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Meito Kansho
Appreciation of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Bijutsuhin
Important art object

Type: Tachi
Mei: Kunitsuna (Ko-Bizen)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 1 bu 8 rin (70.25 cm)
Sori: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)
Motohaba: 8 bu 7 rin (2.65 cm)
Sakihaba: 5 bu 6 rin (1.67 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)
Sakikasane : 1 bu 1 rin (0.35 cm)
Kissaki length: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)
Nakago length: 7 sun 2 bu 3 rin (21.9 cm)
Nakago sori: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly narrow width, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. There is a standard thickness, a large sori, and the upper half has a little uchizori. There is a short chu-kissaki which appears almost like a small or ko-kissaki. The The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and the entire jihada is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, pale utsuri, and jifu itsuri in the upper half. The hamon is ko-choji mixed with ko-gunome, square shaped gunome, and some places have shimaba (clumped nie which appear almost like a small island). The upper half of the blade has a wider hamon mixed with big midare clusters or groups. There are frequent ashi and yo, dense thick ha-nie, and in some places there are kinsuji and sunagashi, and small yubashiri. Some parts of the hamon appear soft. The boshi is straight and round. The nakago is suriage, the tip is a kijimomo type shape, and there is a shallow kurijiri, and the yasurime are unclear. There are three mekugi-ana. On the omote

by the second mekugi-ana, on the mune side, there is a small size two kanji signature.

Usually, Ko-Bizen hamon have a low yakiba, and are based on ko-midare patterns, and have a very natural look, and the classic works are considered mainstream works. As people know, the last Ko-Bizen works were made in the early half of the Kamakura period. But Tsunemitsu, who is supposed to have worked in the Ko-Bizen style, has a blade dated Sho-o 3 (1301). Naturally, by this period, styles were changing and becoming diversified. The meikan lists two Ko-Bizen Kunitsunas: one is from the Genryaku period (1184-5) and other is around the Tenpuku period (1233-4). This tachi's upper sori is shallow and slightly uchizori when compared with the lower part, and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is well forged but the itame hada is visible, and a little rough. There are pale utsuri, and some places have jifu utsuri, and there are clear dark areas of utsuri in the shinogi-ji. The hamon has a wide yakihaba mixed with choji, and is a technically well made well hamon. There are prominent dense ha-nie when compared to mid- to late Kamakura period work. Also, the nakago is a kijimomo shape, and from these characteristics, he was listed as a Ko-Bizen, and as a Tenpuku period smith. Among the old time appraisers, Kunitsuna was considered to be among the "Kiku-gosaku" smiths (the group of smiths who made swords with the emperor Gotoba) who used the the kiku mon with a kebori carving technique (very fine engraving or carving) this group of smiths is supposed to have started working after the Jokyu-no-ran (1221). Characteristics include a high yakiba, and technically well executed midare hamon. In the Katei period (1235-38) Ko-Bizen Tomonari (who has Juyo Bijutsuhin works) had same kind of hamon. In later periods, there is a Hatakeda Moriie tachi dated Bunkyu 9 (1272) classified Juyo Bunkazai, with a hamon that is choji mixed with gunome, and which includes a little bit of kawazuko choji. From these facts, during that period, hamon were changing from ko-midare types to gorgeous active hamon. In my opinion it is interesting that the tachi's upper half has a hamon style with some soft hamon areas, and this is similar to the same prefecture's smith Saburo Kunimune's work; the bottom half of the hamon is primarily a technically well executed hamon. The hamon has a natural or organically appearing part as well as a perfectly technically executed part. This is an early to mid-Kakura period transition work, and I would say that this is an important example which shows changes in Bizen work. This was a Tsuchiura-han Tsuchiya family descendant's tachi during the Edo period.

Explanation and the photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Sanshi no rei - hanpo no kou zu (theme illustrates a Chinese proverb) menuki
Waritanzaku mei (the mei is on a flat platform on the back of the menuki): Ryu
hougan Kiyotoshi

Toryusai Kiyotoshi is known as one of the “ Bakumatsu period’s three best smiths” along with Goto Ichijo and Kano Natsuo. His work shows sophisticated designs, extraordinarily innovative sukashi work, and sophisticated iroe techniques, and these characteristics strongly show the period’s taste at the end of the Edo period. Kiyotoshi’s work has a very strong personality or style. He signed with soe-mei (mei which included titles and other information), such as Ryuji, Jiryu, Ware-ikkaku, and Ie-issiki. In Koka 2 he received the priest rank of Hokyo, and in Koka 3, he received the Hogan title. He trained many students, and at the same time he produced many masterpieces and he passed away in Meiji 9, at the age of 73. This work shows a theme from the old Chinese proverb “Sanshi no rei, hanpo no kou”. The Sanshi no rei means that pigeons have a courteous polite mind, and they perch on branches three steps down from their parents. Hanpo no rei says crows are returning a favor to their parents for raising them, and they give them food from their mouths. Both stories bring to mind piety and courtesy. This piece shows Kiyotoshi’s delicate and detailed carving technique, his fine and bright colored metal work, and his excellent skilled work. Also, on the back of the menuki, the tanzaku (platform or space for the mei) with his signature becomes one piece with the inyo-kon (the menuki pins which are solid on one menuki and hollow cylinders on the other menuki). This is a very unique work.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 680

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 680 issue Shijo Kantei To is October 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 October 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: tanto

Length: slightly less than 9 sun 9 bu (29. 85 cm)

Sori: slightly less than 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Motohaba: 9 sun 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun (12. 12 cm)

Nakago sori: very slight

This is a katakiriha zukuri tanto with an ihorimune, and it is wide, long, and thick . There is a shallow sori and a poor fukura shape. The jihada is itame hada, which is slightly visible, and in places there is nagarehada and masame hada. There are dense ji-nie, frequent chikei, and a bright jihada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are yubashiriin places, long ashi, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie, and in places, there are strong bright nie, kinsuji, and sunagashi. The boshi return is not continuous but extends all the way down to near the mune machi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are sujichigai, and there is a one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, under the mekugi ana there is a two kanji signature along the center and slightly towards the mune side.

Shijo Kantei To No 678 (in the July, 2013 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 678 in the July issue is a katana by Oku Yamato-no-kami Motohira (dated Bunsei 9 nen ki)

This katana has a wide mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are not different; there is a large hiraniku, and it is heavy . The jihada has a tight ko-itame hada, and dark colored kawari-tetsu (the kawari tetsu is a patch of a different appearing steel in the ji) is present. The hamon is a prominent togariba gunome midare, there are dense ara-nie, sunagashi, and kinsuji, which shows typical Satsuma blade characteristics. The other Satsuma Shinshinto master smith was Hoki no kami Masayuki who has many blades with a wide mihaba and o-kissaki, and a dynamic shape. Motohira's katana are not like Masayuki's, mainly in that his katana have a somewhat wide mihaba, a longer chu-kissaki, and almost standard shapes. There are a very few blades shaped like this katana, and the hint mentioned this. Masayuki's jihada has forging junctions which become long whitish lines, and these are seen frequently. But in Motohira's work we never seen this ,

and his jihada have dense ji-nie, and often the jihada shows a dark blue color, and moist appearance like the original Satsuma jihada. Some of Motohira's hamon are notare mixed with gunome, and are typical Soshu Den hamon. However, some of his hamon are composed mainly of gunome and togariba and not much notare hamonis seen, just like this katana, and this is one of his characteristic points. Also, his hamon have more strong bright ha-nie, and are bright and clear when compared with Masayoshi's work. There are kinsuji, imozuru type niesuji, and sometimes there are thick dark, strong glossy kinsuji type niesuji called "Motohira's fishing needles" and these are characteristics of his work. Motohira's nakago tips in his work are iriyamagata, and later become kengyo; the yasurime are sujichigai. On katana, his signatures are usually on the ura side and there are long signatures towards the mune edge. On the omote side there is a date, starting slightly above the ura side signature. Motohira's dated blades are from Meiwa to Bunsei, and Masayuki's works are dated from Horeki to Bunka, and these two smiths were active almost during the same time period.

Motohira was Oku Jirobyoei Motonao's son. His early work, around the Meiwa and Ansei periods, shows a usual shape and the widths at the moto and saki are different; there is a very shallow sori and a chu-kissaki which is a Kanbun Shinto type shape. His hamon are a gentle suguha style shallow notare, and there are frequent ha-nie. The jihada, hamon, even mei are very similar to Motonao's work. Later his mihaba become wider, and at the same time, his main style changes and becomes like the style on this katana.

Masayuki was already making blades with long kissaki around the Meiwa and Ansei periods, and after this, Masayuki and Motohira's shapes are clearly different. But it is interesting that many of Motohira's wakizashi have o-kissaki. At this time, this katana was typical of Motohira's work, and most people voted the correct answer. Some people voted for the Nidai Motohira. Because some sword books listed him as Motohira's son, this answer was treated as an almost correct answer at this time. The nidai Motohira's work is seen about 30 years after Motohira passed way around the Bunkyu period instead of right after his death in Bunsei 2. The nidai's work continued to the Ganji, Keio and Meiji periods, and it is difficult to think that he was Motohira's actual son. It seems more likely that the nidai was the son of Motohira's son Motohiro or Motohira's grandson. The nidai's style shows wide mihaba, o-kissaki, and a dynamic shape, and many of them are suguha instead of midareba and their quality is not the same as the shodai's and the workmanship is much different from the shodai. From now on, in judging the Shodai Motohira's work, the nidai answer cannot be treated as an almost correct answer. Please note these comments.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

