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Meito Kansho

Type: Tanto

Owner: NBTHK

Mei: Rai Kunitsugu

Length: 8 sun 4 bu 2 rin (25.5 cm)

Sori: slight

Motohaba: 7 bu 9 rin (2.4 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 2 bu 2 rin (9.45 cm)

Nakago sori: none

Commentary

This is a hirazukuri tanto with a mitsumune. It is slightly wide and slightly long, has a standard thickness, and almost no sori. The jigane is a tight ko-itame, there are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, some jifu, and clear bo-utsuri. The hamon is ko-notare with ko-gunome and gunome. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, yubashiri, and a bright and clear nioiguchi. The omote boshi is almost straight and a yakizume style. The ura boshi is a slight notare, and the point has a narrow togari shape. The horimono on the omote and ura are katana-hi

with tsure-hi and both are carved into the nakago. The nakago is slightly suriage and the tip is kiri. The yasurime are kiri, and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote under the mekugi ana on the center, there is a large three kanji signature.

Rai Kunitsugu's active period is around the end of the Kamakura period judging from his existing dated work: a Juyo Token ken dated Karyaku 2 (1327), a tanto dated Shokyo 1 (1332) signed "Rai Minamoto Kunitsugu", and a tanto listed in the "Kozan Oshigata" book dated Gentoku 2 (1330). Kunitsugu succeeded Kunitoshi, and was a slightly junior smith relative to Kunimitsu. In his work, there are a few tachi, and mainly tanto or long hirazukuri wakizashi. His tachi have narrow or standard shapes and are slightly wide with a long kissaki. Among his tanto and wakizashi, there are few small sized works, and many of them are wide and with a length of 8- 9 sun. They are notably wide, and there are more long blades which are over 1 sun in length with a slight sori. These unique large shapes are one of his major characteristic points. His style is called "Kamakura Rai" in historical sword books when compared with other Rai work, especially that of Kunimitsu. There are abundant hataraki such as ji-nie and chikei, and it does not matter what the hamon style is. Usually the blades are wide with abundant nie, and among the school's smiths, he has a strong Soshu Den style, and a unique style. Because of this, he is considered to be one of the "Masamune jitetsu". In addition, the "Kyoho Meibutsu Cho" lists five of his tanto, so his work had a high reputation.

This blade is wide and long, and is large when compared with the standard tanto shape seen in the latter half of the Kamakura period. In addition, there is

almost no notable sori. His active period was from the end of the Kamakura period to the early Nanbokucho period. There is a well forged and refined ko-itame hada, the hamon is wide and has ko-gunome mixed with ko-notare, and there are slightly wide and narrow variations in the width. There are abundant even nie and yubashiri, and the hamon does not have a characteristic Rai feeling. At first glance, this work looks like it may be from Yamashiro Den with a strong Soshu Den style. But there is a dense nioiguchi, the jiba (jigane and hamon) are bright and clear, Rai's unique clear bo-utsuri are present, and some places show a slightly rough Rai hada. This has the school's characteristic points, and is excellent work, and it is an important material to help study his style and characteristics.

This is from the late Fujisawa Otsuyasu's collection and was presented to the NBTHK by his bereaved family in Heisei 12 (2000).

Explanation and the picture by Ishi Akira.

Shijo Kantei To No. 807

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 807 Shijo Kantei To is May 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 May 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: Wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 1 sun 3.5 bu (34.45 cm)

Sori: slightly over 1 bu (0.4 cm)

Motohaba: 9.5 bu (2.9 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 3 sun 2 bu (9.6 cm)

Nakago sori: slight (0.1 cm)

This is a hirazukuri wakizashi with a mitsumune. It is long and wide, and slightly thin for the width, and there is a shallow sori. The jigane is itame hada, and there is a slightly visible hada. There are abundant jinnie and frequent chikei. The hamon and the boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon is hitatsura, based mainly on a choji style hamon, and the gunome form a complex midare pattern. Some places have dango (a round cake shape) choji, and going to the upper part of the blade, the width gradually increases or becomes higher. There are strong nie and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. The boshi is sharp and there is a long return. The horimono on the omote is tsumetsuki ken, and on the ura there is a katana-hi carved into the nakago. The nakago is ubu, and has a short length for the blade. The tip is narrow and kurijiri, and the yasurime are a shallow katte-sagari. There are two mekuigi ana. On the omote, under the original mekuigi-ana on the center, there is a long

kanji signature made with a fine chisel, and the ura has a date.

This smith has many hirazukuri blades over 1 shaku in length with a large shape, and there are few small sized blades made by him.

JUYO TOSOGU

**Eda kiku zu (chrysanthemum branch theme) Mitokoromono
Kozuka, Kogai mei: Goto Tsujo with kao
Menuki: mumei Goto Tsujo**

Goto Tsujo was the third son of Senjo in the Taroemon family, and later married the daughter of Renjo, the 10th head of the main family, and became the 11th generation head of the Goto family in Genroku 10 (1698). The highlight in Tsujo's work is his unique style. Tsujo did not adhere to the Goto family's traditional style, but instead incorporated various designs into his Oie bori (carvings for daimyo), and created a new style for the Goto family. This is said to be due to the influence of the machi-bori (town craftsmen's carvings) works that were emerging at the time. The Goto head family had been required to live in Edo since the time of the previous generation, and Renjo was required to move from Kyoto to the new capital of Edo. Taking advantage of this change in the environment, Tsujo's work evolved into a style which utilized new designs and techniques to adapt to the Genroku era while still preserving the techniques of previous generations.

This work is a Goto family specialty eda kiku theme mitokoromono. On a shakudo nanako ground, the takabori eda kiku colors are provided by using inlaid gold and silver. The chisel work skillfully expresses the textures of soft surfaces in working the hard metal, such as the sharply cut end of a branch, the chrysanthemum flower that swells like a ball, and the graceful leaves. The skill of the engraver can be clearly seen in his work. The novelty of Tsujo's ideas that I mentioned earlier can also be

seen in this composition of chrysanthemums. The leaves, buds, and flowers are oriented in various directions, and some are twisted, giving movement to the traditional chrysanthemum drawings. This gives the flowers and leaves a sense of perspective and makes them look realistic.

What is more noteworthy are the menuki. A strip of paper with a waka poem written on it is placed on a chrysanthemum branch. These read "If you tell me, I will try to break the white chrysanthemum because the first frost came and the first frost and the white chrysanthemum are indistinguishable", and "The frost on the chrysanthemum on the fence of my house has almost disappeared, and I will fall in love with her." This is a song by Oshi Kouchi no Mitsune and Ki Tomonori. Waka poems and flowers from the imperial culture are blended into this work in a fashionable way that seemed to be popular with town metal carvers. You can feel the elegance and dignity of this work, which is different from Goto family work up until this time. Furthermore, since the use of the name Tsujo was limited to a short period in his later years, there are only a few examples, and it is valuable in terms of documentation.

Commentary by Kotaro Takeda.

MARCH TEIREI KANSHO KAI

Date: March 9 (the second Saturday of March)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium.

Lecturer: Ooi Gaku

Kantei To No. 1: Tachi

Mei: □shu Osafune ju Motoshige

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: Itame hada with strong nagare hada and masame hada, and the hada is visible; there are jienie, chikei, and midare utsuri.

Hamon: angular shaped hamon features mixed with gunome, choji, ko-gunome, and midare. There are ashi, saka-ashi, and yo; the bottom half has a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie inside of the hamon, kinsuji, sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: notare style, there are some hakikake, the tip is slightly sharp and there is a return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi with marudome.

This tachi has a slightly narrow shape, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a large koshizori although the blade is suriage, the tip has sori, and there is a chu-kissaki. From this, you can judge this as work from the early half of the Nanbokucho period before the Kano era, such as the Koei and Jowa (1345-49) eras. At this time some people voted for Ko-Ichimonji work, but if it were from that era, this type of narrow tachi would have the tip falling down going forward (the sori becomes more shallow going towards the kissaki) and other details showing an older style shape.

The forging is Bizen work and seems to have utsuri. An important observation is that the jigane shows itame, a strong nagare, and prominent masame hada. Among the Bizen smiths, there are very few smiths that have a large amount of masame hada in their work. We note that this is a strong detail to help narrow the possible smiths down to Motoshige. In addition, the ji has jifu, and branch Bizen utsuri is less

clear or apparent than mainline Bizen work, and this is often seen in Motoshige's work.

The hamon has angular shaped features and togariba, and there are many saka-ashi. The angular shaped hamon elements are slightly long below the yokote to around the monouchi area. The boshi tip is sharp and there is a return, and these details show Motoshige's characteristic points. Furthermore, because Motoshige is one of Sadamune's three best students, we wish to remember, beside Bizen blades which are nioi deki, he has frequent nie-deki work too.

Also, the boshi is straight above the yokote, and then becomes a notare and has a return, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) is similar, some people voted for Chikakage. However, an important difference is the masame hada and prominent long sections with angular shaped hamon elements. Also, looking carefully at the kissaki, the top of the hi touches the the shinogi, so it is lower than its usual location, and the yokote line is low. Noting this, you can see that the hamon is straight above the yokote.

Kantei To No. 2: Wakizashi

Mei: Hizen kuni ju-nin Tadayoshi saku

Horimono: Fujiwara Munenaga

Length: 1 shaku 2 sun 8 bu

Sori: 2.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: slightly tight ko-itame hada. some areas have visible hada; there are abundant dense nie, dull fine chikei, and a bright jigane.

Hamon: chu-suguha; there is a slightly dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, some nie mura (clusters of nie), hotsure at the edge, long kuichigaiba, uchinoke, sunagashi and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight; near the tip there are kuichigaiba and some hakikake; there is a komaru and return.

Horimono: on the omote there is a hata hoko, and the ura has a shin-no-kurikara.

The detailed shin-no-kurikara horimono is good because it was made by the Hizen horimono artist Munenaga. It does not matter what type of blade he worked on, the horimono on the ura side is a strong characteristic point (Yoshinaga has one horimono on the omote side of a Bizen Hironori blade). These artists also carved horimono on the center of the shinogi ji. Furthermore, the dragon's neck is long and thinner than his body, and his tail is more narrow, which brings a perception of depth. On the other hand, the surface of his shoulder, waist, and ken are strongly carved and detailed, and all together these details produce a three dimensional appearance.

However the carving is slightly narrower at the koshimoto, the dragon's mouth is open to a large degree, his claws are abnormally long, there are no scales at his ankles, the ken's hilt is gripped by the dragon's claws (ryaku-ko), and these details show Munenaga's characteristic points very well.

Yoshinaga has Kurikara carvings with the same composition, but he has much less work, and compared with Munenaga's work, his carving is rough, the dragon is very long, and there is less

volume. Consequently, the dragon looks skinny, and the ryaku-ko (claws) are slightly narrow, and these details are different from Munenaga's work.

Also, Munenaga's carvings are seen in the Keicho and Genna periods, and around the Kanei period Yoshinaga succeeded him. From this, among the Hizen-to, you can narrow this work down to being the Shodai Tadayoshi's work.

Also, if you don't know about carving, the komenuka style jigane, suguha hamon mixed with long kuichigai-ba and uchinoke, and the straight boshi with a komaru and return indicates that this is likely a Hizen-to work. People looked at the horimono by a famous Keicho Shinto smith, but they need to judge this sword without the horimono.

Note: the nakago photo is 78% of the actual size.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Mei: Tairyusai Munehiro tsukuru kore
Manen 2 nen (1861) 2 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun 9 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: slightly tight ko-itame hada; there are abundant dense ji-nie and pale unique midare utsuri.

Hamon: ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji; there are frequent ashi, a slightly soft nioiguchi, nioi-deki, some parts of the nioiguchi have ko-nie; there is a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi; there is a round point and a long return; the boshi falls down slightly going forward (the boshi near the tip falls closer to the edge or ha).

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi with marudome.

This is a wide blade and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki does not stand out. The blade is thick, there is a small amount of hiraniku, and it is heavier than usual for its short length. There is a shallow sori with a large kissaki, and these details are clear characteristic Shinshinto points. In voting, almost no people mistook the style of the period.

The forging is a tight ko-itame hada with a fresh looking jigane. The hamon has a bright and clear nioiguchi, and is composed of ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji and these two elements are both continuous. Some of the valleys are slightly wide, around 3-4 sun, and can form one group or form several groups, and these patterns are repeated. This is called kataoshi (printed or stamped) tsuchioki. From this, a majority of people voted for Chounsai Tsunatoshi smiths who have these characteristic points. Because there is no yakidashi at the koshimoto, and Tsunayoshi often has yakidashi, few people voted for him, but many people voted for Koyama Munetsugu.

Munehiro sometimes has uneven rough nie, but this blade does not have them, so maybe that is why people did not vote for him. Yakidashi are not seen on all of his works. In addition this has a mitsumune, the choji and gunome hamon bunches or groups are small and the size of red beans, the difference in the midare hamon's high and low areas is small, the height of the features along the border of the hamon are the same, there is unique utsuri in which the dark

ares and lines are thin, and these details clearly show Munehiro's characteristic points.

Also, the long boshi return is not seen often in Munetsugu's work but is seen often after the Manen period and the Bunkyu period in Munehiro's work. In addition, he has many jizo boshi which are slightly falling down going forward (descending down towards the fukura), and around the Keicho period he often has strong round boshi on katana.

Kantei To No. 4: Wakizashi

Mei: Suiryushi Toshizane

Bunka 5 nen (1808) 2 gatsu hi

Length: 1 shaku 1 sun 5 bu

Sori: 1.5 bu

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: ko-itame hada, some places have a visible hada itame hada; there are abundant fine ji-nie.

Hamon: long straight yakidashi at the moto; above this there is a large Mt Fuji, single choji, angular shaped features, and above this there is a juka choji midare hamon. This is called a Fuji-mi Saigyo hamon. There are frequent ashi, yo, ko-nie, some kinsuji, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip is straight, there is a komaru, and a slightly long return with an abrupt stop.

The hamon style is called a Fuji-mi Saigyo picture. At the koshimoto, the yakidashi shows gentle foothills of Mt. Fuji, and the large notare wave at the top is divided at the top and shows Mt.Fuji. The first single

choji is a Saigyo hoshi (monk), and the inside of the choji has ashi, and on the ura it has yo, and this seems to express the idea that he is looking at Mt. Fuji, and turning back, he carries a bamboo hat. The next choji is an angular shaped feature. This seems to rest or lean against lean on his travel case.

Furthermore, beyond that, there is a Hamabe school even top juka choji midare hamon, this could be around the famous Miho no Matsubara (beach with pine trees).

For hamon examples, many books show picture-like hamon such as “Fuji-mi Saigyo”, “Kiku-sui, Tatsuta-gawa, and Yoshino-gawa,” but we actually see very few of these. It is said that these were supposed to be exported to foreign countries.

The “Shinto book “Meizukushi Goshu” published in Kyoho 20 (1735) states that Nidai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke made “Fuji-mi Saigyo” hamon, but they may have been exported, since we do not see many of them”. Today, typically we can see many of Hamabe Suiryushi Toshizane’s work, including Kiku-sui hamon. Due to his influence, Shinshinto period Inba no Kuni smiths’ works sometimes have them. However, his father Toshinori who led the prosperous Hamabe school very rarely has this type of hamon.

Toshizane has many muji style blades with small hamon and a very tight nioiguchi. However, this katana has some areas with a prominent visible itame hada. We thought this would be difficult to judge, but several people voted for the correct answer in the first vote, and that was impressive.

Some people looked at this as Shinshinto work, and they voted for Yokoyama Sukenaga school smiths. That school has rare Fuji-mi Saigyo style works, and they have more tobiyaki in the hamon to suggest

images of the sun and moon. The Hamabe school hamon are a Naka-Kawachi style where the top of the choji hamon is organized neatly, but in many of the Yokoyama school hamon, in some places, the choji bend and lean, and they form a unique midare hamon in which it appears as though the choji are leaning towards their neighboring choji.

Kantei To No. 5 : Katana

Mei: Wakasa no kami Fujiwara Ujifusa saku

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 4 sun 5 bu

Sori: 4.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada with some nagare hada; the hada is visible, there are abundant ji-nie, and a whitish jigane at the koshimoto.

Hamon: there is a straight long yakidashi at the moto; above this there are round top gunome, choji, kawazuko choji, and togariba. There are ashi, some yo, a tight nioiguchi, some konie, some tobiyaki, some kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: dense yakiba, midarekomi, falls slightly down going forward; there is a sharp tip and a return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are bo-hi carved into the nakago.

In April of Eiroku 13 (1570), Ujifusa (Kanefusa) received a Saemon shoi (commission) and the Wakasa-no-Kami title, and he changed his name to

Ujifusa since his grandfather and father were both named Ujifusa. He is supposed to have worked for Nobunaga, and he moved to Gifu, Kiyosu and Azuchi, and passed away on May 21 of Tensho 18 (1590) in Kiyosu, at the age of 57 years.

The katana shape is often seen in the Eiroku to Tensho period which was his active period. The width of this katana is slightly wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and saki are not prominent. There is a large kissaki, the sori is shallow, but compared to Keisho Shinto swords, the tip has sori. There is a poor hiraniku and these details show the period's characteristic points very well.

The forging is itame with nagare hada and there are whitish areas. In the midare hamon, the round top gunome, togariba, and choji stand out. The valleys between the midare peaks are prominent, and because of this there are fewer ashi and yo, and a tight nioiguchi. The boshi is a wide midare, and falls down slightly going forward (the boshi is narrower above the ha or edge, and it can also be interpreted as a jizo-boshi. In voting, people focused their votes for Sue Seki smiths.

The hamon is not a typical notare, and is mainly from the Wakasa-no-kami Ujifusa period. There are fewer examples from the Kanefusa period which are called Kanefusa midare hamon. These are midare with gunome and choji, and with valleys and a repeated pattern. Because of this, at this time all Sue Seki smith's names are treated as a correct answer.

Also, from the yakidashi, some people looked at this as Shinto work. From now on, please remember that sometimes in the latter half of the Muromachi period,

there are swords with yakidashi and consider evaluating the sword without focusing on the yakidashi. I wish to carefully observe the shape, jiba (jigane and hamon), and condition of the blade.

Shijo Kantei To 805 in the February, 2023 Issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Sa Yukihide.

This katana can be considered to be a Keicho Shinto or a Shinshinto blade because it is wide, the difference in the widths at the moto and saki is not noticeable, the sori is shallow, and the chu kissaki is long. In addition to the fact that the hiraniku is not very conspicuous, it is quite long, thick, and is quite heavy in the hand, all of which shows characteristics of a Keicho Shinto or Shinshinto blade. Furthermore, the shinogi ji is narrow for the width, and this is a characteristic of Shinshinto work, and it is especially common in Sa Yukihide's work.

Sa Yukihide's jigane can be a muji style or have a visible masame hada, or usually a tight ko-itame hada. There are abundant dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and a clear jigane. Many of them also are mixed with a masame style nagare hada just like this katana.

The hamon most often seen in Yukihide's work is suguha and is reminiscent of Inoue Shinkai, who is also one of the smiths who made extremely dense and wide nioiguchi during the Shinto period. Yukihide has suguha and suguha with a shallow notare hamon, and there are thick long ashi,

and he left many masterpieces which have frequent nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

In addition to these types of hamon, we also see prominent large gunome, and gunome mixed with choji and ko-notare. Yukihide's early period work around the Tenpo to Koka eras has Bizen Den style gunome choji with a tight nioiguchi.

Yukihide's nakago are a narrow tipped ha-agari style kurijiri or kurijiri. The yasurime are generally suji-chigai, and sometimes a large sujichigai, and either style has kesho yasuri. in the case of swords, many of his signatures are written on the ura side, and this characteristic was mentioned in the hints.

In voting, there were many votes for Hizen swords. This is probably due to the fact that there is a suguha hamon and the mei is on the ura side. But as mentioned above, this work clearly shows the characteristics of the shinshinto period. Even if you think of the tightly forged jigane as komemuka hada, it doesn't make sense to mix this with the masame jigane. Also there are no kesho yasuri.

Looking at this as Shinkai style work from the Shinshinto period, people voted for Naoe Sukemasa, Suishinshi Masahide, Taikei Naotane, and others.

If it were a Sukemasa katana, it would be a Mito sword, so it would have a notably thick and strong shape for the width, his signatures are often katana mei, and his nakago tips will be kuriyama gata.

Masahide rarely has Shinkai utsushi work, but they are often found in earlier his work, so the width is standard or slightly wide, the kissaki is long, and in many of these, not only the hamon, but also the shape was inspired by Kanbun Shinto work. In addition, the nie often form clusters, with rough nie spilling into the ji. The nakago yasurime are a large suji-chigai with kesho yasuri, the nakago tip is ha-agari kurijiri, and many of his signatures are katana mei. If it is a

later work that is wide with a large kissaki, many of them have a prominent kao and kokuin (stamps).

Naotane katana often have a signature on the ura, kesho yasuri, the nakogo tip is kurijiri, and there is suguha hamon, so there are some common elements. But his early era Osaka Shinto utsushi swords often have a toran midare hamon and are modeled after Shinkai style suguha work which is rarely seen. In fact, many of the suguha swords seem to have been modeled after Soshu master smith work, since kinsuji and sunagashi and are more noticeable, the nie are prominent, and the distinctive Uzumaki hada appears in the jigane. Beside these, he has also Yamato Den work, that have masame hada, with frequent hotsure and sunagashi, but in any case, they are modelled after Koto work, and many also have a kao in the signature.

Commentary by Ooi Gaku.