

NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
ISSUE NUMBER 730
November, 2017

Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Classification: Kokuho
Type: Tachi

Omote mei: Hiromine-zan onkennegai nushi Musashi kuni Chichibu gun ju
Ookawara Saemonjo Taji Tokimoto
Oite Harima kuni Shiso gun Mikata-nishi zoushin kore
Ura mei: Bizen kuni Osafune ju Sabyoe Kagemitsu
Sakusha Shinshi Saburo Kagemasa
Karyaku 4 nen (1329) Tsuchinoe Mi 7 gatsu bi
Owner: Saitama Prefecture Museum of History and Culture

Length: 2 shaku 7 sun 9 rin (82.4 cm)
Sori: 8 bu 3 rin (2.5 cm)
Motohaba: 1 sun 2 rin (3.1 cm)
Sakihaba: 6 bu 3 rin (1.9 cm)
Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)
Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)
Kissaki length: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)
Nakago length: 7 sun 6 bu 6 rin (23.2 cm)
Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a wide shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune, and the widths at the moto and saki are a little different. The blade is thick for the width and long. There is a large koshi-zori with funbari and there is a short chu-kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, and in places, the jihada is somewhat visible. There are ji-nie, some fine chikei, pale utsuri, and on the omote side there is some midare utsuri. The hamon is a chu-suguha mixed with some ko-gunome and some ko-notare, and in some places there are hotsure. There are ko-ashi, and the entire hamon has a tight nioiguchi and is almost nioi-deki. The boshi is straight and the omote has yaki-kuzure, and the tip is sharp. On the ura side, the boshi is komaru with a return and the tip has hakikake. The nakago is a ubu and the nakago tip is almost kiri. The yasurime are sujichigai and there is one mekugi-ana. On the omote side there is a

shrine's name where the sword was donated and also the name of the person who ordered and donated the sword. The forging location's kanji are inscribed with a fine chisel. On the ura side there is a long signature and a date.

Kagemitsu is son of Nagamitsu, and the mainstream Osafune school's 3rd generation leader. His active period is Kagen 4 (1306) to Kenbu 3 (1336) which is the period when we see daimei by Mitsunaga which occurred for 30 years. Kagemitsu's work consists primarily of tanto and tachi, but there are a few ken and naginata. His style is well known, and he continued using Nagamitsu's tanto kaku-gunome hamon and established his own original kataochi gunome style hamon. Besides this, he used mainly suguha on tachi, and a suguha style mixed with kaku-gunome. Compared with Nagamitsu, his work is more gentle, less flamboyant, but shows a more refined forging than his father's work.

Kagemasa made this tachi with Kagemitsu, and his signed works are seen from Bunpo 1(1317) to Ryaku-o 3 (1340) over a twenty year span. His hamon are a suguha style and some are mixed with ko-notare, ko-gunome, kaku-gunome, and never seem to be based on Kagemitsu's kataochi gunome style hamon. His active period is almost the same as Kagemitsu's and he used the same "Kage" kanji. There are some other gassaku (jointly or collaboratively made) works just like this tachi. Because of this, he is considered to be a younger brother or student of Kagamitsu. However, there are not many signed blades of his, so it might be reasonable to assume that he was Kagemitsu's assistant.

Besides this tachi, another gassaku tachi made by these two smiths belongs to the emperor and is famous in the sword world. The emperor's tachi was ordered by "Ookawara Nyudo Samiso-ren" and "Saemonjo Taji ason Tokimoto", a father and son who came from one of the seven powerful Musashi warrior groups called "Tanto" (or "Nakamura") who lived in the Kanto area. The Kamakura bakufu sent "Kato Gokenin" (bushi or warriors) to the countryside around Japan. The purpose of the shogun Minamoto Yoritomo was to arrest his brother Yoshitsune, and to maintain his power, he organized offices (Shugo and Joto) all over Japan.

After the Jokyu no ran rebellion in 1221 A.D. led by the retired emperor Gotoba, the Kamakura bakufu confiscated the former emperor Gotoba's followers' lands, and sent in new lords to control those manors. According to a historical book, the Ookawara father and son's ancestor Nakamura Ieyasu ruled the Chichibu area, and subjugated the Banshu lord Haga Shichiro around the Kocho (1261-64) period. After this, Nakamura received the Harima-kuni Shisou-gun Mikata Nishi territory which is listed in the tachi's mei. He was also awarded the territory of Mimasaka-kuni Yuge-no-sho. According to the "Harima Fudo-ki", a list of natural features and borders published in the early Nara period, this area included the Mikata Noshi (today's Hyogo Prefecture Shisou city's Haga machi), and the Harima kuni Anaguri area which was known for iron production. The book tells the story of how the Ookawara father and son, who later ruled the area, invited the two sword smiths Kagemitsu and Kagemasa from Osafune, and asked them to forge a sword, and none of the Kamakura period sword related books describe this kind of detailed history.

Later, besides the emperor's family tachi which is dated 1325, Kagemitsu signed a tanto dated Genkyo 3 which is classified as Kokuho. The tanto's name or meibutsu is "Go Kenshin Kagemitsu", and has a horimono with the kanji "Chichibu Daibosatsu" on the sword. This tanto was donated to the family's original home territory's Chichibu shrine. The tachi shown here is dated Karyaku 4 (1329), but the donor's name is listed as only Tokimoto, indicating that between 1325 and 1329 Tokimoto's father had probably passed away.

These donated swords are supposed to have been given to the shrines during the Sengoku period. This tachi is listed in the "Tokugawa Jiki" (diary) for Genyuin (or Tokugawa Ietsuna, the 4th shogun) in the 25th volume on the page for Kanbun 3 (1663), April 15th. The entry says that "They invited Okudaira Mimasaka-no-kami Tadamasu, Daizen-no-suke Masanori and Tadamasu (the son of Daizen-no-suke Masanori) in the Utsunomiya area to the castle for a ceremonial meeting. Ietsuna presented Mimasaka-no-kami Tadamasu the Kagemasa and Kagemitsu gassaku sword, 30 kimono, and 500 pieces silver. He also presented 2 kimono to Daizen-no-suke Masanori. There is another book, the "Shintei Kansei Jyushu shokafu No.9" which discusses this same event and the presentation of the sword. On page 214 there is an entry about Okudaira Tadamasu for April of Kanbun 3 (1663) mentioning a meeting to celebrate the Genyuin's (Ietsuna's) new era or nengo. Ietsuna visited the Mount Nikko shrine for the first time, and on the 15th, he visited the Utsunomiya castle, and he gave Tadamasu this Kagemitsu and Kagemasa gassaku sword and 500 sheets of white silver. Both of these books list this tachi. From this, we learn that 13 years after receiving the shogun title, the 4th Shogun Ietsuna for the first time visited the Nikko shrine (the tomb of Ieyasu). In April of that year, the Shogun visited the Nikko shrine for a major ceremony commemorating the anniversary of Ieyasu's death. The Utsunomiya lord Okudaira Masatada who hosted the Shogun, received the tachi. Since then tachi has been handed down in the Okudaira family, and is listed in the "Kozan oshigata" Book.

This is a wide tachi which is over 2 shaku 7 sun long, and has a dignified appearance. It is thick, there is no damage, and it is very healthy, and its great state of preservation is amazing. Even though it is so long, the jihada is completely uniform along the entire length exhibiting consistent forging from the moto to the tip, and it exhibits the mainstream Osafune school's high quality of work. The hamon is suguha which is seen in many tachi, and there is a tight unbroken or uninterrupted noiguchi along the entire length. The ura side has a characteristic Sankaku style boshi. This is a masterwork for a tachi, without ostentation, and very suitable for a honou-to (a sword donated to a shrine). It has a very elegant feeling, and exemplifies the Musashi bushi's (warrior) feeling, and at the same time has a great historical value.

Today, the owner of the tachi, the Saitama Prefecture History and Culture Museum has an exhibition of the "Uesugi family's 35 Masterpiece Blades" running until December 10th. At the same time in an annual exhibit, this tachi will be exhibited until next year on January 28, 2018. Please visit and take advantage of this chance to look at this tachi.

Explanation and picture by Ishii Akira.

No.730 Tosogu Kanshou

**Myoga (ginger), hiiragi (holly), daki-gyoyo(mon) sukashi-tuba
Mumei: Owari**

Since historical times, there have been many masterpiece Owari tsuba available which exhibit a fine iron color and which generate a deep appreciation. In particular, sukashi-tsuba are very appealing because of the beauty seen in their iron surfaces. Sukashi tsuba show the samurai's esthetic sense and philosophy and many strong simple tsuba remain today.

Among the Owari sukashi tsuba, this tsuba is a little different from the usual ones. The tsuba's style maintains the usual left and right balance, but the composition seems to break the balance and has a dynamic feeling. The solid forged iron texture has a soft feeling and almost suggests it is melting, but the rim around the edge shows strong iron lines. The tsuba's appearance brings to mind an antique and quiet time.

From the period and the workmanship, the tsuba has a friendly feeling, but at the same time, there is an elegant feeling. For a viewer, the tsuba displays tension and generosity in the same space. We can feel the Owari sukashi tsuba's deep charm.

Among metals, iron is the most familiar in most people's lives, and it is the most useful metal in history. From this history, iron itself can display a considerable charm. This tsuba is just iron, but this iron can show us its charm and ask us to perform some task. Possibly the Owari sukashi tsuba is a unique type of iron work.

Explanation by Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 730

The deadline to submit answers for the No.730 issue Shijo Kantei To is December 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 December 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: tachi

Length: 2 shaku 4 sun 5 bu (74.24 cm)

Sori: slightly over 1 sun (3.1 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 6 rin (2. 9 cm)

Sakihaba: 5 bu 9 rin (1.8 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 3 rin (0.7 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Nakago length: 4 sun 7 bu (14.1 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihori mune, the width is standard, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a large koshizori with funbari, the blade is uchizori towards the tip, and there is a small kissaki. The jihada is a tight ko-itame, there are thick dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and clear jifu utsuri. The hada is visible, and some places show mokune and o-hada (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 has a yakidashi above the machi, frequent ashi, yo, dense nie, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and both the jihada and hamon are bright. The horimomo on the omote and ura are bo-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago is ubu although it is slightly shortened. The nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are katte sagari and there is one mekugi ana. On the omote side, under the mekugi ana on the center, there is a flowing two kanji signature. The tachi's hamon is a bit wide for this school's work.

Shijo Kantei To No. 728 (in the September, 2017 issue)

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To No. 728 in the September issue is a katana by the Shodai Kawachi no kami Kunisuke dated Kanei 19 (1643)

This katana has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a slightly large sori with funbari at the koshimoto, and a short

chu-kissaki. From the shape, you can judge this as work from around the Kanei to the Shoho period.

It is a my personal opinion, but the Shin Kunisuke appears to have more shinogi zukukuri wakizashi than shinogi zukuri katana. Many of his katana shapes are Shoho period Shinto shapes. But he has other wakizashi shapes besides this kind of shape, and many of them are wide with a long kissaki. Others are wide and long hirazukuri wakizashi, and there are yari and naginata with sori.

This katana's length is 2 shaku 4 sun 4 bu which is slightly long, but we often see long katana with a length of around 2 shaku 5 sun.

Shin Kunisuke is a Horikawa Kunihiro school student. But he is actually supposed to have studied under the senior student Kunitoshi, the same as Izumi-no-kami Kunisada. His early work appears similar to Kunitoshi's work, which is wide and has hamon mixed with gunome and togariba, and this style is seen more in wide wakizashi than in katana.

The katana is classified as Juyo Bijutsuhin and is work from the latter half of Kunisuke's career when we see his best work. Around this period, his work shows Kanei to Shoho Shinto shapes, and many of his jihada are a tight ko-itame with dense ji-nie and fine chikei.

Shin Kunisuke and Shin Kunisada's later works have shapes and jihada with similar characteristics. The differences are that Shin Kunisada's hamon have almost the same width as the yakidashi, and above the yakidashi, there are round top small choji and gunome which are close to each other. At the yokote around the top of the hamon there are tobiyaki and muneyaki.

Shin Kunisuke's long yakidashi become wider along the upper part, and there is a wider hamon when compared to Kunisada. We often see a wide hamon go over the shinogi-ji, and long choji are prominent.

In Kunisuke's work, a komaru boshi and wide yakiba are seen more often than in Kunisada's work, and this katana shows the characteristic points which are typical of his work.

Kunisuke's nakago have narrow tips, and a prominent ha-agari kurijiri, and the yasurime are oosuji-chigai.

In voting, a majority of people voted for the Shodai Kunisuke, and for an almost correct answer, some people voted for Shin Kunisada and the Nidai Kunisuke.

Shin Kunisada and Shin Kunisuke worked in very similar styles, and so those answers are understandable. But looking carefully, we can see some differences as I explained above. Also, Shin Kunisada's work often has muneyaki, and this is one of his characteristic points and this is different from the hints, so please pay attention to this type of detail.

A few of the Nidai Kunisuke's works are similar to the Shodai Kunisuke's, but the majority of his works have a Kanbun Shinto shape. In his hamon, several choji cluster to become one group, and a group of gunome can be square, and form fist-like shapes. Often between two fist-like profiles or shapes we can see a group of gunome which appear like a regular or normal choji hamon.

The Nidai's Shodai style work is considered to be a transition period from the Shodai's work, and some have the opinion that these swords could also be the Shodai's late period work.

This is a typical Shodai late period work. So unless you have a special point or observation, it is best to consider looking at this as the Shodai's work.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai