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Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Juyo Token

Type: Tachi
Mei: Kagehide

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu 8 rin (71.75 cm)
Sori: 6 bu 1 rin (1.85 cm)
Motohaba: 9 bu 8 rin (2.95 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 5 rin (1.95 cm)
Motokasane: 1 bu 9 rin (0.55 cm)
Sakikasane : 1 bu (0.3 cm)
Kissaki length: 9 bu 6 rin (2.9 cm)
Nakago length: 6 sun 6 bu 1 rin (20.05 cm)
Nakago sori: 5 rin (0.15 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are not much different. The blade is a little thin, is koshizori, and has a chu- kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, and nagare hada is present. Some areas have a visible jihada. There are ji-nie, midare type utsuri, and in the center of the ura side the utsuri becomes suji utsuri. The hamon is a choji style hamon mixed with gunome, ko-gunome, togariba, and contains square shaped elements. The hamon overall is a ko-notare, and the mid- to upper part of the hamon is wider. There are ashi and yo, sunagshi, and in some places, the nioiguchi is soft. The boshi is slightly notare with togari, and ko-maru with a return, and has yubashiri. The nakago is suriage, the tip is kurijiri, and the yasurime are a deep sujichigai (old) and kate-sagari (new). There are three mekugi-ana. On the omote under the third mekugi-ana and a little towards the mune side, there is a large size two kanji signature made with a with fine tagane (chisel).

According to many old sword books, Kagehide is supposed to have been the brother of the Osafune school founder. His characteristic hamon were written as

“a choji hamon which has alot of vertical variations, and in some places the hamon reaches up to the shinogi-ji; his midare hamon resemble each other more than Mitutada’s; he has many togariba hamon and they are sharp looking” and as you know, this is a hisstyle. His family line according to the “Kanchinhon Mei-zukushi” is supposed to have been established in the latter half of the Kamakura period, and Kagehide is listed as “Osafune Sama no jo,“ and from this he would have been active around the mid-Kamakura period, and have been either an Osafune smith, or closely associated to the Osafune school. Actually, there are blades just like the early Osafune style, in which the middle of hamon is wider, and around the monouchi area, the hamon necomes lower; these also are mixed with kawazuko-choji which form a diverse midare hamon: this style is associated with Osafune hamon. But seing Kagehide listed as “Mitsutada’s brother” is only seen in later periods, such as in the original oshigata book “O-kinsho” written in the latter half of the Muromachi period (the Eisho period). Also, the signatures of kagehide and Mitsutada have no similarities at all. From these facts, some old traditional books and experts have written that there might be an association with the Ichimonji school or possibly there were 2 generations of Kagehide smiths. But even today, thre are no accepted theories about this, and further studies are necessary. Only the masterpiece called “Kuronbo kiri”, a strangely named tachi which belonged to Date Masamune and is classified as Juyo Bunkazai has writtern evaluations. In the “Kokon Mei Zukushi“ it says the hamon has long ashi with large clusters, and there is a beautiful choji hamon”. Kagehide has 10 Juyo and Tokubetsu Juyo swords with signatures, and besides this tachi, he has quite a few less variable smaller hamon based on suguha. Among his blades, this tachi’s yakiba is the same as “Kuronbo kiri”, and the entire hamon is high, there are variations in the midare hamon, and some parts of the hamon go up to the shinogi-ji, there are some togariba, and the hamon shapes are between choji and gunome. As one of the few tachi with a signature, this is an important piece to display the wide variety in Kagehide’s work. This is listed in the “Kozan oshigata” and is an old possession of the Mori family.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Enso-zu Zen circle design) tsuba

Mumei: Hikoza

There were many master goldsmiths in Higo. The goldsmiths who studied their art under Hosokawa Sansai (a tea ceremony master who was Sen Rikyu’s student) trained intensively under their teacher Hirata Hikoza, and the school produced mastersmiths such as Shimizu Jingo and Nishigaki Kanshiro. Both of them had

strong feelings about iron, and were innovators who helped establish the art in iron. Hirata Hikoza used to use other materials besides iron such as yamagane, shinchu (brass), and shakudo. He preferred abstract subjects such as amida-yasuri (a circular pattern of deep file marks going around the surface tsuba) and okina-yasuri (a related type of filed pattern), and he developed his original art work with different materials and motifs. At the first examination, this is a quiet appearing tsuba. The surface of the tsuba is a black lacquered shibuichi decorated with an okina-yasuri pattern. The urushi is very old and well aged and there is a very graceful feeling in the work. The tagane pattern at the nakago ana (nakago opening) is simple but has a deep significance. The entire balance of the tsuba is excellent. Also, the mimi fukurin (metal rim around the tsuba) for tsuba are usually different from Hikoza's unique Odawara fukurin. He uses shibuichi which almost looks like silver, and used a bamboo design, and produced a great balance over the flat space, and the entire tsuba shows Hikoza's personality. This is Hikoza's original masterpiece, with a very quiet silent feeling, but at the same time it has motion and a dynamic feeling. Among the Higo smiths, this tsuba displays Hikoza's original feeling, which is a co-existence of quiet and motion together.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 683

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 683 issue Shijo Kantei To is January 5, 2014. Each person may submit one vote. Submissions should include 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, 2014 will be accepted. If there are swordsmiths with the same name in different schools, please write the school or prefecture, and if the swordsmith's name was used for more than one generation, please indicate a specific generation.

Information:

Type: tachi

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5.5 bu (74.39 cm)

Sori: 9 bu (2.73 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 9 rin (2.7 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 1 rin (1.55 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 3 bu (19.09 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, a slightly narrow width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshi-zori effect with funbari; the tip has sori, but the tachi overall has is wa-zori; and there is a chu-kissaki. The jihada is tight ko-itame. There are dense thick ji-nie, fine chikei, the school's distinctive jihada, and pale bo-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There is a bright nioiguchi, ko-nie, kinsuji, fine sunagashi, and pale muneyaki. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is saki-kurijiri. The yasurime are kiri, and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side, above the hole, the nakago has a three kanji signature on the mune edge, and under the hole, there is a date. Both kanji are written along a straight single line.

A Celebration and Commemoration:

1) 65 years of the NBTHK

2) 35 years of the tatara operation.

3) The first all Japan vote for Kantei To identification

Meeting Date: October 26, 2013 (Saturday)

Place: Keio Plaza Hotel

During this meeting, five swords were displayed for examination, and people could vote only one time. Many people competed in this examination and three people were awarded a prize. The Chii (2nd) and the The Jini (3rd) prizes were awarded for the same tied score, but the Chii prize was awarded for the earliest correct vote. The person with the highest score in the voting become the Teni or first prize winner. The prizewinners received award certificates and a Tosho tsuba by Yoshindo Yoshihara.

Teni: Nakamura Kazuhito (Shizuoka branch)

Chii: Takahashi Muneo (Kawakura Tokenkai)

Jini: Shiina Etsuzo (Tokyo branch)

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mei: Ichi (Yoshioka Ichimonji)

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 2 sun 5 bu

Sori: 7 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume hada, some places have nagarehada, and the hada is fine and visible. There are ji-nie, and utsuri begins from the machi and is a clear midare utsuri.

Hamon: suguha type shallow notare, with gunome, ko-gunome, and small gunome. There are frequent ashi, yo, a tight nioiguchi, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi; there is some ko-nie.

Boshi: on the omote it is shallow notare, with a sharp tip and return the ura is a notare notare, and the tip is komaru, with fine hakikake and a return.

This tachi is slightly over 2 shaku 5 sun 2.5 bu long. It is shinogi zukuri with an ihorimune. There is a slight koshi-zori left and funbari. The tip has sori and there is a small kissaki. From the shape you can imagine this is a mid- to late- Kamakura period tachi. The hamon is not a variable choji hamon, but is a suguha type ko-gunome hamon with ashi, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi. From this you can imagine it to be from the end of the Kamakura period, and a Yoshioka Ichimonji school work. Also, judging from the utsuri which starts from the koshimoto at the machi, this is not suriage, but is an ubu blade. The Yoshioka Ichimonji school signatures, besides the ichi “一” kanji, contain othr kanji. Many smiths used the “助” or “suke” kanji, such as Sukemitsu, Sukeyoshi, Sukeyoshi (with different “yoshi” kanji), and Suketsugu. Also, there are very few Yoshioka Ichimonji school blades which contain the ichi “一” kanji with an individual's name. Their hamon are not large gorgeous choji midare hamon, and many of them are choji midare hamon with prominent small size gunome hamon, suguha type hamon mixed with choji and gunome, or suguha type hamon with ashi and with a gentle appearing hamon, just like this tachi. Unfortunately, in voting, there was no Yoshioka Ichimonji answer. Beside this, a very few people voted for Fukuoka Ichimonji school smiths such as Yoshifusa and Sukesane, and the Katayama Ichimonji smith Norifusa. Sukezane has wide and narrow blades, and two types of shapes, and from the shape the answer is understandable, but we never see this type of hamon. His choji midare hamon are prominent, with a more intense wide nioiguchi, and vertical variations in the hamon. Yoshifusa has a few narrow blades with a suguha type hamon, and from this, that answer is understandable. In Norifusa's midare hamon the entire hamon has saka-ashi, and from this that answer is understandable. But his hamon are more active midare hamon, and have vertical variations, and his jihada are brighter, and this is a difference. Also, people voted for Osafune school smiths, such as Nagamitsu, Sanenaga, Kagemitsu, Chikakage, and Motoshige. Very few people voted for Unrui smiths (who use the “un” kanji) such as Unsho, and Unji. Considering the entire appearance, these answers are understandable for a single first vote.

Explanation by Hiyama

Kantei To No. 2: katana

Mei: Hizen no kuni Tadahiro

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly less than 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-tamehada. There are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, pale bo-utsuri and a bright jihada.

Hamon: ogunom, mixed with gunome, ko-notare, open bottom gunome, small togari, and yahazu. There are frequent ashi, yo, ko-nie, a little yubashiri, tobiyaki, a little bit of kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: there is a slightly wide yakiba; the omote is a notare-komi and there is a round tip; the ura is a slight midare with a round tip; both sides have a slightly long return.

This katana was made around Keicho 18 by the Shodai Tadayoshi, and the model was a work by Osafune Chogi and some people voted for that name. This sword is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a shallow sori and a chu-kissaki. The shape looks a Nambokucho period o-tachi, which is greatly suriage, but this katana has no trace of funbari: rather the habakimoto is wide and stable, and you can imagine that this katana was made originally in this shape. The hamon is a Chogi style, but the important features are: the jihada is tight ko-itame with a bright and refined hada; there is variety in the nioiguchi; and the ko-nie dots are even and very well formed. This blade shows characteristic main-stream Hizen-to's beautiful work. In voting, the largest vote was for Iyo-no-jo Munetsugu. His jihada are a slightly visible, large sized itamehada with an uneven pattern. Many of his works have prominent chikei, a high yakiba, more square shaped hamon features, and not only ashi, but also yo are prominent. There are frequent hataraki such as kinsuji, sunagashi, tobiyaki, and muneyaki. His boshi are mixed with hakikake and nie-kuzure, and contain strong variations, which are a strong Shoshu Den style, and a dynamic style. Also, for the almost correct answer, Harima Daijo Tadakuni's hamon have more prominent kinsuji and sunagashi and the boshi have hakikake. Beside these almost correct answers, there are Keicho Shinto mastersmith's names, such as smiths from the Mishina school, the Horikawa school and Yasutsugu. However, with these smiths, the jihada are different, and their nioiguchi are worn down. Masatoshi and Kunitoshi's nioiguchi are bright, but their hamon and boshi are different.

Explanation by Ooi

Kantei To No 3: tanto

Mei: Uda Kunifusa

Length: 8 sun 1.5 bu

Sori: slightly uchizori

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jihada: itame mixed with mokume and nagarehada, and jifu type hada. There are frequent chikei and ji-nie, and the entire jihada is visible; there is a dark jihada.

Hamon: narrow suguha type, with a small notare shape; there are ko-gunome, ko-ashi, hotsure at the habuchi, nie, rough nie, and sunagashi.

Boshi: slightly notarekomi; the tip is sharp and there is a slightly long return.

The first impression of this tanto is the distinctive jihada based on a visible itame hada, with thick chikeiin places. Also, the hamon has frequent nie. This is a hirazukuri tanto, which is slightly narrow and is long for the width. There is a mitsumune and it is uchizori. From the shape, many people voted for Kamakura period Soshu Den smiths such as Shintogo Kunimitsu and Norishige. But, if you look at it carefully, it is too thick for a Kamakura period tanto, and there is less hataraki in the jihada and hamon when compared with old work, e.g. observe the nie, the brightness, kinsuji and sunagashi.

This is a Etchu Uda school Kunifusa tanto. The Uda school was active from the Nambocho to Muromachi period, and many of their jihada and hamon are a nie type. They produced many mastersmiths such as Kunifusa, Kunimune, Kunihisa, Kunitsugu, and Tomotsugu, and among these, the work is as good as the old Shoshu Den mastersmiths, just like this tanto. The Uda school jihada are a visible itame hada, and contain the characteristic Northern school work's dark colored jihada, and the hamon have small nie, and uneven nie, and this tanto shows these characteristics very well. The school's boshi are sharp tipped and have a long return, which reminds us of the Samonji school, and this tanto has a sharp tipped boshi. Usually, in Kunifusa's work from the Uda school, many of his jihada are tight and bright and clear. This tanto is a typical Northern country style, and if you look at this as a Muromachi period Uda school work that is acceptable.

Explained by Iida

Kantei To No. 4: katana

Mei: Izumi no kami Fujiwara Kunisada

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 5 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: tight ko-itame. There are thick dense ji-nie, and fine chikei.

Hamon: straight yakidashi at the moto; above this, the hamon is based on choji mixed with gunome, ko-gunome and togari; the entire hamon is a wide midare hamon. There are ashi, yo, wide nioiguchi, frequent ko-nie, yubashiri around the monouchi area, and muneyaki.

Boshi: straight with a komaru and long return.

This is a Shodai Izumi no kami Kunisada, or commonly called a Shin Kunisada katana. The widths at the moto and saki are a little different, there is a short chu-kissaki, and the sori in the bottom is notable. This was made between the Kanei to Shoho periods from the shape. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, with thick dense nie, and a refined jihada. The hamon has a wide nioiguchi which is bright and clear, and there is a yakidashi at the moto. Above the yakidashi, there is a choji based hamon mixed with ko-gunome and gunome, and the entire hamon is wide and with a midare pattern. Also, the area around the monouchi has yubashiri and muneyaki. The boshi is straight with a komaru and return. This is typical of Kunisada's work, and more than half of the people voted for the correct answer. Beside Kunisada, Kotetsu, Okimasa, Kunisada's son Shinkai, and other of the school's smith such as the Shodai Kunisuke received votes. The Kotetsu name seems to be considered based on the long yakidashi and brightness of the jihada and hamon. Definitely, his early period work has a characteristic long yakidashi, but his hamon are one set of small and large gunome hamon which is called Hyotanba, and this is a prominent feature. If this were Okimasa's work, his hamon are two gunome fused together. Both of these smith's hamon are large sized clustered midare hamon, and not small like on this katana. The Shikai answer is not too bad, as there was a teacher and student relationship with Kunisada. This style is seen in Kunisada's work only before he began to sign "Izumi no kami Kunisada" with a 5 kanji signature in his early work. Usually, his hamon are a suguha type shallow notare hamon, and unless you have a strong conviction, you better not vote this way. The Shodai Kunisuke's works are similar, but his yakidashi are different from this, and more gradually, the hamon becomes wider, and his choji are prominent.

Explained by Ishii

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Higo no kami Tachibana Yoshitsugu saku

Kirimeai (cutting test):

Sannoma otoshi hirajiiri

Ushiro ryokuruma otoshi hirajiiri

Mataushirowakige otoshi hirajiiri

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Design: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jihada: ko-itame hada and the hada is visible. There are dense ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: short straight yakidashi, and above this a continuous gunome hamon.

There are ashi, yo, a wide nioiguchi, dense nie, kinsuji, sunagashi, niesuji and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: both omote and ura are midarekomi, there are frequent hakikake, and the tip becomes a kaen (flame).

Horimono: both the omote and ura sides have bo-hi carved through the nakago.

Higo no kami Yoshitugu is supposed to have received the title Higo no kami around the Kanbun period, and today we see in Enpo and Genroku period dates in his mei. If his active period was Kanbun to around Genroku time, this was the same time as Nakasone Okimasa was active which is a little later than the other Edo Hojoji primary mastersmiths' active period. Compared with other Hojoji smiths' bo-sori (smaller sori) Kanbun Shinto shapes, many of his blades have a large sori, and this is supposed to indicate a different period, like this katana. His individual gunome shapes are clear and large unlike the usual Hojoji school examples and somewhat similar to a Kotetsu juzuba shape. Often, Yoshitsugu's midare hamon contain rough nie, prominent kinsuji and sunagashi, imotsuru type niesuji, and this katana shows these features. In voting, besides Yoshitsugu, many people voted for other Hojoji smiths such as Masahiro, Sadakuni, and Okimasa. Usually, Hojoji school blades are different shape from this katana, the hamon are a chu-suguha type with continuous gunome, there are frequent gunome ashi, and many of them are a suguha type small hamon. Okimasa's shapes and juzuba type hamon containing two continuous gunome are similar to this, and that answer is understandable. But many of Okimasa's blades have more hataraki such as yubashiri, and in places hani go up to a rough jihada. When Yoshitugu signed the saidan mei on the nakago, he didn't use kinzogan (gold inlay), so it appears that he himself carved the saidan kiri mei (cutting test). Also, many other Hojoji school smiths used cutting tests by Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa and Kanjuro Hisahide. But this Yoshitsugu blade is very rare with the Hisahide kiri mei. He often used swordsmen other than Yamano family swordsmen to do the tests, such as Aida Danshiro, Takao Jindaiu, and Mori Kosuke. This is an unusual katana example without a cutting test swordman's name.

Explanation by Hinohara

Shijo Kantei To No. 681 (in the October, 2013 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 680 in the October issue is a tachi by Izumo Michinaga Masanori (Oei 30 □ nenki)

This sword has a usual mihaba, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a koshizori, the tip has sori, it is thick for the width, and there is a chu-kissaki. From the shape you can judge this as an early Muromachi period tachi. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume and nagare hada, and the hada is visible. The hamon is a continuous ko-gunome, there is a bright nioiguchi, frequent nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. Also, there is distinctive utsuri which looks like a gunome hamon pattern. This is a characteristic Bizen Yoshii school work. Among the Yoshii school works, Ko-Yoshii work is made by the end of the Nambokucho period, and rest of the work is called Yoshii. Ko-Yoshii hamon have frequent nie, and kinsuji and sunagashi are prominent hataraki. Muromachi period Yoshii hamon are a nioiguchi type. From the date, this supposed to be an early Muromachi period work when the Yoshii school moved to Izumo and became a branch school, and this work has stronger ha-nie than usual Yoshii work. In the hints, "the school he belongs to " means this. There are several stories, according to the "Kokon Meizukushi" that the Izumo Michinaga school started around the Oei period at Unjo. The " Koto Meizukushi Daizen" says that around the Showa period, Bizen Naganori moved to Izumo, and become a monk and was named Michinaga. But we never seen the school's work in the Nambokucho period, and Izumo Michinaga's work which we see today is similar to Muromachi period Yoshii school work, so the Yoshii school Michinaga is supposed to have moved to Izumo. Also, from their work, we have never seen a signed sword with "Unshu ju" or "Michinaga" so still, many details about the school are not clear. This tachi is not especially different from Yoshii school work, and if you look at this as a Muromachi period Yoshii work it would be fine. Also, Yoshii school smiths' works are similar to each other, and it is difficult to judge individual names. At this time, Izumo Michinaga smiths's names and Muromachi period Yoshii school smiths' names are treated as correct answers. A few people voted for Nambokucho Ko-Yoshii school smiths such as Kaganori and Sanenori. This is a early Muromachi period work, and similar to Ko-Yoshii and the answer is understandable, but the tachi has sakizori, so please pay attention to the hints.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai.

