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**MEITO KANSHO: EXAMINATION OF IMPORTANT
SWORDS**

Juyo Bunkazai

Type: Tachi

Mei: Chikakane

Owner: Hayashibara Museum

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 3 bu 1 rin (76.7 cm)

Sori: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 6 rin (1.7 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 2 rin (0.35 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 5 bu 9 rin (23.0 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 different. The tachi is slightly thick for its width. There is a large koshi-zori with funbari and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is ko-itame mixed with itame and mokume, and the jihada is barely visible. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, and utsuri. The hamon is a wide suguha, At the koshimoto, it is mixed with ko-gunome with vertical undulations. There is a dense nioiguchi. Above the koshimoto there is a shallow and small notare with a tight nioiguchi. There are ashi and yo, mainly at the bottom half of the tachi, and the entire hamon is nioi-deki (based on nioi). The boshi is straight and almost yakizume, and the entire boshi is yaki-kuzure (composed of crumbled nie) with hakikake, and a very small return. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is ha-agari kuri-jiri. The yasurime are katte-sagari and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side, high and towards the mune edge there is a small two kanji signature.

Usually, Ko-Bizen hamon are primarily based on a ko-midare hamon with a low or narrow hamon, and have a natural looking appearance. The last part of the Ko-Bizen period is supposed to be during the early half of the Kamakura period. However, we sometimes see Ko-Bizen style work from the smith Tsunemitsu, and dated in Shonan 3 (1301). Naturally, as the period progresses or changes, more or new variations in styles and workmanship appear.

According to the historical sword book "Meikan", there are four Ko-Bizen Chikakane smiths who worked in the Genryaku(1184-85), Hoji(1247-49), Bun-o (1260- 61) and approximately the Sho-o (1288-93) periods.

This tachi's ko-itame hada is a refined jihada, and shows a pleasing appearance in the steel. The entire suguha hamon is wide with a tight nioiguchi, and different from the usual Ko-Bizen hamon based on a ko-midare hamon. But Masatsune has an example showing a sophisticated wide suguha hamon which reaches the center of the ji, and this tachi could also be an example of that style. Considering the period, in some places, we see jifu utsuri extending into the shinogi ji, but from the Sho-o period this is unexpected. Today, Chikakane has only two signed blades, this tachi and the 14th Tokubetsu Juyo Token blade. The Tokubetsu Juyo blade's hamon is based on choji midare, and is a gorgeous hamon for Ko-Bizen work. This tachi's hamon has absolutely no nie, but has a sophisticated nioiguchi. Also the kaisho kanji mei near the mune edge side is a well made and neat small signature. From these details, it is reasonable to think that this is a Hoji or Bun-o period (1243-1260) "sue (late) Ko-Bizen" work. From the hamon style and tight nioiguchi, this could be an early example of the style used on an Osafune Sanenaga kotachi which was the 8th Tokubetsu Juyo Token, and so it is very interesting.

This was the Kaga Omaeda (the mainline Maeda) family's tachi during the Edo period. According to the "Tokugawa Jikki" (Tokugawa records) for Sir Yutoku-in (the Shogun Yoshimune), the 17th volume for September 13th of Kyoho 8 (1723) states that Matsudaira Kaga-no-kami Yoshitoku received an order to proceed with his inauguration as daimyo, and Yoshimune presented him with this Bizen Kuni Chikakane tachi, a hawk, and a horse. Also, in the newly revised "Kansei Jushu Shoka-fu No 17" , on page 280, it was recorded that Maeda Yoshitoku on September 13th received this Bizen Chikakane tachi. These records confirm Shogun Yoshimune's presentation of the Chikakane tachi, and the time Maeda Yoshitoku succeeded as the Kaga family's 6th lord and left Edo to travel to the family's domain.

In a later period in Meiji 43 (1910) on July 8th, the Meiji emperor visited the Maeda family in Hongo (in Tokyo), and the imperial household minister Iwakura Tomosada suggested that the emperor preferred a sword as a gift. Besides the Shinkan (an emperor's own written documents) classified as Kokuho and Juyo-Bunkazai and some scrolls, the Maeda family prepared 16 famous master work swords including this tachi as well as others such as the Kokuho Odenta Mitsuyo, the Taro saku Kokuho Masamune, the Tomita Go Kokuho, and the Fukushima Kanemitsu Juyo Bunkazai. However, due to circumstances, this tachi could not be

presented to the emperor. From this, we have to conclude that this Maeda family tachi was considered to be first class master work.

Later, the Maeda family had to raise funds for the Maeda family's library, to build a museum, and to establish a public interest foundation, the Ikuseikai. To do this, they sold some swords in their collection in May and July of Taisho 14 (1925), and then later in June of Showa 12 (1937) to raise funds for expanding the foundation. In the book "Modern research on Japanese Swords" this tachi's oshigata is shown and described as a sword which was owned by Duke Maeda, so it is thought that this tachi was sold by the Maeda family in the Showa 12 sale. However, this tachi is not only of historical value, but is also valuable material to study the Ko-Bizen style and to help re-evaluate our ideas of Ko-Bizen work.

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

No.729 Tosogu Kanshou

Nami ashi (reed design) makie koshirae

Kozuka: sui-gatsu zu (water and moon design), Mei: Natsuo

Warikogai: ashi zu (reed design), Mei: Natsuo (kao)

Menuki: Sawa-gani zu (crab design) Warikibata-mei: Natsuo

Sayanuri (urushi lacquerwork): Hori mei: Zeshin

This is an artistic koshirae made by two master craftsmen in collaboration: the urushi lacquer expert Zeshin, and the engraving expert Natsuo. The koshirae has an elegant shape, with a quiet glossy black urushi finish highlighted with bronze details, and this produces a feeling of serenity. The bottom half has Zeshin's original seikai-ha design of a large ocean wave just breaking. The makie reeds extend high on the saya, and the sides of the reeds are sprinkled with gold and silver powder which appear to twinkle. Notably, the hilt area around the crab menuki shows a detailed crab's dwelling painted on using lead colored urushi, and produces a feeling that the crab is living in it. This is an amazing work and exhibits the master urushi artist Shibata Zeshin's outstanding ability.

At the same time, Natsuo exhibits his own characteristics. The omote menuki design shows an imposing view of the strong front claw of the parent crab. The ura side menuki shows two juvenile crabs using multicolor color metals with katchi-bori (carving design and composition technique). The kozuka design shows water and the moon. The wari-kogai design shows reeds on a shibuichi ground with inlay. From Natsuo's signature, the fittings are supposed to have been made during the Keio period (1865-67).

The saya shows a waterfront scene with a seikai-ha (breaking wave) design with reeds and some birds, and this kind of sword fitting design was shown in the Ryuga-do (gallery) of Mitsumura Toshio and was one of his favorite themes. The ground is black urushi, with gorgeous makie. Many of the fittings owned by Mitsumura were made by Ichijo school smiths and Bakumatsu O-tsuki school smiths. This koshirae is designed the same way, with an extravagant silver tsunagi. The urushi painting uses colored urushi and red gold, and is beautiful. It is my personal opinion that this is one of Mitsumura's special orders from someone who Mitsumura later patronized. This may represent the beginning of Mitsumura Toshio's great collection.

This will be exhibited in the special exhibition "Tagane no hana (The flowering of carving: the Mitsumura collection)" in the Nezu museum.

Explanation by Kubo Yasuko

For exhibition details, please look at the event guide.

Shijo Kantei To No. 729

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 729 issue Shijo Kantei To is November 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 November 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: tanto

Length: slightly less than 7 sun 2 bu (21.8 cm)

Sori: uchizori

Motohaba: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)

Motokasane: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 4.5 bu (10.5 cm)

Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

This is hirazukuri tanto, and the width and thickness are standard. The tanto is uchizori. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, but the hada is visible, and some places are

mixed with mokune and o-hada (i.e. with a large pattern hada). There are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei and bo-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. The hamon contains ko-gunome, some ko-ashi, yo, a nioiguchi, and frequent ko-nie. Both the jihada and hamon are very bright and clear, and there are fine kinsuji and sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, and the nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote side, under the mekugi ana and on the center, there is a flowing two kanji signature made with a fine chisel.

Shijo Kantei To No. 727 (in the August, 2017 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 727 in the August issue is a katana by Ishido Unju Korekazu dated Kaei 7

The katana is not too wide, but is thick for the width, and there is a narrow shinogi ji. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and almost muji. The hamon has long ashi which extend almost to the hamon's edge, and from these details you can judge this as being a Shinshinto katana.

Unju Korekazu's active period is supposed to be around the latter half of the Tenpo period to the Meiji period. In the late Shinshinto period, mainstream smiths such as Sa Yukihide and Koyama Munetsugu produced wide, thick blades with large kissaki, and typical heavy Shinshinto shapes. In the same period, Korekazu's styles are of standard width or are slightly wide, the kissaki are chu-kissaki or a slightly long chu-kissaki, and many of his swords have a relatively standard shape. We often see blades this wide with a length of 2 shaku 5 sun or 2 shaku 6 sun.

Many of Korekazu's jihada are a tight ko-itame and are almost muji. Some are mixed with a little bit of nagare hada, and some have a visible ko-itame hada with prominent chikei. There are other examples where the entire jihada is nagare or masame hada.

Korekazu's early hamon around the Koka to Kaei periods (1844-1853) are very similar to Chounsai Tsunatoshi's Bizen-Den choji midare hamon with a nioiguchi.

Later, his hamon were based primarily on large round top gunome and gunome-like choji midare hamon. There are long ashi, a dense nioiguchi, a bright and clear hamon, and prominent kinsuji and sunagashi, just like we see on this katana.

There are comments that Korekazu made "Bizen-den choji midare hamon with nie", and we could say that that was his own style, and as you know, this characteristic hamon produced a high level of appreciation for his work.

The katana shows this characteristic point very well. At the same time, inside of the continuous choji notare hamon, there are some places where the notare

hamon is mixed with choji, and there are more vertical hamon variations than usual. This characteristic is supposed to have led Dr. Honma to add “modeled after Shizu” on the katana’s sayagaki.

At this time, a majority of the people voted for the correct answer.

However, the katana has a date of Kaei 7 (also Ansei 1 or 1854) Kinoe Tora 3 gatsu bi. The year before, in July of Kaei 6, Admiral Perry came to Uraga with four steamships for the first time, and in February of Kaei 7, he came again with seven steamships. Around this time, the Tokugawa Bakufu hurriedly built a fort in Shinagawa.

Unji Korekazu’s active period is supposed to have been around the latter half of Tenpo to the Meiji period (1830-1868). In my personal experience, I have never seen a dated Tenpo period work, and there are relatively few works from Koka to around Kaei 7 (Ansei 1), and after Ansei 2, many works suddenly appear.

Of course an increase in demand is supposed to be the main reason his original work found a high level of appreciation. Another reason could be the high level of tension present in Japan at that time after Perry’s visits.

As we mentioned in the previous issue, the Ishido Korekazu family’s old documents were donated to the NBTHK by his grandson Ishido Yoshitaka. From studying these very valuable documents, we are hoping to learn more about the Ishido family.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

