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Heisei 25 nen Shinsaku Meito Ten:
Heisei 25 New Sword Exhibition and Competition

Tachi, Katana, Wakizashi, Naginata, and Yari section

Classification: NBTHK Chairman's prize

Type: Katana

Mei: Nishu Kunimasa saku

Heisei 25 nen haru (spring)

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 9 bu 8 rin (75.6 cm)

Sori: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 cm)

Sakihaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 6 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane : 1 bu 9 rin (0.55 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 9 bu 3 rin (5.85 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 1 bu 9 rin (21.8 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri Katana with an ihorimune. It is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are somewhat different. The blade has a slightly large sori and a o-kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame. There are dense ji-nie, and frequent chikei. The hamon is a choji type hamon mixed with ko-gunome, square-gunome, and togari. The entire hamon has a high yakiba with vertical variations. There are frequent ashi and yo, and the hamon is formed in nioi, but some parts have groups of rough nie, and in places there are small tobiyaki. The boshi is midarekomi with a sharp komaru and a long return. The horimono on both the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago and the tips end in a low location. There is a nakago tip is a shallow ha-agari kurijiri, and the yasurime are sujichigai. There is a one mekugi-ana. On the omote under the hi along the center, there is a long and mei inscribed in large kanji and made with a thick tagane (chisel). On the ura along the mune edge of the shinogisuji there is a date.

The sword smith Matsuba Kunimasa was born on Showa 34 (1959). In Showa 58, he became a student of the smith Kobayashi Yasuhiro. Because Kobayashi died early, Kunimasa became a pupil of Kobayashi's senior student Ando Yukio. In Heisei 1 (1989), he received his sword smith's licence. Since then, he has entered the Shinsaku Meito Ten every year, and has received many prizes such as the NBTHK Chairman's prize, and the Kunzan and Sanzan prizes. He has been producing his original style of work. He has also been giving energetic lectures and seminars about his favorite subjects of Aikido and swordplay performances, not only inside of Japan, but also in America and Europe which is beyond a sword smith's usual efforts. This is a Matsuba's ideal of a Bizen Osafune Chogi style katana, which is the same style he made last year. Matsuba has received the first or special prize in the last three years. This katana is about 2 shaku 5 sun which is large, and it is wide with an o-kissaki. It produces an impression of a strong dynamic shape. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame. There are fine dense jinnie and chikei, which complements this strong shape. The variable hamon does not have a flat or even top, but varies vertically. The ashi and yo are soft appearing. The nie are worn down, and the nioi are soft and smooth. This type of sword can often be overpowering, but this effort has a well balanced feeling and is not overwhelming. The entire katana is a powerful work made with good skill and control. The katana clearly shows Matsuba's high level of skill and accomplishment.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Heisei 25 Nen Shinsaku Meito Ten Tsuba

NBTHK Chairman's prize: First Prize

Sakura kuyomon sukashi nijū karakusa zogan tsuba:

10 sukashi Cherry blossom mon around the perimeter of the tsuba

Mei : Hidefumi

Heisei 25 nen

Yamashita Hidefumi is 38 years old and he had been working with iron every day. He was fascinated with iron tsuba, and in Heisei 13, he visited his prefecture's (Ehime) master smith and asked become a student, and he was accepted. Since Heisei 15, he has entered the contest, and he received the award for hard work prize three times. This year, finally, he received the Chairman's prize. This is a sakura kuyomon sukashi tsuba. The entire composition is excellent, and shows his high level of skill. There are fine details in his work everywhere, and the progress and improvements in his skill is amazing. He has studied hard under his strict teacher. I would say that this excellent work has finally emerged from his long period of hard work.

NBTHK Chairman's prize: second prize

Nozarashi-zu tsuba

Tsuba with Kanie's carvings of human skulls

Mei : Utsushi (copy) Sa Kazumitsu saku

Mizunoto mi haru (spring)

The Chairman's prize No.2 winner is Hagawa Yasuho, the same person as last year. We introduced him last year and he has been working hard since an early age. Currently, he has been giving lectures at the NBTHK concerning " Toshoku ginou koshukai " (sword related techniques workshop) in the touso kanagu section, and also in the "Token kenma gaiso gijutsu kenshukai Kajitogi kenshukai " (polishing, koshirae techniques, and kaji-togi workshop). His teaching and lectures have been well received. He studied and worked diligently before he started working with this subject. He has a good understanding of a tsuba's character. Based on this kind of study plus his long experience, he can produce great work. A new classically elegant tsuba was created through his study of classic works, and his excellent high level of workmanship.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya.

Shijo Kantei To No. 677

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 677 issue Shijo Kantei To is July 5, 2013. 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 July 5, 2013 will be accepted. If there are swordsmiths with the same name in different schools, please write the school or prefecture, and if the swordsmith was active for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

Information:

Type: wakizashi

Length: 1 shaku 7 sun 4 bu (52.72 cm)

Sori: slightly less than 3 bu

Motohaba: 1 sun 1 bu 1 rin (3.35 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 9 rin (2.4 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (4.05 cm)

Nakago length: 5 sun 3.5 bu (16.21 cm)

Nakago sori: very little

This is a shinogizukuri wakizashi with an ihorimune, and it is slightly wide. The widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a shallow sori and a long chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame hada. There are dense thick ji-nie, fine chikei, and this is a unique jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There is a characteristic nioiguchi, ko-ashi, a thick nioiguchi, dense nie, fine kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is iriyamagata. The yasurime are katte-agari, and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side, the nakago has a long kanji signature toward the mune side. Most of this smith's nakago yasurime are kiri, and it is rare to see this kind of katte-agari yasurime. Also this wakizashi is wide for his work.

Teirei Kanshou Kai For April

The swords discussed below were shown in the May, 2013, meeting at the NBTHK headquarters building. This discussion presents answers concerning the makers of these blades.

Meeting Date: May 11, 2013 (2nd Saturday of May)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Hiyama Masanori

During these meetings, five swords are displayed for examination. The blades can be examined, but the nakago are covered and cannot be seen (they are left in the shira-saya tsuka). After examining the 5 swords, the meeting attendees must decide who they think made the 5 swords which were available for examination, and submit a paper ballot with these names. The 5 swords seen in the May meeting are described below, and the correct names of the makers are presented, along with an explanation of important details which should lead a person to pick the correct sword smith's name.

Kantei To No. 1: wakizashi

Mei: Dewa Daijo Fujiwara Kunimichi

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 4 sun 9 bu

Sori: 5 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame hada mixed with mokume; some parts are rough and the hada is visible; the entire hada is rough and there are frequent ji-nie.

Hamon: shallow notare type hamon mixed with gunome, togari, and choji; it is a shimaba type hamon. Some places have tobiyaki and variations in the hamon height; there is a tight nioiguchi and ko-nie.

Boshi: wide yakiba, midarekomi, komaru tip, and a slightly long return.

Kunimichi was a very long living sword smith. His earliest dated blade is from Keicho 13 (1609), and his last dated blade is from Keian 5 (1653) with his age stated as 77. Also, his last work is known to be from Kanbun 2 (1662). Some opinions are that work after Sho-o is by a second generation. This wakizashi is slightly wide and the widths at the moto and saki are not different. There is a long boshi and the kissaki is large which is a Keicho Shinto shape. The hamon is mixed with gunome, ko-notare, togariba, and there are tobiyaki, which is a Mino style hamon. The boshi is a shallow notare and has a sharp tip which is called a Sanpin boshi. Because of this, beside Kunimichi, many people voted for Sanpin school smiths' names such as Iga no kami Kinmichi and Echu-no-kami Masatoshi. Usually, for Sanpin school smiths, the jihada are nagare hada. Some part of this wakizashi's jihada are mixed with nagare hada, but they are not prominent. The hada is itame hada mixed with mokume hada, there is a visible hada, and it is a rough appearing jihada. From this jihada and the boshi's yakiba characteristics, it is possible narrow this work down to Dewa Daijo Kunimichi from the Horikawa school. Echu-no-kami Masatoshi's work has a typical Sanpin boshi, but his hamon have yahazuha choji, gunome choji, and togariba which have strong vertical variations when compared to Kunimichi. His nioiguchi are tighter, and often his midare hamon tips contact each other, and in these areas, the yakiba seems to disappear. Also,

some parts of this wakizashi have a saka-ashi hamon, and this is one of Dewa Daijo Kunimichi's characteristics. Iga no kami Kinmichi's midare hamon have thick tobiyaki over the hamon and can become a sudareba hamon; it is also mixed with square shaped gunome and notare, and many of his boshi have strong hakikake and niekuzure rather than being a Sanpin-boshi.

Kantei To No. 2: tachi

Mei: Fujishima Tomoshige

Length: 2 shaku 1 bu

Sori: 6.5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada; a tight jihada; there are ji-nie, and the entire jihada is dark.

Hamon: square gunome mixed with togariba, ko-gunome, and yahazu choji; there are ashi, ko-nie, and in places there sunagashi and some tobiyaki.

Boshi: wide yakiba; midarekomi; komaru tip, and a slightly long return.

This is a small size tachi by Fujishima Tomoshige. From the shape, jihada and hamon, the date is supposed to be around the Oei period. Fujishima has suguha and midareba hamon in two kinds of style. His midare hamon are a continuous ko-gunome hamon which reminds us of the Shikake school; togariba, square gunome, and yahazu choji mixed with a strong Mino influence. Another style is a Bizen style mixed with a Mino style. His hamon are variable. This tachi is based on open bottom gunome and at first glance, it looks like Bizen work. But look at the jihada carefully: it is itame mixed with mokume hada, and the entire jihada is dark, which is a typical Hokkoku (Northern Japan) jihada. Among the Hokkoku smiths, the reason for Fujishima's name to come to mind is that on the ura side, the midare hamon is mixed with square shaped gunome and the tips look like a sharp horn. This is a unique hamon, and with square gunome this is the school's favorite style. Usually, Fujishima school swords do not come up in the sword discussion meetings and there are many styles. I thought this was a difficult blade to identify, but many people voted for Tomoshige. Compared with smiths from the same period, Tomoshige's jihada are tighter. From this observation, some people voted for Oei Bizen smiths such as Yasumitsu and Morimitsu, and Sue Seki smiths such as Kanehiro. If it were work from Oei Bizen smiths, there would be clear straight utsuri or midare utsuri, and the hamon would have prominent open bottom gunome mixed with choji, gunome, and togariba. There would also be ashi and yo, a nioiguchi with an active midare hamon, and the boshi tip would be sharp and there would be a shallow return, and these are their characteristics. If it were Sue Seki

work, the jihada would not be dark, but rather more whitish, and the utsuri would be whitish.

Kantei To No 3: tanto

Mei: Buzen no kami Kiyondo

Length: 9 sun

Sori: 1 bu

Style: osoraku zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight itame hada mixed with a little bit of nagare hada and there are frequent ji-nie.

Hamon: gunome mixed with togari gunome and square shaped gunome; there are long ashi, frequent sunagshi and nie.

Boshi: midarekomi with nie kuzure, and the tip has hakikake.

Horimono: both the omote and ura have katana-hi and koshi-hi carved through the nakago.

This shinogi zukuri kissaki is very long, and this is a unique shape called “Osoraku zukuri”.

This shape originated at the end of the Muromachi period by one of the Sunshu Shimada smiths. Sukemune made a tanto in this shape and he carved “Osoraku” hirakana on the tanto, and the name of this style came from this. In the beginning, this was supposed to have been Takeda Shingen’s treasured tanto, and according to the Umetada Meikan, it later belonged to Katagiri Katsumoto’s son Takatoshi (Izumo no kami). Originally, the tanto was made to be used in a metazashi style (to be worn on the right side, so in close combat it could be used to cut an enemy’s neck). In general usage, the osoraku name refers to this kind of strange tanto shape which was never seen before. Another opinion is given in the Token Bijutsu Magazine’s No. 45 issue (Showa 32) where Tsujimoto Naoo wrote that this style tanto was very fearful to look at and couldn’t be compared to other tantos, so the smith put the word “osoraku” on it. This is an understandable opinion, and even today, this shape of tanto has an intimidating feeling. In the late Edo period, there were some copies made of this unique tanto shape. This was the Kiyomaro school smiths’ specialty and they produced them. Among the school smiths, Kiyondo’s work is seen often, and most people voted for Kiyomaro or his school’s smiths such as Saneo, Nobuhide, Masao, and Kiyondo. This is Kiyondo’s work, and is similar to his teacher Kiyomaro’s late work, so voting for Kiyomaro is understandable. But the jihada, ji-nie and chikei are not prominent, and the condition of the nie, and the clarity of the hamon are as good as Kiyomaro’s. Also, the boshi return has hakikake which appear just like marks from a comb, and this

kind of characteristic is not seen in the work of the Kiyomaro school's other smiths, so we can say that this is one of Kiyondo's works.

Kantei To No 4: wakizashi

Mei: Echizen kuni Kanetane

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 3 sun 3 bu

Sori: 2 bu

Design: hira-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada and the entire jihada is masame; there are ji-nie, and entire jihada is dark.

Hamon: gunome mixed with togari gunome, togariba, square shaped gunome, and gunome-choji : there are frequent tobiyaki, a worn down nioiguchi, ko-nie, and it becomes a hitatsura style.

Boshi: shallow notare, the tip is komaru, and there is a slightly long return.

This wakizashi has a wide mihaba and is long, and examples of Echizen Kanetane's hirazukuri wakizashi are very seldom shown in Kanteito, so this could be difficult to judge. Because of this, there were different times in which people thought it was made, either at the end of the Muromachi period, the Keicho Shinto period, or around the first half of the Edo period. In the first vote, people voted for the wrong Keicho Shinto smiths. The hada is itame mixed with mokume and the entire jihada is nagare hada. The hamon is gunome, mixed with togari-gunome and gunome-choji, and some parts have strong Sue Seki characteristics such as togariba and gunome, which is a very diversified hamon, and the jihada is dark. From these characteristics, this could be a Hokkoku blade. Considering the Mino style hamon, and among the Echizen Shinto smiths, the Echizen Seki smiths name comes to mind. It was very difficult to judge individual names, and people voted for Yamato Daijo Masanori, Harima Daijo Shigetaka, Chikugo no Kami Sadakuni, Omi no Kami Tsuguhiro, Hoki no Kami Hirotaka, Higo Daijo, and no specific generation of Yasukuni, and these names are understandable. Among the votes, only one person voted for Echizen kuni Kanetane. Kanetane's work is a little different from Shigetaka and Hirotaka, whose hamon are often notare mixed with dense round gunome, and there are frequent ashi. Many of Kanenori's hamon have a wide nioiguchi and large notare hamon. Sadakuni's hamon are usually low, with a gentle suguha. Among Yasutsugu's three early generations, there are a few works similar to this style, but they do not have this many Mino characteristics in them. The Masanori name is understandable, and he has some works in a similar style similar to this one.

Kantei To No. 5: tanto

Mei: Heianjo Nagayoshi

Length: 7 sun 7 bu

Sori: almost none

Design: hira zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: tight ko-itame; there are ji-nie, and the entire jihada has nagare hada.

Hamon: on both, the omote and ura, at the koshimoto, there are two ko-gunome, and above this there is a chu-suguha style; there is a shallow notare; there is a tight nioiguchi, ko-nie, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with komaru; the tip has a small amount of hakikake; there is a long return.

Horimono: both the omote and ura sides have a short So style kurikara, and the ura side has gomabashi at the koshimoto.

This tanto is short for the mihaba, there is a poor fukura, and the horimono are concentrated around the koshimoto. The omote and ura hamon are the same, and from these characteristics, you can judge this tanto as work from around the end of the Muromachi period. When the omote and ura sides have the same almost identical characteristic hamon, smiths who come to mind are the Sengo school smiths, such as Muramasa, Masashige, and Masazane, Heianjo Nagayoshi, or Sue-Seki smiths. Except for Ujisada, Sue-Seki smiths did not make much horimono, and from this, most people did not vote for Sue-Seki smiths. Heianjo Nagayoshi is well known, and his strong point is horimono, and most of his work has horimono. The tanto shape is short for the mihaba, with a fat shape and with a mitsumune, and from these characteristics, many people voted for the correct answer which is very good. Because the omote and ura hamon are almost identical, the other answer was Muramasa, which is understandable. The two smiths are similar in their styles and nakago, and some of their horimono are same, and they have a common style. There are some differences between them: Muramasa's jihada is visible, and the jihada and hamon are worn down when compared with Heianjo Nagayoshi and Muramasa's work does not have as much Horimono as is seen in Nagayoshi's work.

Shijo Kantei To No 675 (in the April, 2013 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 675 in the April issue is a wakizashi by Shume no kami Ichinohira Yasuyo

Yasuyo is known with Mondo-no-sho Masakiyo, as Satsuma Shinto representatives of great smiths, and these honored smiths received permission to use the Ichiyo Aoi Mon from the Tokugawa Shogun Yoshimune (note: only four smiths were granted permission by Yoshimune to use this mon). Both of these smiths were active around the Kyoho period but, their styles are quite different from each other. Masakiyo was a student of Maruta Souzaemon Masafusa, and his style is representative of the Satsuma Masafusa school's Soshu Den. His jihada are itame, his hamon are based on ko-notare mixed with large and small gunome and togariba. The top of the hamon has prominent yubashiri and nijuba; there are deep and shallow variations in the height of the nioiguchi; there are ara-nie, kinsuji, and imozuru. His boshi has frequent hakikake, and becomes a kaen type.

Yasuyo is different. He studied with his father Ichinohira Yasusada, and at the same time he trained with Naminohira's 58th generation Yamato no Kami Yasukuni. His father was Yasusada who trained under the Naminohira 57th generation Yamato no Kami Yasuyuki. Yasuyo's style had a strong influence from the Shinto Naminohira school. His work is evaluated and compared to styles based on the Shinto Naminohira school, and have a more clear and elegant jihada and hamon, and every time you see his work, you can recognize this characteristic. His works often have a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not different. The swords are thick, and have a large hiraniku and heavy weight, which are all part of Satsuma's characteristic style. His work was very strongly influenced by Shinto Naminohira's wide shinogi ji, and high shinogi, just like this wakizashi. The suguha style hamon becomes a shallow notare with a wide nioiguchi, dense nie, and prominent rough nie in the hamon. His jihada are ko-itame, and often mixed with nagare hada. There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and the jihada is visible. Also, his jihada are dark and this is one of his characteristics. Many of his hamon are a suguha style with a shallow notare, and sometimes there are suguha style hamon mixed with continuous gunome. Sometimes there is a notare style hamon mixed with gunome. Either hamon will have a wide nioiguchi, dense nie, prominent rough nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, and imozuru. According to the sword collector's beginning book, "Masakiyo and Yasuyo are representatives of the Satsuma Shinto great master smiths. Masakiyo has more midare hamon, and Yasuyo has more suguha hamon". This is true, and if you think about their background, it may be more helpful in understanding differences in style between the two smiths. Most people voted for Yasuyo, and as a almost correct answer, a few people voted for his adapted son Yasuari. Yasuari has several of Yasuyo's daimei signatures. In this case, the blade has an Ichiyo Aoi mon. In Yasuari's own work, we never see an Ichiyo Aoi mon. This wakizashi's signature is different from Yasuari's daimei. Yasuari's own work or Yasuari's daimei Yasuyo work are more gentle from the usual Yasuyo work, and there are less kinsuji and niesuji hataraki.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai