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2019 Gendai Toshoku exhibition

Tachi, Katana, Wakizashi, Naginata, and Yari Division Prince Takamatsu Memorial Prize

Type: Tachi

Mei: Masatada saku
Heisei 31 nen (2019) 2 gatsu bi

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 9 bu 2 rin (78.55 cm)

Sori: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 7 rin (3.25 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 6 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 8 rin (0.55 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 1 bu 1 rin (3.35 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 2 bu 4 rin (21.95 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 not too different. This tachi is thick and long, and there is funbari, a large koshizori, and the tip has sori. There is a short chu-kissaki, and a fukura kareru (a relatively straight fukura) and this is a kamasu-kissaki style. The jigane has a tight ko-itame hada, some areas are mixed with a nagare style hada, and there are ji-nie. The hamon is wide, and is composed of choji midare mixed with ko-gunome and togari. There are frequent ashi, yo, a nioiguchi type hamon, and a bright and clear nioiguchi. The boshi is midare-komi, the tip is sharp, and there is a komaru and return. The horimono on the omote and ura are futasuji-hi carved through the nakago. The nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are a pronounced sujichigai. There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote, under the mekugi-ana, along the center, there is a small sized three kanji signature, and in the same location on the ura there is a date.

The smith, Kitagawa Masatada, comes from Higashi-Omi City in Shiga Prefecture, was born Showa in 54, and is 39 years old. At the Osaka Art University, he studied Photography and intended to become a photographer. While he was a student, he was

intrigued by programs showing Japanese sword making on TV, and became interested in working as a sword smith. In Heisei 14 (2002) right after his graduation, he became student of the smith Miyairi Norihiro. After 6 years of training, in Heisei 20 (2008) he received his sword smith's license. The following year he entered the Shinsaku Meitoten for the first time, and received the excellence award and the Shinjin (newcomer's) award. Since then he has received the excellence award seven times, the diligence award three times, so he has been consistently winning prizes. Also, in Heisei 24 (2012), in Shiga Prefecture's program to encourage young people to pursue traditional techniques and crafts, and he received the "Omi Wakamono Meister" given to young persons who demonstrate notable skills. Furthermore, last year, he received the "Shiga Prefecture Cultural Award" designed to recognize traditional crafts. In view of these awards, it is clear that Masatada's accomplishments have been recognized a number of times.

His choji-midare hamon are always fresh appearing and bright and clear, and we can see that he has a foundation that will allow him to produce excellent work in the future. This year, he has received the top award, the "Prince Takamatsu Memorial Prize".

This tachi's shape closely resembles a mid-Kamakura period tachi shape: it is wide, the difference in the widths at the moto and saki are not too prominent, it has a strong koshizori, the tip has sori, there is a short chu-kissaki, and a well proportioned and strong shape. In addition, the gentle hamon is composed primarily of high, wide choji which is appropriate for the healthy tachi shape. The hamon also includes several differently shaped features, and the moto and saki have variations of a midare hamon. In addition, there are abundant ashi and yo. This is a successful example of work in the magnificent Fukuoka Ichimonji style.

The highest prize this year was won by a sword with a pure choji-midare hamon, and it is a long time since we have seen this, and we anticipate that Masatada's skill will continue to grow and improve. We expect he will play a part in the sword world in the Reiwa period which began this year.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

No.749 Tosogu Kanshou

Juyo tosogu

**Utsuyama sukashi tsuba
Mumei: Owari**

Among the sukashi-tsuba which are made of iron, we have Owari-sukashi, Kanayama-sukashi, Kyo-sukashi, and Akasaka-sukashi tsuba which are well known. Some of these sukashi tsuba designs show diverse ideas, and this is one of them.

In the "Ise-monogatari" (an early Heian period compilation of songs and stories), the ninth story is "Kara-koromo". The main character is a man (supposed to be Ariwara-no-

Narihira, a poet and prince in the royal family) who traveled to the east and passed through Yatsunashi. This story is also famous for an incident: at the end of his trip at the Sumida river, a sailor called him an “Black-headed gull” (a colloquial expression for a man who came from the capital Kyoto) and the prince cried.

The theme of the story derives from a man’s experience as he traveled from Kyoto.

After an endless period of walking, he arrived in Suruga Province at Utsu Mountain (Utsuyama), along a very dark and narrow road overgrown with ivy and maple trees. As a result, the man became lost and met a Buddhist monk. The sukashi tsuba design shows the monk’s bags and thick ivy to express this “Ise monogatari” theme.

This tsuba expresses the “Ise monogatari” story by using iron and showing a small world or environment. Iron is a simple and interesting material, and with excellent work and a classic elegance, it can form a very tasteful work. Since historical times, many Owari-tsuba were simple and sturdy, but at the same time exhibited a sophisticated feeling. This tsuba shows this type of character, and there is a sophisticated feeling and it is an excellent example of an Owari sukashi tsuba.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 749

The deadline to submit answers for the No. 749 Shijo Kantei To is July 5, 2019. 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 July 5, 2019 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: 7 sun 2.5 bu (21.97cm)

Uchi-zori

Motohaba: 6 bu 9 rin (2.1cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Nakago length: 3 sun 7 bu (11.3cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a hirazukuri tanto with an ihorimune. It is short, and has a standard width, but is thick for the width. The blade suddenly becomes thinner near the point. There is a strong uchizori, and the fukura is a fukura kareru style (a relatively straight fukura). The jigane is a tight itame but the hada is visible, and there is a refined hada. There are abundant ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and pale midare-utsuri. The hamon and boshi are

as seen in the picture. In the hamon, there are small ashi, yo, frequent nie, kinsuji, fine sunagashi and a bright nioi-guchi. The horimono on the omote is a goma-bashi. The horimono on the ura is a koshi-hi with marudome. The nakago is ubu, and has a long length for the tanto size. The nakago tip is kurijiri. The yasurime are kate-sagari. There are two mekugi-ana, and on the omote near the original mekugi-ana, there is a long kanji signature located towards the mune side. On the ura, in a slightly lower area, there is a date.

Teirei Kanshou Kai May 2019

Date: May 11 2019 (2nd Saturday of May)

Place: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Oi Takeshi

Kantei To No. 1: tachi

Mei: Sukezane (Bitchu Senoo)

Length: 2 shaku 5 sun 2 bu

Sori: slightly over 1 sun 1 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihori-mune

Jigane: itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and the hada is visible. There are ji-nie, fine chikei, and a chirimen style hada. There is a slightly dark hada, some with jifu, and clear jifu-utsuri.

Hamon: wide suguha, with a shallow ko-notare style. The bottom half is mixed with ko-gunome and square shaped gunome. There are ashi, yo, some togariba, and saka-ashi. There is a tight nioiguchi, ko-nie, and inside of the hamon there are string-like shaped long yaki (hardened steel areas) along the hamon, and a worn down nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

Among the Bitchu smiths, there are two different groups, Aoe smiths usually used the tsugu “次” kanji and signed on the ura side, and the Senoo smiths did not use the “次” kanji and signed on the omote side. This tachi is supposed to be from around the Bunei period's Senoo smith Sukezane, and is in good condition.

According to a historical sword reference book, the Senoo founder Noritaka came from Bizen. Some of the school's work shows Bizen characteristics, but their nakago are thicker, the hamon are similar to Aoe work, their yasurime are o-suji-kai, and many of the jiba (jigane and hamon) are not too different from Ko-Aoe and Kamakura period Aoe work. For example, there is an "Senoo" kanji, dated during the Shochu (1324-5) period in Yasumitsu's work. Senoo school smiths did not change their residence, but in later periods, Bizen style influences become weaker in their work, and they seemed to alter their work to Aoe style work.

The tachi style is Ko-Aoe and Aoe smith work. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and overall there is a large sori. The jigane shows a small itame mixed with mokume hada, and there is a fine visible hada. There are dark jifu-utsuri which appear as though they were imprinted into place by being pushed with a finger. There are jifu (sumihada), which appear like namazu-hada, and this is a very characteristic style. The hamon has ko-nie and a worn down nioiguchi, and these are precisely Ko-Aoe characteristic features.

Also, there is a tight nioiguchi and a suguha style hamon mixed with saka-ashi. Along the hamon there are pale suji type yaki (line-like hardened steel areas) which appear like suji-utsuri, and these are characteristics from the latter half of the Kamakura period rather than Ko-Aoe work. In voting, people recognized these typical characteristics, and many people voted for Ko-Aoe work.

(Note: the nakago photo and the oshigata are reduced in size by 91%.)

Kantei To No. 2: wakizashi

Mei: Dewa Daijo Fujiwara Kunimichi

Length: slightly over 1 shaku 2 sun 2 bu

Sori: slightly less than 2 bu

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume; along the hamon side there are strong nagarehada; the hada is slightly visible; there are abundant ji-nie, and chikei.

Hamon: large gunome, notare, and suguha style hamon, and some saka-ashi. There are ashi, a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, some mura (uneven) nie, yubashiri, tobiyaki, frequent nie-suji, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi, with strong hakikake; the omote is a kaen style, and the tip is sharp; the ura tip is a slight notare, and there is a togari type komaru; both sides have a slightly long return.

This hirazukuri wakizashi is slightly wide with sakizori, and from the shape you can judge this as Momoyama period work. But this is different from Tensho-Bunroku period (1573-95) characteristic thin blades in which the mitsumune ridge line is narrow. This blade is thick, and the ridge mitsumune line is wide, and from this, you should judge this as Shinto work from around the Keicho to Genna (1596-1623) periods. Additionally, the characteristic visible hada, with a slightly dry feeling and rough hada could be narrowed down to Horikawa school work.

Dewa-daijo Kunimichi's jigane has a strong nagare hada along the hamon, his hamon are wide, there is a large gorgeous midare hamon, saka-ashi, and there are frequent kinsuji and sunagashi. His boshi are notare, the tip is sharp, and there is a long return, similar to a Sansaku-boshi. Kunimichi has many kinds of horimono and there are many extant swords today.

This wakizashi shows his characteristic points well, and is typical of his work. There is a strong midare hamon, and in his school, he has the most dynamic style, from and from these observations, many people voted for him on the first vote.

In addition, in the nakago yasurime, in the upper part of the nakago, there is a slightly different angle of the yasurime, and this shows early use of kesho yasurime. The nakago tip is narrow and round, and has a very unique shape. Also, his kanji signature is close to the hamon side of the nakago, and these characteristic points are often seen in the school's work.

Kantei To No. 3: katana

Mei: Kashu-ju Kanewaka Tsujimura Matasuke 53 sai (years old) tsukuru kore
Kanbun 4 nen (1664) 8 gatsu kichijitsu

Length: slightly less than 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: slightly over 3 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: slightly tight itame hada; there are abundant ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and a dark colored steel.

Hamon: primarily a hakoba (square) midare hamon mixed with ear shape gunome and ko-notare. There are ashi, some yo, a dense nioiguchi, frequent nie, and some areas are rough appearing. There are some uneven nie, hotsure, frequent kinsuji and sunagashi, and a bright and clear nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight with a komaru.

This is a Matasuke katana. Matasuke was the Shodai Kanewaka's (Jinroku) third son and succeeded as the Shinto Kanewaka's second generation. In the Kanbun (1660-1672) period, there was some daimei work which was followed by the third generation Shiro-uemon, and this katana's signature seems to be that of Shiro-uemon.

This katana has a standard width, and the difference in widths at the moto and saki is prominent. There is a shallow sori, and a slightly short chu-kissaki, and this is a Kanbun Shinto period characteristic shape.

The jigane on the shinogi-ji shows a masame hada, and the flat area is a tight itame hada. There are abundant ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, a dark color ji, but there is no visible and whitish hada, so it is not a Koto period work from the North with an unclear hada. It appears to be more like a Shinto work with a characteristic clear jjitetsu. The hamon is a Kanewaka school characteristic hakoba-midare hamon, and this really suggests that it is work by a Kanewaka school smith.

This is different from later Kanewaka work with a simple hakoba-midare hamon, or an exaggerated large midare hamon. The whole hamon is a gentle gyo (flowing) style midare, with wide and narrow nioiguchi in different areas, and the nie are not simple, but show more variations. The hataraki inside of the hamon and at the edge of the hamon are rich and just right, from these details, some people looked at this as Shodai work, and this is a reasonable judgement.

However, if it were the Shodai's work, with either a wide shape or a long kissaki and Keicho-Shinto shape, or his later work, with a standard width, there would be a prominent sori with funbari, and a Kanbun Shinto shape. Also, we wish to note that the straight boshi with a komaru and return are seen more often in later generation work.

Kantei To No. 4: tanto

Mei: Rai Kunimitsu

Length: 9 sun 2.5 bu

Sori: none

Style: hirazukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: tight ko-itame, and some areas have a visible itame hada. There are abundant dense ji-nie, frequent fine chikei, and pale nie-utsuri.

Hamon: ko-notare mixed with gunome; there are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, frequent kinsuji, sunagashi, nie suji, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: slight midarekomi, fine hakikake, the tip is komaru and there is a return.

Horimono: on the omote and ura there are katana-hi carved through the nakago.

This tanto is a little long and wide, but is also a little thin, and from this, some people judged this as an Enbun-Joji shape. However, there is no sori, so we wish to look at this as a late Kamakura period work.

The jigane is a tight ko-itame, and there are abundant dense ji-nie. There is beautiful forging work, but some areas show a weak visible hada, which is characteristically called Rai-hada. The hamon is notare mixed with gunome, there are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, abundant ko-nie, a bright but gentle appearing hamon, and good hataraki such as kinsuji, nie-suji and sunagashi. The boshi is a small midarekomi, with a komaru and return. With its elegant gentle midare hamon, this seems to be a characteristic Rai Kunimitsu work.

For an almost correct answer, there were not just a few votes for Rai Kunitsugu. However, if it were Kunitsugu's work, when compared with Kunimitsu, sometimes Kunitsugu's jigane have a strong visible hada; the hamon is wide, and in the jiba (jitetsu and hamon) there are prominent nie and chikei; there are more hataraki inside of the hamon, and many of them have a strong Soshu-den characteristic influence.

Also, possibly from the impression made by the slightly short shape, some people voted for Awataguchi Kuniyoshi. But Kuniyoshi does not have this kind of midare hamon, and many of his hamon are suguha with long niju-ba. His jitetsu would be tight and be a more refined ko-itame hada.

Kantei To No. 5: katana

Mei: Hizen kuni Kawachi Daijo Fujiwara Masahiro

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9 bu

Sori: 5.5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: ko-itame hada, and the hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie, and some jifu; the steel has a slightly dark color.

Hamon: chu-suguha with some ko-gunome. There are ashi and a dense nioiguchi.

Some areas show a belt-like nioiguchi. There are ko-nie, some rough appearing hotsure, small yubashiri, long kinsuji around the koshimoto, and a bright nioiguchi.

Boshi: straight, the tip is komaru, and there is a long return.

This katana is a little wide, and the difference in the widths at the moto and the saki is not prominent. The blade has an average thickness, a long chu-kissaki, and a moderately large sori. In the Shinto period, we generally do not see this kind of shape, and this kind of katana shape has Hizen-to characteristic points, and this would help to narrow down possibilities for the maker's name.

Usually, a Hizen-to hamon has a characteristic clear belt-like nioiguchi. However, we can also see yubashiri, a slightly rough hamon edge, prominent long kinsuji. From these considerations, some people voted for Go Yoshihiro and there were mentions of Yasuyo and Shinkai. Both smiths' hamon have more strong nie, and Yasuyo's shape would have a high shinogi and prominent ha-niku. Shinkai's shape would be have Kanbun-shinto characteristic widths at the moto and saki and the sori would be shallow.

Also, the hamon is suguha mixed with ko-gunome, but is different from the common gunome hamon which is formed or defined by falling or descending ashi. The suguha's thick nioiguchi incorporates gunome shapes, the mune side of the nioiguchi is straight, and only the hamon side of the nioiguchi shows a gunome shape, and this is one of the school's characteristic points. In addition, some shin-gane is visible, and this detail is also identified with Hizen-to.

Masahiro's suguha work is rare, and it seems to be difficult to judge this kind of work. But the hada is visible and dark, the suguha hamon has good form and variation, and observing these characteristics carefully, some people voted for Masahiro in the first vote.

Shijo Kantei To No. 747 in the April, 2019 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a katana by Musashi Daijo Korekazu.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Korekazu. For an almost correct answer, a few people voted for Koretsugu and Moritsugu.

Many of Koretsugu's blades have a shallow sori, and a typical Kanbun-shinto shape, but this katana has a relatively large sori.

The Korekazu jigane is itame hada and there is a strong nagare hada which approaches a masame hada style, and there are midare utsuri.

Korekazu is one of the Edo Ishido school's representative smiths. The same school's smiths, Dewa no kami Mitsuhiro and Tsushima no kami Tsunemitsu have good hamon which have prominent high and low variations and beautiful choji midare. Korekazu's choji hamon overall have a low width and are a smaller size, and have mainly saka-ashi, and this katana's hamon is a beautiful example of his work.

The Edo Ishido school's boshi are sometimes midarekomi with togari, just like Tsunemitsu. But the majority of the boshi have a gentle look, for example straight with a komaru tip, a shallow notarekomi with a small tip and komaru, and a small midarekomi with small tip and komaru.

As I explained above, the shape has a large sori for Korekazu's work, the hamon is more gorgeous, the jitetsu is overall a masame type, and from these details the Koretsugu and Moritsugu judgements are understandable.

But their hamon are mixed with gunome which are often described as being "just like a squid's head", where the center or middle is a little swelled up, and the end tip is narrow and sharp, and there are saka-ashi of a type which is unique to their saka-choji hamon. Sometimes there is a wide hamon which reaches the shinogi. Generally, their boshi are midarekomi and have a strong return.

Now, changing the subject, I would like to talk a little bit about ji-nie.

In sword commentaries, we often see the description "tight itame hada with ji-nie", or a "tight ko-itame hada with abundant dense ji-nie and frequent fine chikei". I could say it would not be overstating the case that we see these comments in most sword descriptions.

However, for inexperienced people, it seems to be difficult to actually recognize ji-nie on sight.

There are all kinds of hataraki which can appear on the ji, such as chikei, jifu, and utsuri. These things can be difficult to recognize in an article, but if some experts can show you these things with good lighting, it will then not be difficult to recognize them by eye.

If the ji-nie are relatively large, they can be seen on the surface of a ji in good polish by using a fluorescent light in the ceiling. If you look at the sword's surface from above, you can see ji-nie. As in the picture, if you rotate a sword from the hamon edge to the mune edge very slowly, on the surface of the ji, the ji-nie will appear to be twinkling.

Also, when looking at nie-utsuri, abundant ji-nie clusters or groups appear to look like utsuri, particularly in the case of nie utsuri. You can place a sword in front of an incandescent light bulb. As explained above for ji-nie, rotate the blade very slowly, and the utsuri will become visible. Sometimes you will also see twinkling ji-nie.

In many kansho-kai, people are not permitted to use magnifiers or lenses, and in this case you have to follow instructions. If you have permission look at a sword with a lens or magnifier, when looking at the flat part of the ji, you can sometimes recognize ji-nie particles.

Observing ji-nie can be very difficult if you do not examine swords often. To recognize ji-nie by eye seems to one of the difficult things for beginner to learn in studying swords.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai

