

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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MEITO KANSHO
APPRECIATION OF IMPORTANT SWORDS

Juyo Bunkazai
Important Cultural Property

Type: Wakizashi

Mei: Bitchu koku Tsugunao saku
Enbun 3 nen (1358) 12 gatsu hi

Owner: NBTHK

Length: 1 shaku 1sun 1 bu 2 rin (33.7 cm)

Sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 2 bu (9.7 cm)

Nakago sori: 3 rin (0.1 cm)

Commentary:

This is a hirazukuri wakizashi with a mitsumune. It is wide, and notably thin. There is a long kissaki and a shallow sori. The jigane is a tight ko-itame hada. On the omote in some places, and on the ura at the habaki moto, the hada is mixed with itame hada and there are midare utsuri. The hamon is saka-choji midare mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome. Going towards the tip, the hamon gradually becomes wider. There are saka-ashi, yo, a nioi deki hamon, tobiyaki, mune-yaki, and a bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi is midarekomi, and the omote boshi is round, and the ura boshi is sharp. Both returns are long and continue to form muneyaki. The horimono on the omote and ura are katana-hi with marudome. The nakago is ubu, the tip is a pronounced ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are a large sujichigai, and there are four mekugi-ana. On the omote, almost on the center, there is a long signature made with a fine chisel, and ura has a date made in the same style.

Today at the NBTHK, blades made by the Bitchu Aoe school roughly before the mid-Kamakura period are called Ko-Aoe, and after that period, they are called Aoe. After the latter half of the Kamakura period, Aoe work is unsettled or variable, and difficult to distinguish uniformly from the previous period. As a general trend, the jigane become finer and tighter, and sometimes we see sumi-hada, the utsuri are different from the irregular jifu-utsuri seen until then, and dan-utsuri is even from around this period.

Also, the hamon are mostly a suguha style and do not show much vertical variation, but there are saka-ashi, a tight nioiguchi, and also the suguha hamon have saka-ashi. As you know, in the Nanbokucho period the hamon become more regular or consistent, and in nioi-deki with gorgeous saka-choji. The nioiguchi complements the refined jigane, the jiba (jigane and hamon) is bright and clear, and the level of sophistication increased dramatically. In looking at the hamon composition, it is interesting that in the Nanbokucho period in neighboring Bizen, the gorgeous choji hamon fade out, and there are notare with prominent nie and which are mainly gunome and square gunome.

In the early to mid-Nanbokucho period, Tsugunao is one of the school's representative smiths along with Tsuguyoshi and Moritsugu. He does not have many signed works, and dated works are confirmed from Jowa 3 (1347) and Enbun 6 (1361). The type of blades seen are tachi, hirazukuri wakizashi, tanto and naginata. Most of Tsuguyoshi's works have suguha hamon. Tsugunao is good at making saka-choji hamon, but he used that hamon only on tanto and wakizashi, and never on tachi.

This wakizashi is wide and notably thin. There is a long length, and a large size, and it shows exactly the period's characteristic Enbun-Joji shape. The jigane is tighter than a "chirimen-hada" and is a very refined hada. The hamon is his excellent saka-choji-midare going from the moto to the tip, and becomes wider going towards the tip. The clarity of the hamon

is barely expressed in the oshigata, and not only the nioiguchi, but also the entire hamon pattern extends all the way to the tip, and the jiba (jigane and hamon) is really bright and shows outstanding workmanship. The slightly prominent wide and shallow hamon composition is dynamic, and is softened by the gentle nioiguchi, and there is a feeling of elegance. Among Tsugunao's saka-choji hamon work, the blades are thin, and show the Aoe school's good points and characteristic points, and we could say this is the best among his works.

This wakizashi's owner was called the "god of constitutionalism" and was the former prime minister Inukai Tsuyoshi's favorite sword, and he was a victim of the May 15 incident in 1932. After that, the blade was owned by Kuhara Fusanosuke who changed from a businessman to a politician. The blade was then owned by the sword connoisseur Ito Miyoji, a former earl, who worked as the privy counselor. Also, this wakizashi has a gold nashi-ji saya aikuchi wakizashi koshirae, and it is in a very healthy condition, and matches with the earl's family's collection catalog. The koshirae very likely came from the earl Ito who made many new koshirae for swords in his collection.

This wakizashi was donated by the son of Mr. Kanie Eikichi (a former president of the Kagome company). He formerly worked as an NBTHK director and honorary advisor, and passed away in December of Reiwa 5 nen (2023). We greatly

appreciate his lifetime achievements in the token world, and pray for the repose of his soul.

Explanation and oshigata by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei To No. 816

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 816 Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2025. 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, 2025 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 also submit votes online to:

[https://www.touken.or.jp
shijokanteinyusatsu.html](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.

Information

Katana

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun (69.8 cm)

Sori: slightly less than 5 bu (1.45 cm)

Motohaba: 9.5 bu (2.9 cm)

Sakihaba: 6.5 bu (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: slightly less than 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: slightly over 1 bu (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2.5 bu (3.75 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 2.5 bu (19.0 cm)

Nakago sori: slight (0.1 cm)

This katana's omote style is shinogi zukuri, and the ura side is kiriha zukuri. There is an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are slightly different. There is a standard thickness, a shallow sori, and a chu-kissaki. The jigane is itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and the hada is slightly visible. There are frequent ji-nie, chikei, a dark jigane, and the omote shinogi ji and the ura along the mune have a masame hada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the oshigata. There are

abundant nie, and in places the nie are mura nie or clumps of nie which are uneven and rough. There are sunagashi on the shinogi ji, and a worn down nioiguchi. The horimono on the omote is a bo-hi and soe-hi with maru-dome. The ura has futasuji-hi with marudome, and kasanebori with bonji, rendai, kuwagata, and suken. The nakago is ubu, the tip is kiri (this is a utsushi work, and usually we see kengyo or iriyamagata). The yasurime are katte-sagari, the nakago mune is kaku, and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote, below the habaki there is a mon, and under it, almost on the center there is a long kanji signature and kin-zogan (gold inlay).

Tokubetsu Jujo Tosogu

**Zhuinan zu (“chasing trouble” theme) menuki
Warikata mei: Natsuo**

Kano Natsuo was born in Bunsei 11 (1828) in Kyoto. He studied kinko (metal work) under the Otsuki school's Ikeda Takatoshi, and studied painting under the Maruyama Shijo school's Nakajima Raisho. When he was 27 years old, he moved to Edo (Tokyo) and produced many masterpieces. In the Meiji period he was active in a wide range of fields, such as making mint prototypes for new coins, and teaching at the Tokyo

Art School, and was selected as the first Teishitu Gigei-in (similar to today's living national treasure title).

On the omote menuki there is a demon, and the ura menuki has an ofuku ("ofuku" means a woman who brings good fortune), and the combination is called a zhuinan design. A zhuinan design is also called "oni yarai" (chasing a demon), it is a custom to use when people wish to escape from a demon or disease. The origin is supposed to have been derived from a court event in the lunar calendar's new year's eve. The demon is made with solid gold, his expression reminds us of Buddhist art's tento-demon, his indescribably exquisite molding reminds me again of Natsuo's excellent composition and high level of skill. In contrast, the ofuku is made in silver in yobori with inlay. Her expression is really intense looking and skillfully expressed, her facial features are detailed and carefully finished. Her hair is made with shakudo, her eyebrows are shibuichi, her lips are scarlet shakudo, her teeth are shakudo and they are small back teeth (married woman might dye their teeth black), and Natsuo's supreme skill is seen everywhere. Also, the omote is gold and the ura is silver, which produces a day and night look, and this brings out an unconventional but sophisticated feeling.

According to the "Natsuo Taikan" this was made in Manen 1 (1860), when Natsuo was 32 years old, and is a masterpiece made during the peak of his career.

Explanation by Kugiyama Natsuko

Shijo Kantei To No. 814 in the November 2024 issue

The answer is tachi by Ko-Ichimonji Sukeyoshi.

The Fukuoka Ichimonji school's work from before the early half of the Kamakura period is different from the mid-Kamakura period's gorgeous choji hamon such as those by Yoshifusa and Sukezane, and they are similar to Ko-Bizen work, and many of them are a classic style called Ko-Ichimonji.

In the "Kokon Meizukushi", the Fukuoka Ichimonji school's work is listed by period. The first works were around the Juei period (1182-

84) by Sadanori, and the following smiths were Norimune, Sukemune, Sukenori, and Sukeyoshi, and Sukeyoshi was active around the Tempuku period (1233) which is a slightly late period for Ko-Ichimonji work.

This tachi is signed under the mekugi ana with a slightly large kanji signature, the hamon is komidare mixed with ko-choji, a classic style, and indeed looks like Ko-Ichimonji work. On the other hand, there is a work with a gorgeous hamon (a Juyo Bijutsuhin owned by the Hayashibara Museum) with smaller vertical variations and a small hamon (Juyo Bijutsuhin and formerly owned by the Tsugaru family). The signature is above the mekugi ana and is a small size. The hamon has large size choji clusters and is a gorgeous midare hamon, which is a peak period Fukuoka Ichimonji style. This hamon has fewer or smaller vertical variations, and is a prominent gunome midare with saka-ashi, which is Yoshioka Ichimonji style work. We think the schools existed in a different period, and used the same names for multiple smiths' work.

This tachi has a narrow tachi shape, the widths at the moto and saki are different, there is a large koshizori, and even though it is

suriage, there is some funbari left at the koshimoto. The tip falls down going forward (i.e. the sori becomes more shallow going towards the point), and there is a small kissaki which places it no later than the early Kamakura period, and there is a classic tachi shape.

The jigane has an itame hada, and there are jifu utsuri. This kind of utsuri is seen in Unrui and Aoe smiths' work in later period work, but generally is seen more in early period work. Considering the shape, this is still a key point in letting us look at this as an older period's work. However, compared with Ko-Bizen work, clear utsuri are seen more often in Ko-Ichimonji work.

The hamon is small and in a nie style, and is a narrow suguha mixed with ko-midare and ko-choji. there are ashi, yo, and a classic appearance, similar to the Ko-Bizen style. The hints say there are "prominent ko-choji, and in some places, the width of the hamon has slight high and low variations". The utsuri is clear and the nie is as not strong as in Ko-Bizen work, which is often seen as a key point for Ko-Ichimonji work. It can be said that compared

with Ko-Bizen work, the difference is they have a fresher or newer appearance.

The nakago is suriage, but looking at the Tsugaru family's former Juyo Bijutsuhin tachi signed "tatematsuru Sukeyoshi" (and which is machi okuri) and a Kokon Meizukushi book oshigata, originally the nakago jiri was supposed to be ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are sujichigai, and from the old token books, this is often seen in Ichimonji smith's work. Surely, from the actual work, compared with Ko-Bizen, they have more details or features of the style. But they have many kiri and katte styles, and from this, we are hesitant to say that this is a significant difference between the schools.

Also, Sukeyoshi signed under a mekugi ana, and along the mune side, and there are few signatures with this detail among the Ko-Ichimonji smiths, and along with the sujichigai yasurime, this could be an important characteristic point in considering this as being Sukeyoshi's work. It is not limited to Ko-Ichimonji work, and generally in this period, a majority of smiths signed above the mekugi ana. Also, there are few Ko-Ichimonji Sukeyoshi works, and the upper part of the

blade does not have clear characteristic points to allow us to narrow this down as being his work. From this, at this time, either Ko-Ichimonji smith is treated as a correct answer.

Also, among the Ko-Bizen work, as I explained above, some have Ko-Ichimonji characteristic points, and it is difficult to distinguish between the two, and Ko-Bizen names were treated as correct answers at this time. Among these, Masatsune has a signature under a mekugi ana, and this is supposed to be a major characteristic point, and his name accounted for a large portion of the Ko-Bizen votes. This is a good point considering not only the style of the upper half of the blade, but also of the nakago.

However, Toshitsune and Tsunemitsu are supposed to have the same style as Masatsune, and they signed under a mekugi ana, but most of their signatures are on the center of the nakago. Sometimes Tsunemitsu made a few nakago with sujichigai yasurime, but overall, their yasurime are kate-sagari or kiri.

This is work from the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period, the signature is under

the mekugi ana and there are deep yasurime, and from this, some people voted for Bitchu Kuni smiths, notably the Imo school smith Masatsune. He has work similar to Bizen work, and we included him as a correct answer. Also, most of his signatures are signed on the center, and his yasurime are a strong sujichigai.

In addition, some Bitchu smiths, if it is Ko-Aoe work, except for some smiths such as Moritsugu and Shigetsugu, generally signed on the ura side, the yasurime are a large sujichigai and these are major characteristic points. Their forging shows a well forged mokume hada, and the fine hada is visible, chirimen-hada and sumi-hada come out, and there is a dark iron color. Their hamon are mainly a komidare style, and many of them have saka-ashi or saka-ashi and a worn down nioiguchi.

A few people voted for Ko-Hoki work and Osafune Nagamitsu. If it were Ko-Hoki work, their forging has a large pattern, the hada is visible, there are frequent chikei, and a strong dark iron color. Their hamon border shows hataraki and hamon-hada. Many of these works have yakiotoshi at the koshimoto, and

there is a slightly worn down nioiguchi. Concerning their signatures, except for Aritsuna's katana mei, and smiths such as Sadatsune who signed under the mekugi ana, many of them were like Yasutsuna and Ohara Sanemori, and they signed above the mekugi-ana and along the mune side.

Osafune Nagamitsu's active period was during the latter half of the Kamakura period, and because of this, his tachi shapes do not fall down going forward (i.e. the sori becomes more shallow going towards the point), but rather, the tip has sori. His utsuri are not dark around the shinogi, and on the shinogi ji there are jifu utsuri. His utsuri follow along with the midare hamon, with dark areas relatively near the hamon, and there is generally midare utsuri. However, his signatures are above the mekugi ana and along the mune side.

Commentary by Ooi Gaku