

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL

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MEITO KANSHO

Appreciation of Important Swords

Juyo Token

Type: Wakizashi

Owner: NBTHK

Mei: Hasebe Kunishige

Length: 1 shaku 7 bu 5 rin (32.6 cm)

Sori: 8 rin (0.25 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 1 bu 8 rin (9.65 cm)

Nakago sori: none

Commentary

This is a hirazukuri wakizashi with a mitsumune. It is wide, long, and thin, and there is a slightly shallow sori. The jigane is itame, the entire hada is visible, some areas are mixed with mokume hada, and near the hamon and the mune there are nagare hada. There are ji-nie and chikei. The hamon is a narrow suguha with a slightly notare pattern. There are hotsure at the hamon border, uchinoke, sunagashi, a slightly dense nioiguchi, and frequent ko-nie. The

horimono on the omote is a suken, and on the ura is a gomabashi. The nakago is ubu, and the tip is ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari, and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote, slightly under the mekugi ana along the mune, there is a five kanji signature.

Yamashiro province's Hasebe school smiths were supposed to be in Kyoto in the Gojobomon Inokuma area, and from current research it is thought that they had a relationship with the Soshu and Yamato schools. However, the "Kozan Oshigata" shows Shintogo Kunimitsu and Shintogo Kunihiro nakago photos with the Hasebe name. From this, it is thought that the Hasebe school was associated with the Shintogo school. Also the oldest sword book "Kanchi-in Hon Meizukushi" lists a sword smith group called Toma in Yamato. The retired emperor Kameyama living in Zenrin temple, prayed at Toma, and he received a sword, which is called Hyoe-no-jo, and although he did not know the smith's name, the smith is Shintogo's grandson in Kamakura. This means that among the Toma smiths, there is Shintogo's grandson. Actually, from the Edo period, Soshu Yukimitsu and Toma work were judged as being similar, and it is possible that there were interactions between the Soshu smiths and Yamato smiths. From the many cultural and other details such as temple architecture going from Yamato to Kamakura, this theory can't be readily denied. Therefore today, an important opinion is that the Hasebe smiths were not originally from Kyoto, but originated from Yamato. They learned their techniques in Soshu, and finally resided in Kyoto.

The school was active around the mid-Nanbokuchō period, the same time as the Soshu smiths such as

Hiromitsu and Akihiro, and their style is a distinctive hitatsura style work, and representative smiths are Kunishige and Kuninobu. The Soshu style hamon have a narrow waist around the choji, or are mainly gunome. However, the Hasebe school's hamon are notare mixed with gunome, there are tobiyaki and yubashiri, the boshi is large and round, and there is a return along the mune, so there are differences. Also, the Hasebe school's jigane is a masame style along the hamon and mune sides, which is seen less in Soshu work. It is hard to miss the fact that there are many Yamato characteristic points. In addition, another point is that the shape is notably thin for the width. Kunishige is supposed to be the smith who made the famous "meibutsu heshi-kiri Hasebe". He has confirmed work dated Bunwa 4 (1355) and Enbun 3 (1358), and from this, it is supposed that he could possibly be Kuninobu's older brother.

This wakizashi is wide, long, and thin, with a shallow sori, typical of the mid-Nanbokucho period Enbun-Joji shape, and clearly shows his active period. The jigane has slightly less uruoi than usual, there is a visible hada, a prominent nagare hada along the hamon and mune edges, and these are clear characteristic points. The hamon is a low or narrow suguha which is unusual for him. Besides this blade, there are a few examples like this. Also, the tip of the boshi is round but the size is smaller than usual. On the omote the return is long and continues on to form muneyaki, and there is a long yakisage extending to around the center of the blade, and we can recognize his hitatsura's characteristic point. Also, we see the school's characteristic thin blade, and it is a very typical style. In addition, there is a notable short nakago, and there is a compact signature on the tip of

the nakago. However, the hamon has many hotsure and uchinoke entangled with the jigane, and abundant rich hataraki, and as a valuable typical suguha style example, the high quality makes this an important work.

This is one of former chairman Suzuki Kajo's many gifts, and was presented by his bereaved family in Heisei 17 (2005).

Explanation and photo by Ishi Akira.

Shijo Kantei To No. 808

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 808 Shijo Kantei To is June 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 June 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: Tachi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 9 bu (72.4 cm)

Sori: 6 bu (1.8 cm)

Motohaba: slightly less than 9 bu (2.65 cm)

Sakihaba: slightly less than 6 bu (1.75 cm)

Motokasane: 1.5 bu (0.45 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 6 sun 8 bu (20.5 cm)

Nakago sori: slightly less than 1 bu (0.2 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a standard thickness, a large koshizori although the blade is suriage and funbari remains at the moto. The “tip falls down going forward” (the sori becomes more shallow going towards the point) and there is a small chu-kissaki. The jigane is itame hada mixed with frequent mokume hada, there is a fine visible hada which becomes a unique hada, there are ji-nie, some places have a unique dark hada, there are jifu utsuri, and the jigane’s color is slightly dark. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon is mainly ko-midare mixed with ko-gunome and ko-choji, and in places there are some saka-ashi. There are ashi, saka-ashi, nie deki, kinsuji, sunagashi, and a worn down nioiguchi. Usually, the school’s hakikake in the boshi does not stand out, but this boshi has hakikake. The boshi is straight and there is a shallow notarekomi. There is a sophisticated komaru and a return. The nakago is suriage, the tip is kurijiri, the thickness on the hamon side is prominent, and the yasurime are o-suji-chigai. There are two mekugi ana. On the ura, under the original mekugi-ana along the mune there is a two kanji signature made with a fine chisel.

The smith is one of the retired Emperor Gotoba’s smiths, and his name is listed in the “Jokyu ki”.

This smith has many hirazukuri works over 1 shaku in length, and made large shapes, but he made few small sized works.

Juyo Tosogu

Raijin zu (thunder god design) tsuba

Mei: Tenkodo Hidekuni

Hidekuni was a Bakumatsu period Otsuki school master smith. He was born in Bunsei 8 (1825) at Hoki Kuni Yonago, and at the age of 18 years he went to Kyoto and became a student of Otsuki Mitsuoki's top student Kawarabayashi Hideoki. He is supposed to have studied under Hideoki along with other students such as Shinoyama Tokuoki and Matsuo Gassan. His artist names were Tenkodo and Konryusai, and he was good at using takabori techniques and using colored metal. He was also good at katakiri-kebori, and he acquired the Otsuki school's style. His subjects were shown in sketches, and he was skilled at drawing.

On the tsuba omote, a god is surrounded by clouds, and he waving a stick, Hidekuni boldly drew the moment when the god was raining down thunder. The god is expressed with gold suemon inlay iroe, his eyes are uplifted, and there is a large open mouth. The god's fierce expression, included his wrinkles, is well carved and produces a strong feeling. The rising clouds around the god shows that Hidekuni was good at using sukedashi-bori, and the sharp thunder bolts are expressed by gold suemon inlay iroe. The ura side's wild high waves are expressed with vigorous

sukedashi carving, and the wave's spray is expressed by gold dew-like inlaid iroe. The contrast of the omote and ura composition created heaven and earth with a huge space, and the gold sparkles beautifully on the iron ground. Hidekuni made full use of this kind of sophisticated composition and excellent carving techniques, and exhibits the skills of an energetic master smith.

Explanation by Kugiya Natsuko.

March Teirei Kansho kai

Date: April 13 (second Saturday of April)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Ishii Akira

Kantei To No. 1: Katana

Mei: Ishido Korekazu saku kore

Koka 4 nen (1847) 2 gatsu hi

Donen (the same year) 3 gatsu 13 nichi

Oite Senju futobuto dodan butsu

(execution grounds)

Ishino Chomei tamesu kore

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 7 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: ko-itame hada; there are ji-nie, and in places, fine chikei.

Hamon: choji style hamon mixed with gunome and square shaped features; there are ashi and it is nioi deki.

Boshi: midarekomi and komaru.

This is a Korekazu katana dated Koka 4 nen Unju. Korekazu was Chounsai Tsunatoshi's nephew, and in the beginning he studied forging under Tsunatoshi, and later he took over as the the school's 7th generation, and passed away at the age of 75 in Meiji 24 (1891). From this, we can see that this katana was made when he was 31 years old. There is a choji midare hamon, and the same hamon has a repeat pattern with about a 3 sun interval, and this is very reminiscent of Tsunatoshi's work. This katana does not show any traces of Korekazu's characteristic choji hamon with nie, his unique style. This faithfully followed his teacher's style, and the earliest this kind of work was seen was Tenpo 14 (1843) when he was 27 years old, and until then, it is possible that his work was signed by Tsunatoshi as daisaku work. From this, we could say that either Chounsai Tsunatoshi or Koyama Munetsugu who studied under Tsunayoshi, is an appropriate opinion. In voting, some people voted for the same period's smiths in the Kiyomaro school. However, this katana does not show any Soshu Den style details, just like the No.3 kanteito, so one should note and think about the school's style seen on a sword. Also, the katana's signature is written with soshu style kanji, which is unusual for Korekazu. The following year another signature using the same kanji style was written. This is valuable information, and confirms that

Korekazu used this kind of signature style over a short period. However, the katana's funbari at the moto is gone, the upper half of the katana has a prominent sori, and a long large kissaki, and from the shape, this seems to be obviously modelled after a large suriage blade.

Kantei To No. 2: Tachi

Mumei: Ko-Bizen Yoshikane

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 8 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihori mune

Jigane: itame hada, and some places are mixed with nagare hada; the hada is slightly visible; there are jinnie, chikei, and utsuri.

Hamon: mainly komidare, and mixed with ko-choji and kogunome; there are ashi, a nioiguchi with ko-nie, and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight; the tip is yakizume.

Horimono: on the omote there is a koshi-hi carved into the nakago.

There is a large koshizori, and the upper half falls down going forward (the sori becomes more shallow going towards the point), and there is a small kissaki. The blade is narrow, and the shape is an elegant tachi shape. From this you can naturally recognize work from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period. Also, on the omote, the koshi-hi section above the machi is short, and it runs through center of the nakago. A koshi-hi ending with either a

marudome at the machi, or extending into the nakago are characteristic koshi-hi (wasure-hi) in this period, and this can be helpful for appraisal.

This tachi is Juyo Token, with an ubu nakago and mumei, and has been judged as work by Bizen Yoshikane. From this period, the number of candidate smiths from this school are limited. The tachi is mainly komidare with a classic hamon. There are ko-nie and some sunagashi which shows Ko-Bizen characteristic point very well. But the jigane has some nagare hada in places, and because of this, some people voted for Senjuin work. If it were Senjuin work, the hamon would be narrower than this one, and there would be more prominent hataraki such hotsure, sunagashi, and kinsuji. From this, a relatively large number of people voted for Ko-Bizen work. In Showa 62 (1987) this was judged as Yoshihikane's work. The main points are supposed to be that among Ko-Bizen swords, there is sometimes a relatively wide hamon, and in addition, the yakidashi at the koshimoto can be very wide, or **form a koshiba**. There are two Juyo Bunkazai Yokhikane swords which belong to the Tokyo National Museum.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Mei: Minamoto Masayuki

Tenpo 15 nen (1844) 8 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 8 bu

Sori: 7.5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihori mune

Jigane: itame hada, and some areas are mixed with nagare hada. There are abundant dense ji-nie and chikei.

Hamon: gunome mixed with ko-gunome, choji, and angular shaped features. There are frequent ashi, abundant nie, some areas have rough and uneven nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi; there are small yubashiri shaped tobiyaki, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: midarekomi; the tip has a sharp shape and there are hakikake.

This katana has a narrow shinogi ji for the width of the blade, a small amount of hiraniku, the hamon has long ashi, some of which extend to the edge of the blade. From these details, you can see Shinshinto characteristic points.

This is dated Tenpo 15, and is a Masayuki katana (Kiyomaro's early name). Kiyomaro's jigane as you can see here, tend to be itame mixed with nagare hada, there are abundant dense ji-nie, chikei, and a strong appearance. The hamon is gunome mixed with choji. There are wide and narrow variations in the width of the hamon, and there is a dense nioiguchi. In addition, there are thick uneven rough nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi, and some places have nijuba. The hamon is dynamic and energetic, and shows his notable characteristic points. This work demonstrates Kiyomaro's true potential, and he was called "Yotsuya Masamune". Also the chu-kissaki's fukura is poor, and you can see one of his characteristics there.

However, later, in the Kiyomaro period, his hamon had more gunome than we see here, and are more energetic and variable compared with Masayuki's signed work, and they become more gentle. Some people noticed this, and voted for "Masayuki", and

this accurate opinion is excellent. For another proper answer, some people voted for Kurihara Nobuhide. Nobuhide's hamon tend have small double ko-gunome at the top of the gunome, or are mixed with angular midare features and square elements, and are different from this.

Kantei To No. 4: Tachi

Mumei: Ko-Hoki Sadatsuna

Kiritsuke mei: honou Zozu-san konpira dai-gongen
Bunsei 12 nen (1829) Tsuchinoto-ushi 6 gatsu hi
ganshu (ordered by) Sugiyama Seitoku keihaku

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 1 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: marumune

Jigane: itame mixed with large itame and mokume; the entire ji has a strong visible hada; there are ji-nie, frequent chikei, and pale utsuri.

Hamon: yakiotoshi at the moto, and above this, a mainly ko-gunome midare; there are thick frequent nie, hotsure at the edge, and prominent kinsuji, nie-suji and sunagshi.

Boshi: almost straight and yakizume.

Horimono: on the omote there is a koshi-hi carved into the nakago.

This sword has a kiritsuke Mei dated Bunsei 12 nen (1829) along with an owner's name. A kiritsuke Mei is a Mei inscribed after a completed sword has left the

sword smith. However, the sword is a Ko-Hoki blade by Sadatsuna.

The shape of this tachi is just like the No.2 tachi above. There is a koshizori, the sori in the upper half is slightly shallow, and there is a small kissaki. The short koshi-hi on the omote at the koshimoto is the same as on the No. 2 tachi, and is called a “wasure-hi”, which are characteristic in older swords, and there is no question that this style is from the end of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period. Also, the jigane is mixed with large itame, the entire hada is clearly visible, and there is a dark color, which is characteristic of Sadatsuna’s jigane. In addition, the hamon is mainly ko-gunome, and looks as though it is very old. The yakidashi has a large yaki-otoshi, and the appearance of the jiba (jigane and hamon) has obvious Ko-Hoki characteristic points. Also, the strong visible hada extends into the hamon, and the hada is entangled with complex hataraki such as sunagashi, kinsuji, nie-suji, hotsure, and uchinoke, which provides a rich appearance, and brings out a more classic feeling. Also, a marumune is not seen often in the main school’s work.

In voting, a majority’s opinion was for Ko-Hoki work. But not a few people looked at this as Ko-Kyushu work, such as Ko-Naminohira and Yukihiro. These votes may have come from the same period when yaki-otoshi works were seen, but usually those hamon are based on a narrow suguha with a soft nioiguchi, and they don’t have this much hataraki, so those answers need to be reconsidered. Also, although appraised as Ko-Hoki work, the reasons this was judged as Sadatsuna’s work were the slightly wide width, the relatively robust shape, and the hamon’s

complicated midare pattern, which results in an antique appearance on this tachi.

Kantei To No. 5 : Katana

Mei: Omi Daijo Fujiwara Tadahiro

Hizen koku ju Mutsu no kami Tadayoshi

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6.5 bu

Sori: slightly less than 8 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: tight ko-itame hada; there are abundant ji-nie, and some fine chikei.

Hamon: the entire hamon is wide, and consists mainly of large and small choji mixed with ko-gunome and angular features. There are frequent ashi, yo and ko-nie.

Boshi: starts out in midare, and above this becomes straight; there is a komaru and the ura return is long.

There is a tight ko-itame hada with ji-nie. The entire jigane is refined, and the fine hada is a slightly visible komenuka (rice grain) hada. The hamon is mainly choji with even ko-nie. The boshi starts as a midare, then is straight and there is a komaru, and from this you can notice Hizen elements. This is a gassaku work by the Nidai Tadahiro and Sandai Mutsu-no-kami Tadayoshi.

The main Hizen family's first three generations work usually has a refined forging, especially the third or sandai Mutsu-no-kami's jigane is tight with fine chikei, and this katana shows this characteristic very well. Furthermore, in the case of a mainly choji hamon, it

contains several other elements such as ko-gunome, square gunome, and some togariba, and the entire hamon is a small size. Also the ura side boshi return is prominently close to the mune and shows his characteristic point. The has a wide robust shape, more than is seen in the Nidai's work and the katana's shape shows this

This work shows the Sandai Mutsu-no-kami's characteristic points everywhere. In the case of the Nidai and Sandai gassaku (uchigatana) work, usually the main Nidai Tadahiro name is signed on the ura side following the Hizen rule. But this is an unusual example where the Sandai signed on the ura side, so it is possible that the Sandai is the main smith involved in this work, and this is a rare example.

In voting, many opinions were for Hizen smiths such as the Sandai, Nidai Tadahiro, and Tadakuni. In the case of Tadahiro, his midare hamon bunches or clusters are bigger than this, and there are prominent round tops on the choji midare hamon. If it were Tadakuni's work, his large midare hamon have abundant nie, and prominent kinsuji and sunagashi, different from what we see on this blade, and a bolder character.

The nakago picture is shown at 97% of the actual size.

Shijo Kantei To No. 806 in the March 2024 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by the Shodai Dewa-no-kami Yukihiro.

The shodai Yukihiro was born in Genna 4 (1618), and he was the second son of the shodai Tadayoshi's adapted son Yoshinobu. He is well known for being representative of Bo-Hizen (branch Hizen) smiths along with his older brother the shodai Kawachi daijo Masahiro. In the "Kokon Kaji Bikou" in Shoho 5 (1648) it says that he received the Dewa daijo title in Kanbun 3 (1663), and he changed to the Dewa-no-kami title, and in Tenna 3 (1683) he passed away at the age of 66 years. From this, we can see that he worked in the Kanbun Shinto period.

Around the Kanbun period, Hizento often followed the fashion of the era's shape. But the widths at the the moto and saki are not too different, there is a large sori, and the kissaki is not too short, and compared with the usual Kanbun Shinto shapes, many of them are not overdone, are well proportioned, and they have a reputation for having good shape.

The jigane is ko-itame hada with abundant dense jinnie, and we noted the unique hada, call komenuka hada. In addition, among the Hizento, a slightly dark jigane very possibly indicates Bo-Hizen work.

The hamon is a large midare, the midare valleys have thick nie, there is a prominent dense nioiguchi, the nioiguchi's borders are clear, inside of the gunome there are yo, and some areas have a "snake

eye” shape. Following the large midare hamon, the boshi is straight, and notably there is a belt-like nioiguchi along the fukura. There is a komaru and return, and this work is easy to judge as a Hizento with these elements present.

The main school’s smiths such as Tadayoshi made a special midare hamon called “Naoe Shizu utsushi” (copy), and at the top of the gunome and choji hamon, the heights of these features are almost all the same, and large elements are connected to other large elements by long shallow notare sections. However, many of their midare hamon are continuous, and the valleys are not very wide. Compared with these hamon, the Bo-Hizen midare hamon stretches between large hamon elements are slightly large, and also some of them are connected with low konotare and suguha stretches. In addition, we often see yakidashi, which are seen less in the mainstream school’s work, and the katana has these characteristic points.

Among the Bo-Hizen smiths, Yukihiro has bold large midare hamon mixed with strangely shaped hamon features, and notably they can appear like crushed mushroom clouds, and as strange midare hamon, and long massive tobiyaki are seen often.

The nakago signature, because this is a Hizento katana, is signed on the ura side. The nakago mune has niku, (the nakago has rich niku and a marumune). Yukihiro’s nakago tips are kurijiri or ha-agari kurijiri. His yasurime are sujichigai or a large sujichigai, and different from the main school’s kiri, and this is mentioned in the hints.

Many of his signatures have ichi (一) or an Ichimonji kanji, but in his Daijo period mei we never see this, but after he received the Dewa-no-kami title, we see them frequently. Concerning the reason for these “ichi” kanji, there is no clear explanation, but we can imagine that just like the nidai Hizen smith Tadakuni studied under the Ichimonji descendant Shiro Byoei Noriyoshi in Edo, possibly Yukihiro had the same kind of opportunity (described in Kyoho 5 in “Nabeshima Han Sword Smith Research”, and in “Hizento Swords and Tsuba” by Funkunaga Suiken and Terada Yorisuke).

Yukihiro’s choji hamon with long ashi, or prominent choji midare hamon shows these characteristics less than other smiths, he has suguha hamon, and signed “Oranda kitae (nanban tetsu)” on blades, and concerning his hamon there is less of a connection with Ichimonji work, and we need to study this detail more.

Also, this katana’s signature has an ichi kanji in the center of the nakago, and under this, there is a long kanji signature shifted over along the mune side. This shifted signature is the Shodai Yukihiro’s characteristic point. Also, the Shodai has many “Oranda kitae” works, but the Nidai has fewer. However, there are very few written examples with Namban-tetsu described like this in the work of the shodai and nidai, or in mainstream work too, but this is seen sometimes in the work of Tosa-no-kami Tadayoshi, Harima-no-kami Tadakuni, and Totomi-no-kami Kanehiro.

Also, usually the nidai Yukihiro’s signatures following the ichi kanji, show a long signature signed on the

center of the nakago, but it is seen that in his early his work, the signature is shifted towards the mune side. Also, Yukihiro has many blades as good as the Shodai's, and at this time we treated the shodai and nidai as correct answers. However, you should remember the variations in the long signature's location.

For another dozen (proper answer) response, we had Kawachi daijo Masahiro, and Harima daijo Tadakuni. However, neither of them ever signed with an ichi kanji.

Masahiro is good at making large midare hamon, but hamon like this with crushed mushroom cloud choji, and strangely shaped hamon features are not seen very much, and his nakago tips are iriyamagata.

Tadakuni sometimes has hamon mixed with strange shaped features, he has frequent sunagashi and kinsuji, and his midarekomi boshi are much more common. His nakago tips in his early work were kurijiri and ha-agari style kurijiri, and a few have tips resembling a small trapezoid shape, but in his later work, many of them are an iriyamagata style.

Explanation by Ooi Gaku.