

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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Meito Kansho
Appreciation of Important Swords

Juyo Bujutsuhin

Type: Katana

Owner: NBTHK

Mumei: Den Yoshikaga

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu 7 rin (69.6 cm)

Sori: 5 bu 3 rin (1.6 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Sakihaba: 8 bu 1 rin (2.45 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 8 bu 8 rin (5.7 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 8 bu 1 rin (17.6 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and the saki are almost unnoticeable. The blade is thick, there is a moderate sori and a large kissaki. The jigane is itame, mixed with mokume, and at the

koshimoto along the hamon there is nagare hada. The entire ji is well forged and hada is slightly visible. There are ji-nie, frequent chikei, and from the midpoint to the upper half of the blade, there is midare utsuri. The hamon is ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji and togari. The entire hamon is composed of small midare and there are ashi, yo, and a nioiguchi with ko-nie. In the upper part of the hamon there are small tobiyaki. The boshi is a notare style midarekomi, the tip is round and there is a shallow return. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved into the nakago. The tips are slightly low and drop towards the shinogi. The nakago is largely suriage, and the tip is ha-agari kurijiri. There are four mekugi ana and two are closed. The yasurime are kiri, and the blade is mumei.

Yoshikage has a relatively small number of signed works among the Osafune smiths. Today his confirmed signed work is from the mid- to latter half of the Nanbokucho period, and dated in the Enbun, Joji, Oan, Koryaku, and Kasei periods. Besides tachi, he made prominent naginata naoshi, and his work was described in the Keicho period sword book "Kaifun-ki" which lists many of his naginata. Other items are tanto and hirazukuri long wakizashi. His signed works include two Juyo Bunkazai and eight Juyo Token. His hamon are suguha but mainly ko-notare, and have prominent somewhat wide and shallow open gunome valleys. In particular, his famous masterpiece is the Sendai Date family's heirloom blade which is a Juyo Bunkazai tachi, signed Bizen koku Osafune ju Yoshikage. The hamon style overall is a small sized hamon mixed with all kinds of features with a complex midare pattern. There are frequent ko-nie and

prominent hataraki inside of the hamon, and this is a standard example of his mumei work.

Since historical times, there have been theories that Yoshikage was a student of Kanemitsu or the Chogi school. However, in recent years, from similarities in style, his characteristic gyaku-tagane signature, and using the “kage” kanji, more recent ideas are a certainty that Yoshikage belonged to the Bizen branch Chikakage smiths, such as Morikage, Morokage, and Mitsukage. Actually, among Chikakage’s later work dated Jowa 3 (1347), there is a tachi signed “Bizen koku ju Osafune Chikakage” signed with the “Osafune” kanji under the “ju” kanji (location), and it is used as the school’s name. Morikage has used the same kind of Osafune kanji in the same way. It is confirmed that Yoshikage has a signed work dated Jowa 3 (1347) signed in a manner similar to Chikakage’s signature.

This katana is wide, the difference in widths at the moto and saki do not stand out, there is a large kissaki, an Enbun-Joji shape, the horimono bo-hi tip is low, and this is clearly a typical mid-Nanbokucho period characteristic style. The jigane is itame mixed with a relatively large mokume hada, it is well forged, the entire ji is slightly visible, and this is slightly different from the mainstream Osafune style, and it has the feeling of being a branch school style with its details. In addition, there are ko-gunome mixed with ko-choji and togari. The entire hamon is a small midare, and it has clear characteristic points allowing one to judge this as Yoshikage’s work. There are also frequent ashi and yo hataraki. At first glance it is not spectacular or flamboyant, but there are a variety of midare hamon features which produce an abundance of variations, and show an interesting contrast in

comparison with the period's popular large hamon, and this is a unique characteristic work by Yoshikage. With the magnificent thick shape and excellently preserved state, from the moto to the tip, the blade feels heavy, and this is a master work, and even today, is preserved in a healthy condition.

This blade was donated to the NBHK by Mr. Ikeda Hiroshi along with the Juyo Bijutsuhin tachi signed Kunimura which was described in the last issue (No.812), and we wish to thank Mr Ikeda again for this.

Explanation and oshigata by Ishi Akira.

Shijo Kantei To No. 813

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 813 Shijo Kantei To is November 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 November 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.

You can submit votes online to <https://www.touken.or.jp/shijokanteinyusatsu.html> (see the April, 2024 issue, page 30). We will accept votes every month from the 10th at 10:00 am to the

5th of the following month at 23:59 pm. 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.

NOTE: some people wrote several answers on their postcard submissions. In such a case, even if one answer is the correct answer, this entry becomes invalid, so please be careful. Only submit one smith's name. Also, using both, a postcard and internet to submit an answer, if you write two different smith's names, the later vote will become invalid.

Information

Type: Katana

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 4 sun (72.8 cm)

Sori: 5 bu (1.55 cm)

Motohaba: slightly over 1 sun (3.05 cm)

Sakihaba: 6.5 bu (1.95 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1.5 bu (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: slightly over 1 sun 1 bu (3.4 cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 6 sun 6 bu (19.9 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi tsukuri katana with an ihorimune. There is a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a standard thickness, a slightly large sori, a slight funbari, and a short chu-kissaki. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and there are abundant ji-nie and chikei. There is a straight yakidashi at the moto, there is midare hamon mixed with slightly small gunome and choji. There are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, and kinsuji and sunagashi. Around the monouchi there are tobiyaki and muneyaki. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a ha-agari kurijiri, and the yasurime are o-suji-chigai. There is one mekugi ana. On the omote, along the mune side, under the mekugi ana, there is a one and a half kanji size space, and then there is a seven kanji juryo mei (Describing a title or an official position).

Juyo Tosogu

Tenma zu (thunder god design) tsuba

**Mei: Goto Kyujo with kao
Juyo Tosogu**

**Tenba zu (Chinese mythological winged horse
design) kozuka**

Mei: Goto Kyujo with kao

This mythological horse has a black face, four legs, and wings. The beast is bright or shines, and he looks like ya (a mythological bird) or a Western Griffon Kimaira (a monster from Greek mythology). This is a Tenba. In talking about tenba, many people think of a horse with wings like a Pegasus. But the Tenba first appeared in the ancient Chinese traditional geo-awareness book “Sankai Kyo”. According to the book, 200 ri to the northwest is Basei Mountain, and the top of the mountain has many beautiful stones, and the mountain’s north side has abundant gold and jade. The flying horse lives there, and his shape resembles a white dog, his head is black, he has wings like a bat, and if he sees people, he flies away, and his name is Tenba. However, his wings do not have feathers, and as Kyujo carved them, the wings are membranes (resembling a bat’s wings), his head is carved from black shakudo, and this is as described in the book. It seems definite that Kyujo got the idea for this image from the “Sankai Kyo” book.

The artist Goto Kyujo Mitsutada was born in Bunroku 2 (1594) as the main family’s fifth generation Tokujo’s fifth son. He has brothers who became the 6th generation Eijo, and the 7th generation Kenjo and Takujo who led their families. He married Sojo’s daughter and he established the Minamoto Byoei branch family and passed way in Shoho 2 (1648). After he passed away, we do not know the reason why the Minamoto Byoei family head was a son-in-law Renjo, and his own second son Unjo and third son Rinjo became independent and established separate branch families. This is a very interesting family.

The omote has a gold nanako ground, the Tenba is shown with takabori iroe and suemon. The ura has a

shakudo ground with a gold soritsugi decoration, and this is a gorgeous and elaborate work. Kyujo has very few signed works, so it is difficult to completely learn about his styles and characteristic points. His well known work is the Cedar Arrow design ni-tokoromono (two item set). This work has a kozuka in shakudo with a nanako ground with takabori. The menuki has a shakudo ground with yo-bori, which follows the Goto family's traditional style.

Explanation by Takeda Kotaro

September Teirei Kansho kai

Date: September 14 (second Saturday in September)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Kantei To No. 1: Katana

Mei: Oshu Sendai ju Fujiwara Kunikane
Kanbu 5 nen (1665) 2 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: 2 shaku 1 sun

Sori: slightly over 4 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada; the entire ji is light, there are abundant ji-nie and some chikei in the ji.

Hamon: chu-suguha; around the central area it is a notare style mixed with kuichigaiba; there are frequent ko-nie; on the omote, around the center there are nijuba; there is a bright and clear nioiguchi.
Boshi: straight with a komaru.

The widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a relatively shallow sori and a chu-kissaki. From these details you can judge this as a Kanbun-Shinto shape. The shinogi ji is wide for the width of the blade, there is a high shinogi line, and in addition, there is an orderly masame hada, and these clearly are Yamato den characteristic points. From these details, Sendai Kunikane's name comes out effortlessly, and a majority of people voted for him in the second vote. A number of people narrowed it down to the second generation, and I can say this is a highly traditional appraisal. In other words, if it were the shodai's work, it would have a Kanei to Shoho shape, and slightly more sori than we see here. Also, the hamon nioiguchi's width would be wider, and there would be a less tight nioiguchi than we see here. The jigane would have prominent sunagashi, hotsure, nijuba, and frequent hataraki. In addition, the neat komaru boshi we see here is not seen very much, and usually many of them are yakizume with hakikake, just like old Hosho work. The Shodai Kunikane's work in his later years after the "Yokei Kunikane" signature has many examples similar to this, and so at this time, we treated the shodai as correct answer along with the nidai.

However, the Shodai Kunikane passed away a year before this katana's date on Kanbun 4 when he would have been 72 years old. This is a Nidai Kunikane work, and at this time, his age was 54 years. Also, the

sayagaki lists an old koshirae for this katana, and contains a detailed record written in a unique calligraphy style. This allows it to be recognized as being from the old Ito Miyoji collection. Ito who worked as a privy councillor, was also a sword lover.

Kantei To No. 2: Tachi

Mumei: Bizen koku ju Osafune Yosozaemonjo
Sukesada saku
Tenmon 2 nen (1533) 2 gatsu hi

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly over 8 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; some areas are mixed with itame and nagare style hada; there are abundant ji-nie and fine chikei, and on the ura at the koshimoto there are utsuri.

Hamon: wide suguha, mixed with small midare, and some hotsure; there are yo, a tight nioiguchi, and korie.

Boshi: there is a wide straight yakiba, a togari style komaru tip, and a return. The tip has a small yakiba.

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

There is funbari at the koshimoto, and the length is around 2 shaku 2 sun. The upper half sori is a relatively prominent saki-zori, the boshi yakiba is wide, and from this you can judge this as being work from the latter half of the Muromachi period. Also, the jigane is ko-itame hada, the entire ji is well forged,

and from the moto to saki there are no slight rough and soft areas, and there is a refined jigane, and so you can recognise the smith's high level of skill. From this period, I expect to see many excellent swords produced among the Sue Bizen smiths. Also, in the case of Sue Bizen work, usually bo-hi with tsure-hi have tips which end evenly together, except on items which have been polished often, and this could be one of the key points in narrowing down an answer to the smith's name.

In this period, Bizen Koku produced many master smiths, and firstly Sukesada. Other well established suguha smiths are Tadimitsu and Kiyomitsu. As expected, some people voted for both smiths' names. From this style, we can say that that is a reasonable answer. However, Tadimitsu has less work with this kind of robust healthy appearance, and many of his swords have a slightly gentle appearance, and his nioiguchi are softer looking. In the case of Kiyomitsu, notably, Gorozaemonjo and Magoemonjo are famous. But Magoemonjo's active period was after the Eiroku period. Because of this, his shapes compared with this katana are wider with a long chu-kissaki and we can say that is a more reasonable answer than Gorozaemon. However, from this katana's excellent workmanship, Sukesada's diverse range of work, such as suguha, open valley midare, and hitatsura hamon, Sukesada's name is worth considering.

By the way, Sukesada has a extant tanto dated Tenmon 6 (1537) saying he made this when he was 71. from this, this katana was made by Yosozaemonjo Sukesada at the age of 67 years.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Mei: Nakasone Okimasa

Enpo 2 nen (1674) 8 gatsu 29 nichi

Yamano Kanjuro Hisahide with kao

Futatsudo saidan (cutting test)

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu

Sori: 4. 5 bu

Style: shinogi tsukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; on the ura from the koshimoto to the around mid-point of the blade it is mixed with itame hada. There are abundant ji-nie.

Hamon: yakidashi at the moto, and above this the hamon is gunome mixed with ko-gunome, and ko-notare. There are ashi and a dense nioioguchi with abundant nie.

Boshi: on the omote at the yokote there is a yakikome and then straight. On the ura the boshi is straight. Both sides have a komaru and long return.

The katana widths at the moto and saki are slightly different. There is a shallow sori, a chu-kissaki, and a strong or robust shape, and this is same as the No.1 katana, a Kanbun Shinto blade. Also, the hamon is primarily gunome and ko-gunome, and vertical variations are not prominent. There is a refined jigane, and from this, you can think about Edo Shinto work.

The entire jigane is ko-itame, but the ura at the koshimoto has a slightly visible itame, and this is considered to be tekogane, and it is not very noticeable. In some places there are continuous gunome juzuba, and at the koshimoto there is a small yakidashi. Some places have thick ashi. In addition,

the omote boshi is yakikomi, the entire nioiguchi is clear, and from these details, the Hakatora name comes to mind. However, on the upper half, some parts of the nioiguchi are uneven, or even show rough nie, the tightness or definition of the hamon border is somewhat lacking, and on the omote jigane, some places have yubashiri, and so this is a slightly rough and rustic look. So you can recognise that this is not an obvious Okimasa with a characteristic two gunome fused together in a continuous hamon, but it shows many of Okimasa's characteristic points. For another opinion, some people voted for the same area's Hojoji school smiths. But many of that school's hamon are gunome in a continuous juzuba style. In addition, sometimes there are nijuba style yubashiri, and that is different from this style.

Kantei To No. 4: Katana

Mumei: den Aoe Yoshitsugu

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Style: shinogi tsukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: ko-itame hada; some areas are mixed with itame; the entire ji is tightly forged; on the upper half, there are pale suji shape utsuri and utsuri along the shinogi.

Hamon: chu-suguha; there are ashi, and a tight nioiguchi with ko-nie.

Boshi: straight with a komaru and a long return.

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

This is a katana which has been judged to be the work of Aoe Yoshitsugu. At the moto, the funbari is almost gone, and it is supposed to be either suriage or a large suriage. The sori does not become less going forward towards the tip, and with a chu-kissaki, you can imagine that this work is a tachi from around the end of the Kamakura period. The jigane is tight, but you can see the slightly fine hada is visible, and is a unique hada.

Also, the upper half of the ji, especially around the monouchi area, has pale but fine suji shaped utsuri along the hamon. Along the shinogi ji there is additional utsuri, and from this, you can recognize the Aoe school's characteristic unique dan-utsuri. Also seen is the Aoe school's unique chirimen-hada. The hamon not only has a nioiguchi, but also is bright and clear up to the tip of the hamon, and these are notable Aoe characteristic points. This katana is Juyo Token, and when the sword became Juyo Token, it was accompanied by a paper from Kyoho 3 (1718) which was a Honnami Kochu origami. Honnami also identified the individual smith's name. Yoshitsugu was one of the school's representative master smiths along with Suketsugu and Yoritsugu. From the excellent workmanship, this seems to be a reasonable judgement.

In voting, some people looked at the suji shape utsuri as nijuba, and they saw this as Enju work, but the hamon is not strong enough for nijuba. In addition, if it were Enju work, usually his boshi are large and round, the clarity of the hamon is not as good as this one, and his jigane in some places will be mixed with nagare hada, and these are seen more as Yamato's characteristic points.

The katana has a history. Wakasa koku Kohama han lord Sakai Tadaoto finished the Nikko Toshogu repair mission in Kyoho 16 nen (1731) 12 gatsu 11th day, and the Shogun Yoshimune presented this sword to him.

Kantei To No.5: Wakizashi

Mei: Kunimasa

Length: 1 shaku 3 sun 3 bu

Sori: 2.5 bu

Style: katakiriba tsukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada and there are ji-nie.

Hamon: box shape notare hamon; continuous with a low width; mixed with ko-gunome, there are slightly uneven nie, and niesuji.

Boshi: straight, komaru point, and the tip has hakikake.

Horimono: on the omote, there are short hi and soe-hi finished with a katasogi style; under these there is a dragon and a tsume tsuki ken (takifudo); on the ura there are three suji-hi with marudome.

The katakiriha style was seen from around the end of the Kamakura period, and especially seen during the Nanbokucho period and Keicho Shinto period. This is a Horikawa Kunimasa wakizashi.

In the Keicho Shinto period, this kind of style was confirmed to have been started by the Horikawa school, and mainly used by Umetada Myoju, Hizen Tadayoshi, and Echizen Yasutsugu, and so they are possible candidates for the maker of this blade. But the hamon nie are slightly uneven, the nioiguchi width

has wide and narrow regions, and in addition to the large size hamon, this is a hard to imagine as being from a smith other than from the Horikawa school from the characteristic points that we can see. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada, and this not the rough hada called "Horikawa hada", and Kunimasa's tanto and wakizashi tend to have a refined hada. Also, among the Horikawa school work, this doesn't stand out. Kuniyasu's hamon have various square shaped features and large hamon.

Therefore, Kunimasa is the correct answer, although his extant works are few, and are hard to recognize, certain characteristic points are seen in his work. However, the school produced many master smiths, and from the many signed works and hamon styles, we can say that the Kuniyasu name is relevant. Also, one of Kunimasa's mumei works has a kiritsuke mei (a mei added after the sword has left the smith), "Kuniyasu seisaku Kunimasa", and from this, we can imagine that these two smiths had a close relationship.

Some other opinions were derived from the detailed omote horimono which appear like kinai bori, and led to votes for Echizen Yasusugu. This viewpoint can't be denied, but Echizen Shimosaka school hamon are based on notare, and the style is different.

Also, with this kind of shape, we usually never see a kiriha side without a horimono, and so this is supposed to be an original ubu horimono.

Shijo Kantei To No.811 in the August, 2024 Issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Nakasone Okimasa.

Nakasone Okimasa has dated blades from Kanbun 13 (1673) to Genroku 3 (1690), and from the dates on the blades, he made two styles. On one style, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a shallow sori, a short chu-kissaki, and a Kanbun Shinto shape. The other shape has a relatively large sori, a long kissaki, and a style from around the Genroku period. This katana has the latter shape. Also, a low shinogi and a flat shape are sometimes seen in Edo Shinto swords.

Okimasa's jigane are itame with a slightly visible hada and a tight ko-itame hada just like we see on this sword. There are abundant ji-nie, fine chikei, and sometimes we see Okisato's tekogane style hada. This katana has hi, so we did not mention that in the text, the shinogi ji masame hada is prominent, and usually the same as Edo Shinto work.

Okimasa's hamon have a dense nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, a yakidashi at the moto, and above that, thick ashi, gunome, and a continuous midare. The undulation or drops between the top of hamon to the bottom of the valleys are a little restrained, and this type of hamon is called juzuba, and is similar to Okisato's Hakotora period work.

But in looking at the details, you can confirm that Okimasa's major characteristic points are here and that there are two gunome fused together in a

continuous pattern. Also, you can see some places have a smaller hamon, and togari shaped elements, strong nie, some parts of the nioiguchi become rough, tsuchioki style yubashiri appear, and if you compared this with Okisato's work, you can find the details are not completely in place.

Also, it is very rare to see his teacher's juzuba hamon in Okimasa's work. His gunome undulate somewhat strongly, and there are strong sunagshi.

Okisato's Hanetora period work has two gunome fused together in the hamon, they have prominent round tops, and undulate. Among them, there are a slightly small gunome and a large gunome fused together, just like a gourd divided in two, and this is called "hyotanba", and they are different from this hamon.

The boshi is straight, with a komaru and return. Besides this style, Okimasa has notare, crumbled looking hamon (nie kuzure), and sharp tipped points. We can confirm that he has some Kotetsu style boshi, but there is a very small number of them.

As we mentioned in the hints, Okimasa blades have very rare horimono, and Edo Shinto general trends are the same, except for Yasutsugu and Okisato.

The nakago yasurime are katte-sagari, the tips are kurijiri or ha-agari kurijiri, and the katana fits this description. Many of his signatures are "Nakasone Okimasa" with five kanji, and adding "saku" is rare. Beside these, some mei indicate that he was Okisato's successor, and were signed "Nakasone Kotetsu Okimasa", and some people wrote "Kotetsu

Nidai” which was treated as a correct answer at this time.

Also, in many of the signatures, part of the first kanji “naka” has a hook or link to a mekugi ana, and supposedly Okimasa started using this in the latter half of Kanbun 5 (1665). Okisato’s signatures are well organized, and changes appear periodically, and the signatures change in a consistent way, so we can follow this evolution of these changes. Okimasa has few dated works, and the size of his kanji signature, the length, the width and thickness of the chisel, and the strength of the chisel strokes are different each time. He seems to not have tried to use the same style and carving techniques carefully each time, and there is a rather large variability in his signatures, and this is one of his characteristic points.

Besides Okisato, other acceptable answers were Okihisa and Okinao. But there are very few examples of these smiths’ work, and unless you can narrow down or describe their strong characteristics points, you would be better not to cast such votes.

Besides the proper answer, for a similar smith, some people voted for Kazusa no suke Kaneshige and Ho-joji Masahiro.

Kaneshige’s juzuba hamon have a one-two, one-two, unique rhythmic repeat, but there are few yakidashi. His yasurime are a large sujichigai with kesho, and the tip is ha-agai kurijiri. Looking at additional details, the nakago tip mune surface is flat, only the hamon side has niku, and sometimes also the shinogi-ji, and this is the same as Hankei’s yaken nakago.

Also, Omi-no-kami Masahiro does not have many yakidashi, and almost no continuous hamon with prominent fusions of two two gunome. The Hojoji school, except for Yoshitugu, has hamon which are relatively narrow among the Edo Shinto smiths. Also, many of the school's hamon have long uchinoke and nijuba, and this produces a strong presence of hataraki. However Masahiro's nakago tip is iriyamagata, and that is a big difference from Okimasa.

Explanation by Ooi Gaku.

NOTE: some people wrote several answers on their postcard submissions. In such a case, even if one answer is the correct answer, this entry becomes invalid, so please be careful. Only submit one smith's name. Also, using both, a postcard and internet to submit an answer, if you write two different smith's names, the later vote will become invalid.