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Meito Kansho: Appreciation of Important Swords

Juyo Bijutsuhin

Type: Tachi

Mei: Masatsune

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 7 rin (79.0 cm)

Sori: 8 bu (2.42 cm)

Motohaba: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 4 rin (1.65 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)

Kissaki length: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 4 bu 7 rin (19.6 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. The tachi is slightly narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are not very different. There is a large koshi-zori, the upper half has some uchi-zori, and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame, there is some mokume-hada, and the entire jihada is well forged and tight. There are ji-nie, fine chikei and pale utsuri. The hamon is based on a ko-midare pattern, and around the monouchi the hamon is a suguha style. There are frequent ashi and yo, even dense ha-nie, and above the center, the hamon becomes a little rough. There are kinsuji, and on the omote side at the top of the hamon there are continuous dot-like yubashiri. The boshi is straight with an o-maru. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is a very shallow kurijiri which is almost kiri. The yasurime are uncertain and there are two mekugi-ana. On the omote side under the second mekugi-ana which is original mekugi-ana, and slightly towards the mune side, there is a two kanji signature made with a thick chisel.

Masatsune is well known as one of the two best Ko-Bizen master smiths along with Tomonari, and both smiths have a relatively large number of signed blades. Compared to Masatsune, Tomonari has more graceful elegant tachi shapes. But

Masatsune has a more refined jihada and precise work. Masatsune's hamon are more technically controlled, and the entire hamon is sophisticated. Tomonari's hamon are not natural appearing and he seems to not have had as much control over his hamon as Masatsune, and with his tachi shapes, his blades tend to have a classic look. Sometimes Tomonari has a long signature such as "Bizen kuni Tomonari", but Masatsune has only two kanji signatures, and this is a difference between them.

Among the Ko-Bizen smiths' work, sometimes blades are wide, the upper half will have sori, and there is a dynamic tachi shape. Blades from smiths such as Masatsune, Sanetsune, Toshitsune, Kanehira, Yoshikane, Kunitsugu, and Yukihide have a similar shape. Of course they have elegantly shaped work too. Tomonari has a dated Katei period (1235-38) tachi classified as Juyo Bunkazai, and there is one theory stating that the Masatsune name could have been used for three or more generations. It is possible that his latest works could have been made after the early Kamakura period.

This tachi is a little narrow, there is a large koshizori, the upper half has uchizori, and there is a small kissaki, and these details reflect the period's characteristic elegant shape. The jihada is one of Masatsune's characteristic points, along with the well forged tight ko-itame hada. There are fine hataraki such as ji-nie and chikei, and a moist appearing refined jihada, and these details show his characteristic points very well. The hamon is based on a controlled narrow ko-midare, and there are a lot of hataraki such as ashi, yo, and kinsuji, and this blade has a feeling of being natural and charming. There are evenly distributed dense ha-nie and ji-nie, and because of this the utsuri is not clear, and this is sometimes seen in Ko-Bizen work.

As people know, on his 恒 (tsune) kanji, on the signature's left radical, there are two styles of writing (see the illustration), and conventionally, the older style signature is associated with a more classic natural style.

This tachi has the latter style signature which is an old style, but this work is a based on a ko-midare hamon's classic style.

From the shape, this reflects late Heian to early Kamakura period characteristics, the entire jihada and hamon are clear, this is better than his usual work, and has a dignified appearance and shows Masatsune's ability.

This tachi's registration is dated Showa 26 (1951), and this is the first Juyo Bijutsuhin classified blade from Wakayama prefecture. .

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

Tosogu Kanshou Juyo Tosogu

Kani-zu (crab design) kozuka

Mei: Jochiku (with kao)

Among the Edo kinko (gold smith) groups, there is a smith known for his extensive and unique work. He is Murakami Jochiku. His teacher is unknown, and it is said he may have been an armor zogan (inlay) smith. He used to live in Shiba in Edo.

Many of his works are mixed with skillful large size takabori (engraving) and suemon-zogan, and he used all kinds of materials (besides metals), many colored metals, and his various materials complemented each other well. Jochiku established his own individualistic and original style of work.

This work uses many colored metals, and shows a delicate beautiful feeling. He used fine silver hira-zogan (high relief inlay) for waves, and above this, he sprinkled nanako to express an active aquatic scene. Besides this, along with shellfish and the seashore's natural features, there is a very real appearing migrant crab which shows very detailed and minute work. Looking at this, we experience the reality of the migrant crab moving on a wave washed beach where we can almost hear the sound of the waves. He used this kind of innovative theme, and his work shows the perfection of his zogan-iroe (inlay colors). This is a master work demonstrating Jochiku's great ability.

However, among many of Jochiku works, there are large themes on a chirimen-ishimoku (crepe-like) ground. But this kozuka has a nanako ground and a gold back side which is a very rare style seen among Jochiku's works. This is a valuable piece which exhibits Jochiku's work very well.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 727

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 727 issue Shijo Kantei To is September 5, 2017. 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 September 5, 2017 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: katana

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 4.5 bu (71.05cm)

Sori: 6.5 bu (1.97cm)

Motohaba: slightly less than 1 sun (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 3 rin (1.9 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Kissaki length 1 sun 1 bu 6 rin (3.5cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 2.5 bu (21.97 cm)

Nakago sori: 6 rin 6 mou (0.2 cm)

This is shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is slightly wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. The blade is thick for the width, has a narrow shinogi-ji, and a relatively large sori with a chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there is an almost muji type jihada, there is a little bit of nagare hada and ji-nie. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are long ashi, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie, a bright and clear hamon, and kinsuji and sunagashi. The horimono on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are o-suji chigai with kesho yasurime and there are two mekugi ana. On the omote side, on the center, there is a long signature which includes the owner's name. On the ura side in a slightly lower location, there is a date.

Shijo Kantei To No. 725 (in the June, 2017 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 725 in the June issue is a tanto by the Seki Kanesada

This is a slightly short tanto with a less than standard length and a standard width, and with uchizori. Compared with Kamakura period work, this has a stronger uchizori, and from this you can judge this as Muromachi period work.

This supposed to be a copy of Rai school work. The characteristic point is a tight ko-itame with whitish utsuri.

The suguha hamon is modeled after the Rai style. But the boshi tip is round and large, and the return is a little different and this shows Seki characteristics.

For Seki Rai utsushimono work, the tanto hamon's hotsure are a bit prominent, and the hint refers to this.

Many of the Seki tanto nakago tips are kurijiri, and many yasurime are higaki. The later period Seki smiths such as Wakasa-no-kami Ujifusa, and Gon-no-Shosho Ujisada's yasurime are katte-sagari and sujichigai, and many of these yasurime are slanted down toward the right side.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Seki smiths such as **Izumi-no-kami** Kanesada (Nosada), Magoroku Kanemoto, and Kanetsune.

This Kanesada is supposed to be a different smith from Nosada. The tanto very well expresses Seki details with Rai utsushimono characteristics.

The Seki smiths' works are in very similar styles, so it is difficult to find clear and distinct differences among them. Because of this, at this time, all Seki smiths names are treated as correct answers.

Beside the correct answer, a few people voted for Sue-Teigai smiths, such as Kanetoshi and Kanesada.

With the Muromachi period tanto shape, the whitish utsuri, and higaki yasurime that answer is understandable. But usually the Sue-Teigai school's suguha hamon has prominent hotsure, nijuba, and kuichigaiba. This is different from the hints, and so you should pay attention to this.

However, the Sue-Teigai tanto jihada is are mixed with masame hada. The Seki nakago higaki yasurime strokes meet at an acute angle. The Sue-Teigai higaki yasurime lines meet at a more gentle or less acute angle and this is a characteristic point.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

NOTICE: The Shijo Kanteito mailing adress

Because the The Token Museum is moving, the mailing address will change. From the September issue (No.728), Shijo Kanteito cards should be sent to the new building in Sumida-ku, Tokyo.