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Juyo Bunkazai

Type: Tachi

Mei: Sanemori tsukuru

Owner: Kagawa prefectural Museum

Takamatsu Matsudaira family historical heirloom

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 3 bu (76.7 cm)

Sori: 6 bu 1 rin (1.85 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 4 rin (1.65 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Kissaki length: 8 bu 6 rin (2.6 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 6 rin (18.35 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is slightly narrow, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. It is slightly thick for the width. There is a large koshi-zori with funbari at the moto, the upper half has a little uchi-zori, and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is itame mixed with mokume, the entire jigane is well forged, and in some places the hada is visible. There are ji-nie and chikei, and on the upper half, towards the shinogi, there are some jifu type utsuri. The hamon is ko-midare with ko-choji mixed with choji, ko-gunome, square gunome, and togariba. The variations in the hamon, especially on the ura side, are prominent. There are ashi and yo, a nioiguchi, uneven rough nie, some kinsuji and sunagashi, small tobiyaki and yubashiri. The boshi has a wide yakiba, and the entire boshi is formed in yaki-kuzure (crumbled nie) with hakikake and a long return. The nakago is ubu with a kiji-mata shape, and the nakago tip is a shallow kurijiri. The yasurime are

uncertain, and there are three mekugi-ana. On the omote side under the first mekugi-ana toward the mune side there is a small sized three kanji signature.

From historical times, in many old sword books, Hoki-kuni Ohara Sanemori is known as the son of Yasutsuna and a representative Ko-Hoki school smith. Many of his signatures are long compared with other Ko-Hoki smiths always had two kanji signatures. Some examples are: Hoki kuni Ohara Sanemori tsukuru; Ohara Sanemori and Sanemori tsukuru. His kanji styles are not always the same, and there are some variations. Very rarely there is a signature which includes the kanji “katsu” or “勝”. This means to pray for something, but there is a theory that it was read as “Suguri” which was probably some immigrant family’s last name. Of course we have no confirmation for these theories.

The style of this tachi is a Ko-Hoki style, but the jihada is dark when compared with Ko-Bizen work. The jihada has a visible large pattern, and the hada pattern in the hamon is visible. The moto is yaki-otoshi, the hamon is based on ko-midare with dense nie mixed with clear ko-gunome and ko-notare. There are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, some hataraki variations, a worn down nioiguchi, and the overall character is that of a classic country style. Conventionally compared with Yasutsuna’s hamon, Sanemori’s midare hamon are smaller and this is supposed to be his characteristic point. Also, there are not many examples of Sanemori’s work, but the 51st sword classified as Juyo token was a ko-tachi. There is also another Sanemori tachi with no classification (belonging to the Hitachi kuni Tsuchiura Clan’s Tsuchiya family) which has a suken horimono, and a short koshi-hi or bonji and this is noteworthy.

The ubu kijimata nakago is a valuable reference material. The widths at the moto and saki are different, the tip is slightly uchizori, and there is a small kissaki. This shape is a reflection of the period, and is an elegant tachi shape. The jihada is well forged with a small pattern itame hada. The hamon has prominent variations or activity, especially on the ura side in some places, and we could say it is a gorgeous hamon, which is different from the usual Ko-Hoki hamon. Also, the long return over the boshi is unusual for the period and this is an important characteristic point. From just looking at the hamon, this could possibly be viewed as Ichimonji work. Dr. Honma Kunzan commented on the tachi: “Yasutsuna does not have flashy or flamboyant work, but somehow this might be related to Yasutsuna’s character”. This is rather similar to the Kuroda family’s Yasuie sword (classified as Kokuho and owned by a Kyoto museum; Yasuie is supposed to be either the son of Yasutsuna or a student). The boshi is yaki-kuzure with strong hakikake, there are kinsuji and sunagashi, and these features show a characteristic rustic beauty, and this is a characteristic of Ohara Sanemori’s work.

This Sanemori was an ancestral tachi of Sanuki-kuni’s Takamatsu Clan’s Matsudaira family in the Edo period, and one of family’s “three treasured swords”. The other two are a two kanji Kunitoshi and a mumei wakizashi called Kiriha Sadamune. According to legend, this tachi was carried in the late half of the Heian period by the military commander Shinra Saburo Yoshimitsu at the “Gosan-nen no

eki" battle (a battle in the latter half of the Heian period in the Tohoku area). Later, in the Sengoku period it was owned by Takeda Shingen and Katsuyori. After the Takeda family collapsed, Ieyasu owned it. It later belonged to Ieyasu's 5th son Takeda Nobuyoshi, who revived and led the Takeda family. Because Nobuyoshi passed away at an early age, the tachi was passed to Nobuyoshi's Mito lord who was Ieyasu's eleventh son Tokugawa Yorifusa. Yorifusa became the first Mito Tokugawa family lord. After Yorifusa, the Mito family lord was the famous Mitsukuni (also known as Mito Komon). Mitsukuni had an older brother Yorishige who became the first lord of the Takamatsu Matsudaira family. Naturally, the older brother Yorishige was supposed to succeed as the leader of the Mito family. According to one theory, when Yorishige was born, his father Yorifusa's two older brothers (the Owari Clan's founder Yoshinao, and the Kii Clan founder Yorinori) did not have any sons, and youngest brother Yorifusa was conscious of this and hid Yorishige's birth.

Mitsukuni studied Jugaku (Confucianism) which was popular and respected in the period as a practical study. Possibly Mitsukuni hesitated to lead the Mito family since he was a younger brother, and he gave this tachi to his older brother Yorishige. In addition, Mitsukuni had his older brother's son Tsunaeda named as his successor to lead the Mito family. Mitsukuni named his own son Yoritsune as the leader of the Takamatsu Clan. Ever since this time, the Takamatsu Clan was an important and friendly ally to the Mito family, right up to the end of the Edo period.

This tachi also has another interesting story. During the Edo Shogun Tsunayoshi's reign, Tsunayoshi's soba-yonin (executive secretary) Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu wielded great authority. He insisted on borrowing this tachi because the Yanagisawa family was related to the Takeda family. Subsequently, the Mito family often asked Yanagisawa to return the tachi, but it was never returned. In the next generation's Yanagisawa Yoshisato's time, following a Mito Tokugawa family order, the tachi was returned. But the tachi's habaki had the Yanagisawa family Hanabishi crest which was different from the original habaki. Today the habaki from the Yanagisawa family is still on the tachi (see below picture). This tachi is involved in historical anecdotes and legends, and for sword studies, we can say that this is one of the more valuable materials available.

This tachi is also accompanied by a Honnami Kochu paper which listed a price of 130 mai in Genroku 17 (1704). This tachi is a masterpiece and suitable to be included as one of the three treasured swords of the Takamatsu Matsudaira family.

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

No.728 Tosogu Kanshou Juyo Tosogu

**Shishi-zu (lion design) mitokoromono kozuka and Kogai
Mei: Tobaru Yoshihisa (with kao)
Menuki warikibata-mei: Yoshihisa**

Among the mid-Edo kinko (gold smith) workers, besides the iebori (those who worked for the shogunate) Goto family, many machibori (town craftsmen) and local gold smiths appeared and also developed excellent skills.

The Goto family maintained a top position among gold smiths with a high social status derived from being exclusive Shogunate gold smiths. Besides the original family and branch families, they had many offshoot schools such as Tanaka, Nomura, and Morimura.

The Tobaru school's Tomihisa was a student of the original family's 13th generation Mitsutaka and is supposed to have lived in Goshigaya (in Edo). He is supposed to have worked at shitabori (base or foundation carving) for the main Goto family. His works show a consistent Goto style workmanship.

This mitokoromono (kogai, kozuka, and menuki) was made by Tomihisa's son Yoshihisa. Some of his works are dated in the Bunsei and Tempo eras (1818-43) and this seems to be his active period. This mitokoromo's workmanship for the Shishi in the kozuka and kogai are Goto style work. The rich nikudori, high and low variations or depth in the carving, and the dynamic feeling show no inferiority when compared with mainstream Goto work. Even though he was so skillful, we do not see much of his work today. From this, it seems that he worked for the Goto's family executing shitabori (foundation engraving or carving) and daisaku (unattributed) work, the same as his father Tomihisa did. Possibly some of the mainline Goto family work was partially made and produced by excellent students like Yoshihisa.

Explanation by Iida Toshihisa

Shijo Kantei To No. 728

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 728 issue Shijo Kantei To is October 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 October 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 4 sun 4 bu (73.93cm)

Sori: 7 bu (2.12cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)

sakihaba: 6 bu 8 rin (2.05 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 2 rin (3.4 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 7 bu 7 rin (20.5 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a relatively large sori, funbari at the moto, and a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are thick dense jinie and fine chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The entire hamon width is relatively wide, and some parts of the hamon go up to the shinogi-ji. There are tobiyaki in some places, a prominent choji-hamon, ashi and yo, a dense nioiguchi, dense nie, bright and clear, kinsuji, fine sunagashi, and the entire katana has muneyaki. The nakago is ubu, the tip becomes narrow, and the nakago tip is relatively deep ha-agari kurijiri. The yasurime are o-suji chigai and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote side, towards the mune side, there is a long signature and the ura has a date.

Shijo Kantei To No. 726 (in the July, 2017 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 726 in the July issue is a tanto by the Shodai Yasutsugu

This is a Yasutsugu utsushimono of the Kyoho Meibutsu (masterwork) Ebina kokaji, a signed tanto by Munechika. This is the only Ebina utsushimono work recognized today.

At the Osaka castle fell, the Shodai Yasutsugu repaired many burned and damaged Osaka treasure blades by retempering them to make new hamon. At the

same time, he copied or made utsushimono of these damaged blades and of Osaka treasure blades which had escaped the fire.

The Ebina kokaji blade was a Muromachi Shogun's treasure, and Yasutsugu retempered these burned blades after the fall of Osaka castle. Later these blades went to the Owari Tokugawa family, and today the Tokugawa museum in Nagoya owns them.

Today, the Ebina kokaji tanto length is 9 sun 8 bu, and this is the same as in the "Honnami Kotoku Katana e-zu (oshigata)" Ebina oshigata. Yasutsugu's copy or utsushimono is same length.

The omote side is hira-zukuri and the ura side is kiriha-zukuri, with a slight sori, and this reminds us of a short uchigatana shape. On the omote side there are wide katana-hi carved through the nakago, and inside the hi there is a suken relief carving. The nakago tip is kurijiri, there are four mekugi-ana, and these details are copied exactly from the original. But on the ura side horimono, the original has three bonji while the copy has a bonji, kuwagata and rendai, and this shows us something about the smith's personality.

Actually, I did not examine this in hand, but according to many sword book oshigata and memos, the original tanto has a shallow notare style saiha (retempered) blade. The utsushimono tanto has a shallow notare style hamon mixed with ko-gunome.

Since he made utsushimono, Yasutsugu was good at making characteristic notare style hamon mixed with gunome, a sanpin style sharp tip, and a long return over the boshi, and with either a kengyo or iriyama-gata nakago, so his usual characteristic points are not seen in this type of work.

But Yasutsugu's characteristics are seen in the itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and entirely visible hada. There are frequent chikei, areas with different colored jifu type iron, and the jihada is a little dark. There are frequent nie, and in some places the hamon is rough.

In voting, people recognized this as copy of some blade, and the majority of people voted for the Shodai Yasutsugu.

A few people voted for the Nidai Yasutsugu. Usually the Nidai's work is very similar to the Shodai's, and he made all types of utsushimono, and so we treated the Nidai as a correct answer.

But, as we mentioned in the hints, today an Ebina kokaji copy is seen only in the work of the Shodai Yasutsugu, so people should note this important detail.

As an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Higo Daijo Sadakuni.

He is an Echizen Shinto smith who made good suguha style hamon, and made skillful horimono, so from this background, his name is understandable, but we have never seen Ebina utsushi work from him.

Beside the correct answer and almost correct answer, some people voted for Nanki Shigekuni. This tanto has characteristic points such as a Keicho Shinto period shape, a notare style hamon, a type of prominent horimono, the nakago tip is kurijiri, and the yasurime are kotte sagari. In many of Nanki Shigekuni's hira-zukuri wakizashi the upper half has a prominent large sori, either Yamato-den or

Shoshu-den styles, the jihada is itame mixed with masame, the boshi has frequent hakikake, the nakago tip is a shallow kurijiri, and the jihada color is not very dark.

Some sword books say that Nanki has many types of horimono. But today many of his horimono that we see were made right after he moved to Kishu in Genna 7 to 8 (1621-22). This comment also focuses on four wakizashi with exceptionally long signatures, and one is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhihin, two are Tokubetsu Juyo, and one is Juyo Token. Other than on these, we do not see many of his works with horimono.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai