tadayoshi changed his signature to Musashi Daijo Tadahiro, his jigane show what is called komenuka-hada, or a tight ko-itame hada. There are dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and refined forging. The hamon form a belt like suguha or a midare with a clear boundary nioguchi. The boshi are parallel with the fukura, and they have a komaru and return. He is establishing his standard Shinto style, and the standard Hizen characteristic style.

Tadayoshi responded to this kind of highly detailed order, and the Tadayoshi school’s level of work became elevated. For this reason, existing work from not only the main Tadayoshi family, but also of the branch families, and Masahiro, Yukihiro, Tadakuni, and other Bo-Hizen smiths consist of good blades.

However, before changing to the Tadahiro name, Tadayoshi (the five kanji Tadayoshi, and ju-nin Tadayoshi), had made few of the above styles, and often he made swords that

appear to look like utsushi (copy) work. In the Momoyama period and from around the Tensho to Keicho periods, Soshu Den utsushi (copy) work became popular, and the Shodai Tadayoshi made not only Soshu Den styles, but also made all kinds of utsushi-mono. There are examples such as Rai style work, Yamato style work, Kagemitsu styles, Aoe styles, Muramasa styles, and Soshu Den styles. Tadayoshi also worked in the style of many other smiths such as Hiromitsu, Shidzu, Naoe Shidzu, Chogi, and Dai-sa. He also worked, not only on utsushi, but on many kinds of suguha work. We could say this work is based on the Rai style and adds Yamato style details, and is an eclectic work.

In this period, many of his styles have a long chu-kissaki, and some of them have a slightly high shinogi-ji (this style is seen in the work of the shodai and nidai). The length of Keicho period five kanji Tadayoshi works are less than 2 shaku 3 sun, which is a notably short size. Beginning in the Genna period, long blades and nakago are seen, and are sometimes seen suriage. This katana's nakago is not too long, but compared with five kanji period work it is still long, and the blade is long.

The jigane has a slightly visible hada, and a slightly less moist appearing surface (i.e. less uruoi), and in places we see jifu type hada, (i.e. because the kawagane is thin, the shingane is visible in places), and there is a rather classical appearance. Also, sometimes there is a continuous yakiba, and from the yakiba going up into the ji, we can see mizukage. Looking at this katana, we can see this characteristic point.

Blades with mizukage are sometimes seen in work by the Shodai Tadayoshi, and also the 8th and 9th generations. Many Tadahiro Mei from the 2nd and 3rd generations have a yakiba which stops suddenly at the machi. You should remember this point for comparisons between different generations. The suguha in this period, the Tadahiro period's straight style are not seen often, and are a somewhat shallow notare style, mixed with ko-gunome. There are ashi,

yo, nijuba, uchinoke, slight kuichigai-ba, a slightly tight nioiguchi with wide and narrow areas, and many variations and hataraki. Also sometimes the boshi is not the usual, shallow notare, the tip has hakikake, and there is a disorganized relaxed style.

The nakago tips are kurijiri, usually the yasurime are katte sagari, but sometimes they are kiri (this nakago's bottom area is katte sagari). The signature on the ura (tachi mei) is characteristic, and is a long signature positioned along the mune side which is usual.

Hizento katana nakago mune have some niku, and many of them have a small degree of niku, and sometimes the nakago mune is round. There are some exceptions with the Nidai Masahiro and other smiths, but usually Hizento wakizashi nakago have both, a kaku-mune and a katana mei. Rarely, blades are seen over 2 shaku with a kaku mune and a katana mei, and these are supposed to have been made as long wakizashi.

In voting, some people voted for Musashi Daijo Tadahiro and Hizen kuni Fujiwara Tadahiro saku (the shodai). I see that this is an eight kanji signature, and there are kiri yasuri (or katte sagari), and of course we treated that as a correct answer. But usually these are different from the Tadayoshi mei period's typical style, and the nakago tip is iriyamagata which is a big difference, so it is a good idea to examine these details more carefully before voting. Also, the second generation's signature of Fujiwara Tadahiro saku is supposed to be a presentation mei and were made under strict conditions as I explained above, and not much shingane becomes visible on these swords.

For other acceptable answers with later generations of Tadahiro and Tadayoshi, basically either smith's typical style followed Musashi Daijo Tadahiro's style. But if it were nidai work, the nakago tip is supposed to be iriyamagata.

Usually the third generation's nakago tips are iriyamagata, except in his early work. The yasurime are katte sagari and a

moist (uruoi) jigane is his characteristic point. Among the Hizen smiths he has the clearest jiba (jigane and hamon).

Definitely, the fourth generation has few ju-nin mei, but most of them are without the “saku” kanji and are seven kanji signatures. He has rare Shodai Tadayoshi suguha hamon with variations. His forging is komemuka-hada, which shows the later generation’s characteristic, and also has many works with a narrow shape.

The fifth generation has some complex midare hamon, which are generally similar to Bo-Hizen midare hamon, which have a very Shinto-like appearance, and no classic feeling as seen in the fourth generation’s work. He has some slightly wide blades.

Besides these smiths, some people voted for Bo-Hizen smiths. If it were the Shodai Masahiro or Yukihiro, their yasurime are either sujichigai or a large sujichigai. Notably, the Shodai Masahiro’s nakago tips are iriyamagata.

Iyo Munetsugu’s work is classic looking, but his signatures are katana mei, and this is a big difference. His midare hamon are wide with irregular variations, and a worn down nioiguchi. His boshi are midarekomi, and the tips are either sharp or a kaen style. His works are a more dynamic and strongly influenced by Soshu-den styles and this is a characteristic point.

Commentary by Ooi Gaku.

NBTHK 75th Anniversary
Tatara 45th Anniversary
NBTHK 3rd National Convention

Information:

We will hold the 3rd national convention as described below.

We are looking forward to the participation of many people who appreciate Japanese swords.

Date: Reiwa 5 nen, November 25 (Saturday)-26 (Sunday)

Meeting place: Token Museum

1-12-9 Yokoami Sumidaku, Tokyo

Tel: 03-6284-1000

Members fee: Plan A: 32,000 yen

Includes Kanshokai fee, Token Museum 2 day pass Social gathering at the Dai-ichi Hotel Ryogoku Meeting souvenir

Plan A cost for a companion: 21,000 yen

Includes Token Museum 2 day free pass and the social gathering
Companions are not eligible for the Kanshokai or kantei bid

Plan B: 17,000 yen

Token Museum 2 day pass and meeting souvenir Not eligible for social gathering or kantei bid

Registration to attend: Please register to attend by using the application at the end of the Token Bijutsu Journal's September issue

Deadline to apply for the 3rd national convention: Friday, October 20th 2023

Convention schedule:

November 25 (Saturday): all events are at the Dai-ichi Hotel, Ryogoku

Reception: 12:00-16:00

Token Kansho: 12:00- 16:00

Gendai smith exhibition: 12:00-16:00

One time appraisal bid: 12:00-16:00

Celebration ceremony: 17:00-18:00

Celebration gathering: 18:00-20:00

Token Museum special exhibition: 9:30-16:00 at the Token Museum ※

※Before registration begins for the convention (starting at 12:00 noon), entrance to the NBTHK's museum's sword exhibit will require a separate entrance fee. After registration, attendees will have free admittance to the museum.

November 26 (Sunday): all events are at the Dai-ichi Hotel, Ryogoku

Token Kansho : 9:00-14:00

Gendai smith exhibition: 9:00-14:00

Cooperating organization representatives meeting: 11:00-13:00

Token Museum special exhibition: 9:30-14:00 at the Token Museum

Notes:

- Fees are subject to change due to unplanned or unexpected circumstances
- Seating at the gathering will be in order of arrival
- Please make your own hotel arrangements
- At the Token Kansho, please follow the venue staff's instructions