

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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**MEITO KANSHO: APPRECIATION OF IMPORTANT
SWORDS**

Juyo Bunkazai

Type: Katana

Kinzogan mei: Bizen Koku Kanemitsu
(Meibutsu O-Kanemitsu)
Honnamisaki with kao (Ko-on)

Length: 2 shaku 7 sun 5 bu 1 rin (83.35 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 3 rin (2.2 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 9 rin (2.4 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 8 rin (0.55 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 6 bu 8 rin (5.1 cm)

Nakago length: 9 sun 1 bu 1 rin (27.6 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki are not prominent. The blade is thick and long with a shallow sori and large kissaki. The jigane is ko-itame mixed with itame and mokume hada, and some nagare hada. The entire jigane is well forged. There are ji-nie, chikei, and midare style clear utsuri which becomes straight around the center of the blade. The hamon is mainly notare mixed with ko-gunome, ko-choji and togariba. On the ura side's lower half,

the hamon is a slightly small midare, there are small ashi, yo, a tight nioiguchi, and the entire hamon is bright and clear. The boshi is a shallow notare with a komaru and return. There are bo-hi horimono on the omote and ura, and near the point area, there is a small space between the hi and the top of the shinogi ji which is visible as the hi continues with a shallow sori while the top of the shinogi ji curves upwards with a larger sori. The nakago is greatly suriage, and the tip is ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are a slightly shallow suji-chigai and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote and ura, the flat area has a kin-zogan Mei with a large kanji signature.

Osafune Kanemitsu is the fourth generation of the main Osafune school, following Kagemitsu. His existing signed works are from the end of the Kamakura period from Genkyo 1 (1321) to the mid Nanbokuchō period's Joji 6 (1367). His early works around the early Nanbokuchō Koei (1342-44) period are tachi and tanto with standard shapes, and the hamon are either a suguha style mixed with gunome, or a kataochi gunome style which followed his father Kanemitsu's style. However, around the Jōwa to Kan'ō (1345-51) period, his shapes become larger, and there is a new hamon style which is primarily a calm notare, which was not seen in Bizen work until then. Around the Bunwa to Enbun periods (1352-60) many swords in this style are seen. This hamon style is accompanied by a large sized blade. Before this, the hamon were mainly gunome or kataochi gunome. It has been pointed out that this well balanced composition resulted after numerous attempts.

Kanemitsu also has confirmed hirazukuri uchigatana examples which are Jūyō Token, and this style is seen in the work of Awataguchi Kuniyoshi and are called naki-kitsune. Other Osafune smiths, such as Morikage and Yoshikage have some blades with similar features, and it is noticeable in this period, since there are few similar examples among Bizen blades. As the leader of the largest Osafune main stream school, Kanemitsu produced many masterpieces, either signed or mumei, and there are 13 Jūyō Bunkazai, 15

Juyo Bijutsuhin, and 38 Tokubetsu Juyo, so we can recognize his excellent skills.

This blade is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and the saki is not prominent. There is a large kissaki, a dignified shape, and the tips of the hi near the kissaki are slightly low, which illustrates a Nanbokucho characteristic point. Also, it is thick, hiraniku is noticeable, the blade is heavy, and its healthy appearance has been preserved. The forging is based on ko-itame hada, and the blade overall is well forged and tightly forged. Although this is a large work, there are no defects or flaws at all, and it illustrates really excellent forging techniques.

The mainly notare hamon, along with the long length similarly reflect its healthy shape. There are no weak areas in the jigane, there is a tight nioiguchi, and it remains as fresh looking as it did when it was just finished. There are no scratches, no faults, and the state of preservation is perfect. The jigane is refined and there is strong tight forging, and the calm notare hamon balances well with the shape. This masterpiece work fully demonstrates Kanemitsu's character. However, on the ura's bottom half there is a small midare hamon, and on the omote the hamon is different. It is dated Enbun 4 (1359) and is Juyo Bunkazai, and was owned by the Tohoku museum. In addition, even today, the shape is distinctively long, there is a one mekugi ana present after it was made suriage, so the original ana is absent. It is likely that the original ana was under the current tip of the nakago, so you can imagine that the original length must have been 3 shaku 4-5 sun. This is comparable with a large Uesugi family tachi dated Enbun 2 (1357) which is Juyo Bijutsuhin.

Among Juyo Bunkazai blades, this is the only large suriage tachi. From its excellently preserved condition, the healthy jiba (jigane and hamon), along with a typical Kanemitsu style more than makes up for the large degree of suriage it has suffered, and it exhibits excellent workmanship, and deserves its high classification. In addition, the gold inlay signature by Honnami Koan is very rare, and there is no other example of "Honnami" written with three kanji. This is a masterpiece and a valuable resource. This is listed in the

“Kyoho Meibutsu-cho”, and Todo Takatora received it as Hideyoshi’s bequest, and after this, it was handed down in the Tokugawa Shogun’s family.

This will be exhibited in the “Masamune Jutetsu: The Master Smith Masamune and His Students” at the NBTHK museum from January 6, 2024 to February 11, 2024, and then at the Fukuyama Museum from February 18 to March 27, 2024.

Commentary and photo by Ishi Akira.

Shijo Kantei To No. 802

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 803 Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2024. 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 January 5, 2024 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: Tanto

Length: 8 sun 1 bu (24.6 cm)

Sori: slightly less than 1 bu (0.2 cm)

Motohaba: 7 bu (2.15 cm)

Motokasane: slightly over 1 bu (0.4 cm)

Nakago length: slightly over 3 sun 1 bu (10.2 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a hirazukuri tanto with a mitsumune. It has a slightly small size, a standard width, is thin, and there is a shallow sori, and slightly poor fukura. The jigane is ko-itame hada mixed with itame hada, and the hada is slightly visible. There are abundant fine ji-nie, frequent chikei, and some areas have nie utsuri. The hamon and the boshi are as seen the picture. There is a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and some yubashiri, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) is bright and clear. The boshi is a notare style, tsukiage, the tip is sharp, and the return has a slightly tight nioiguchi. The nakago is slightly suriage. The tip is narrow, almost kiri, (the original was kurijiri or ha-agari kurijiri) and the yasurime are suji-chigai or o-suji-chigai. There are three mekugi ana. On the omote, under the mekugi ana on the center, there is a slightly large sized smith's name made with a fine chisel. On the ura slightly towards the mune side, the location of the smith's residence is inscribed.

The original length before the blade became suriage was a large size for this smith.

Tokubetsu Hozon Tosogu

Murakami Yoshimitsu zu (theme) kozuka

Mei: Adachi Yusai

Adachi Yusai was born in Bunsei 6 (1823) in Bizen Kuni's Kabe village. At the age of 17, he went to Kyoto and became student of Wada Isshin. His skills were excellent, and he was good enough to inherit his teacher's artist name Yusai. He called himself Shinsoku and Shinsou, and after the Meiji restoration, he is supposed to have worked with Yuzen designs (for dyeing kimono fabrics) and sketching designs for ceramics. In his work, he used carving techniques with hira-zogan (inlay) and takabori-zogan and both styles of work were excellent.

This work has a shibu ichi ground with katakiri-bori, and is a scene from the Taiheiki (the story of the war between the

north and south courts during the Nanbokucho period), and Yusai used hira-zogan here. The emperor Daito no Miya Moriyoshi Shinno raised an army with his father, the emperor Godaigo, but they were struggling and trying to escape to Kumano. On their way, they were blocked by local samurai. If these samurai allowed passage for the emperor's party, the Shogun would severely penalize them. In addition, the local samurai believed that blocking the emperor would be very rude and improper. These samurai decided that they needed to show some proof that they engaged in combat with the emperor's forces, so the emperor gave them one of his banners, and the samurai allowed the emperor to pass through their territory. The samurai who was the primary or main character in this story is Murakami Yoshimitsu. He was late in following the emperor's party, and when he reached these local samurai, he asked why they had the emperor's banner. After he heard the situation he became very angry, and was described as being like a raging fire. He told the local samurai that they were ordinary people, and this type of rudeness being displayed to the emperor was inexcusable. He immediately attacked the local samurai, and it was said that he tossed some of them 4 to 5 jo away (about 12-15 meters). The samurai were amazed at Yoshimitsu's superhuman strength and submitted to him. Yoshimitsu put the banner on his shoulder and proceeded to follow the emperor, and there is no question that the emperor relied on him. Yoshimitsu later committed suicide in place of the emperor, and later his son Yoshitaka met the same fate as his father. Thanks to the father and son's sacrifice, the emperor was able to escape safely to the Koya mountains.

The kogai omote shows Yoshimitsu holding the banner, as the local samurai tried to attack him. The ura shows Yoshimitsu tossing the local samurai into the air. The kozuka has an interesting scene that we can recognize from a sketch book with a Kojima Kotoku drawing. For tosogu, there are many subjects or characters used from the Taiheiki story, such as Omori Hikoshichi, Inamura-ga-saki, Sakurai no wakare, and Kojima Kotoku. Among these, especially

those when a samurai dies for the southern or Nancho court, many gained in popularity among loyal subjects, and many of these stories were used in ukiyoe. These images promoted and recognized respect for the emperor.

Commentary by Takeda Kotaro

Shijo Kantei To No. 801 in the October, 2023 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Osafune Yosozaemon Sukesada (shodai).

This katana has sakizori, the nakago is less than 5 sun 6 bu which is a short length, and from this, you can judge this as a katate-uchi katana which is from the latter half of the Muromachi period. In addition, the length is over 2 shaku 3 sun, and compared with many typical short swords from around the Bunmei-Eisho (1459-1520) period, this clearly has a long length, and a long kissaki.

This kind of shape is seen in sometimes in the Bunmei and Eisho periods, but from around the Kyoroku to Tenmon period (1528-54), it became a mainstream shape. Furthermore, at the end of the Muromachi period around Eiroku to Tensho (1558-91), many of them have longer nakago so they can be used with two hands. The kissaki is also longer, and are just like Keicho Shinto swords with a saki-sori shape.

The ji has midare utsuri, and apparently was a specially ordered blade with a tight refined jigane, and you can recognize this as highly skilled work. In the Sue Bizen period, there is no prominent utsuri, and you see more abundant strong ha-nie.

The hamon has open valley gunome and large gunome, and the top of the hamon has small choji and small gunome, and is what is called a fukushiki gunome midare hamon. In

addition, the entire hamon is wide and looks high, but there is a good distance from the top of the ha to the bottom of the valleys of the midare hamon. This kind of wide hamon is one of the characteristic points which helps to narrow this sword down to Sue Bizen work.

In addition, the hamon disappears near the hamachi, and this is seen sometimes after the Oei period (1394-1427) in Osafune work. You should remember this as a reference point.

Many of the boshi from the period have a wide yakiba, and this katana shows this characteristic point.

Many Sue Bizen nakago tips are kurijiri and ha-agari kurijiri, and the tips are wide, and the nakago are wide and stout. I heard a story, that in a battlefield, if a katana nakago is broken and was not usable, one could wrap the base with a cord and could continue to use it. In addition to this shape, the yasurime are katte sagari, and in the case of a katana the signature can be long and along the mune side of the nakago, with the date starting lower than the Mei on the omote side, and this is a Sue Bizen characteristic point.

As I explained above, this style was made before and after the Tenmon period (1532-54), and shows Sue Bizen work's characteristic points, and their typical style. But this katana has a refined jigane, a bright nioiguchi, and many hataraki such as frequent ashi, yo, and sunagashi, and is excellent work. From the great workmanship, we would wish to think about Sue Bizen's best master smith, Yosozaemon Sukesada, and this katana is Juyo Bijutsuhin.

At this time, many people voted for Sukesada, and a majority of them wrote his common name Yosozaemon, and that was very good. Some people also wrote other common names, such as Hikobejo and Genbejo and they have similar work, so we treated all Sukesada names as a correct answer.

Others votes were for Katsumitsu, Tadamitsu, and Munemitsu. They have work similar to this, and it can be

hard to distinguish among them, and we treated those names as correct answers.

But in general, the shodai Hikobei Sukesada, Munemitsu, and Tadamitsu all had their active peak work around the Eisho period (1504-20) and their works are short, many of the nakago are less than 5 sun long, and there are fewer long kissaki. Also, if this were Katsumitsu's work, many of them would have a midare hamon with choji. If it were Munemitsu's work, his midare hamon tend to be narrow. Tadamitsu has excellent sugaha work and many of his boshi tips have a large round shape.

Genbejo Sukesada and Hikosaemonjo Sukesada have dated Tenmon (1532-54) work, and are a reasonable answer. But a large part of their active periods were before and after the Eiroku period (1558-69), and as I explained above, the nakago became longer to allow for two hand use, and the kissaki are much longer.

There was a Shichibejo Sukesada vote, and he has the same name as a smith in the Koto period, and we treated that as a correct answer at this time. But he is a Shinto smith, so from now on, without a specific Koto period label, we will treat him as a Shinto smith, and so please note this. Also, if it were the Shinto period's Shichibejo Sukesada, there are no utsuri, and many of his swords have yakidashi. In case of his fukushiki midare hamon, many of his midare hamon are large.

For another proper answer, some people voted for Norimitsu and Kiyomitsu. Norimitsu's work peaked around the Kansho period (1460-65), and he has many works from around the Eikyo to Bunmei period (1429-86). Notably, many of his works before and after the Kansei period are short and narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a slightly small kissaki, and a small size and graceful shape. His hamon are small, narrow midare hamon, with a slightly long distance between the midare peaks, and some areas contain angular shaped features. There are small ashi and yo, and a gentle hamon. His boshi yakiba is not as wide

as this, and many elements are strongly different from this Kantei To.

Kiyomitsu, with his Gorosaemonjo work peaked around the Tenmon period (1532-54), and considering the shape, the vote is a reasonable viewpoint. But including work from around the Eisho period (1504-20) with the Magouemonjo name, most of those works are a suguha style. I feel through my shinsa work, his fukushiki gunome hamon comprise perhaps less than 10% of his work. Also, many of his jigane are itame mixed with mokume and the hada is visible.

Other votes were for Oei Bizen smiths such as Morimitsu. Many of these swords are long and are tachi, there is a prominent sori, and because they are tachi, the koshizori is supposed to be prominent. Also, compared Sue Bizen work, fukushiki gunome valleys are seen near the top of the hamon. On the other hand, the top of the hamon approaches the shinogi, and there are more high and low variations in the hamon width, and the hamon are large. The boshi are not as wide as Sue Bizen boshi, the tip is sharp, and among these, when the tips have ashi, they are called “candles”, and they look very different.

Some people also voted for Tatara Nagayuki's Sukesada utsushi work (copies). Concerning this, Tame Senjo's old issue No. 23 Juyo Token journal is famous. This shows a short nakago and was supposed to be a special order. However, the katate-uchi style was no longer in common use in that period, and a short nakago was very rare, and I can say this example was unique or an exceptional example. In actuality, Nagayoshi's nakago show a longer trend in his Shinshinto work. His jigane is a tight ko-itame, his hamon have a bright and clear nioiguchi, and a very tight nioiguchi, and prominent togariba. In addition, the yakiba goes under the machi, and the tip of the boshi is sharp. Also, the nakago tip is not wide, and has a common narrow shape.

Commentary by Ooi Gaku.

INFORMATION ABOUT UPCOMING SHINSA

SUBMISSIONS FOR SHINSA

Items which qualify for the October Juyo Token Shinsa should have received a Tokubetsu Hozon classification by June. Toso (koshirae) and toshingu (tosogu) should have received a Tokubetsu Hozon classification by May. Please note these requirements.

From March, 2022, requirements were changed. Items submitted for Tokubetsu Hozon Shinsa must have passed a Hozon Shinsa a month or more before the Tokubetsu Hozon shinsa application. If the item has already passed an earlier shinsa, please submit a reservation number and certificate for the items.

APPLICATION PERIOD

Internet applications: Applications are due a month before the shinsa, from the 1st to 25th (on the 1st of the following month, acceptances will begin from 10:00 am).

Mail applications: Applications are due a month before the shinsa, from the 1st to 7th (valid postmarks must be present)

If the number of accepted items reaches the limit for a shinsa before the deadline, we must stop accepting additional items for that shinsa.

ADDRESS FOR APPLICATIONS

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai Jizen Shinsa Uketsuke Dept.
1-12-9 Yokoami Sumida-Ku, Tokyo, Japan 130-0015

2024 Hozon and Tokubetsu Hozon Shinsa Acceptance Dates

Date	Category	Items	Acceptance Date	Internet Application Date	Mail Application Date
APRIL	28 th Tokubetsu Juyo	Token, Tosogu	APRIL 1-3	March 1-25.	March 1-7
MAY	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Toso, Tosogu	MAY 7-9	April 1-25	April 1-7
JUNE	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Token	JUNE 3-5	May 1-25	May 1-7
AUGUST	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Toso, Tosogu	AUGUST 5-7	July 1-25	July 1-7
SEPTEMBER	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Token	SEPTEMBER 2-4	August 1-25	August 1-7
OCTOBER	70 th Juyo Shinsa	Token, Toso, Tosogu	OCTOBER 1-3	September 1-25	September 1-7
NOVEMBER	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Toso, Tosogu	NOVEMBER 5-7	October 1-25	October 1-7
DECEMBER	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Token	DECEMBER 2-4	November 1-25	November 1-7
2025 DATES					
FEBRUARY	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Toso, Tosogu	FEBRUARY 3-5	January 1-25	January 1-7
MARCH	Hozon, Tokubetsu Hozon	Token	MARCH 3-5	February 1-25	February 1-7