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Meito Kansho: Examination of important swords

Juyo Bijutsuhin: Important Cultural Property

Type: Tachi

Mei: Naritaka

Owner: Kyoto National Museum

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 5 bu (80.3 cm)

Sori: 1 sun 6 rin (3.2 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 4 rin (3.15 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 1 rin (2.15 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 1 rin (0.65 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 3 rin (0.4 cm)

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

Nakago length: 6 sun 8 bu 1 rin (20.65 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu 7 rin (0.5 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is slightly wide and the widths at the moto and saki are slightly different. It is thick and long. There is a large koshizori and funbari, the tip falls down slightly going forward (the sori going towards the tip is more shallow than the sori closer to the nakago), and there is a chu-kissaki. The jigane has itame hada mixed with mokume hada, the entire ji is well forged, and on the ura side some areas have a jifu type hada which is visible. There are ji-nie, chikei, and mainly on the bottom half, there are pale jifu utsuri. The hamon is wide, and there are ko-choji and ko-gunome and a komidare style hamon, but the hamon is a suguha style around the monouchi area. There are ko-ashi, yo, a tight nioiguchi, nioiguchi-like ko-nie, and on the bottom half there are some kinsuji and sunagashi. The boshi is straight and round at the tip, and the tip has hakikake. The nakago is ubu and the tip is a shallow kuri-jiri. The yasurime are suji-kai and there is one mekugi-ana, On the omote, above the mekugi-ana, and slightly towards the mune side, here is a large two kanji signature made with a slightly thick chisel.

According to the "Nihon To Meikan", there were 3 Ko-Bizen Naritaka smiths. One worked before 1183. The next Naritaka worked around the Genryaku era or 1184-85. The third Naritaka worked during the Tempuku era (1233-34). This Naritaka's signed

work consists of less than ten pieces. Among these, there are two Juyo Bunkazai, two Juyo Bijutsuhin, one Tokubetsu Juyo Token, and two Juyo Token or 7 items, and so there are very few works available. The only mei style is a large size two kanji signature. His mei are found in many locations: near the mekugi-ana as well as under the mekugi-ana and above the mekugi-ana, but all of them are along the mune side.

One of his swords classified Juyo Bunkazai is known as the “Nasu-no-Yoichi Munetaka tachi” and the owner was considered to be the best archer in the Eastern part of Japan. In the Genji and Heike war, at the Sanuki-Yashima battle (1185), Nasu is famous for shooting an arrow at a fan on the small Heike boat. Among the seven Naritaka blades, five have an ubu nakago including this Nasu tachi. According to one theory, this means that Naritaka’s work was often acquired by Minamoto Yoritomo who established Kamakura Bakufu or shogunate, and Yoritomo was supposed to have given Naritaka blades to gokenin (vassals of shogun) as rewards. We can imagine that the gokenin families appreciated this very much, and that this could be a reason why they preserved the original ubu nakago. Other rewards presented by Yoritomo, besides the Nasu family tachi, was to Sawara Yoshitsura which is classified as Juyo Token, and presented for Sawara’s leadership at the plan of “Hiyodori-goe no sakatoshi ”in the battle of Ichi-no-tani.

This tachi is not suriage, so there is a large koshizori with funbari at the moto, and the tip falls down slightly going towards the point (i.e., the sori becomes more shallow going towards the point). Along with the elegant shape, it is wide with a chu-kissaki. There is a dynamic feeling, and the one original mekugi-ana preserves the original shape. Also, the jigane’s itame-hada is well forged, especially on the omote side with no visible hada, so we can recognize the smith’s skill at forging. Furthermore, part of the hamon is very wide and is almost half the width of the ji, and this contrasts with the smaller size of the rest of the hamon which has many variations. There are rich hataraki in the gentle hamon such as ashi and yo, and it reminds us of Masatsune’s master works. The nakago is original from when it was made, with almost no additional alterations. The tip has a narrow shape, and the nakago becomes thinner going towards the tip, and this is an important reference material to show us the shape of the nakago at that time.

This is one of the tachi listed in the “Bocho Kokiko” which was commissioned by the Hagi clan. They spent 6 years from Meiwa 6 (1769), listing the family’s treasures after the Mori Motonari era. These were properties of the main families of the clan, the Suou and Nagato families. Among these items this tachi is listed in the “Masuda Etchu no kami Fujiwara Narinaga family treasures” page, and is described as “Sir Yoritomo’s tachi, called the Inubo tachi”. It is listed with detailed records about the tachi’s dimensions, origin, the tachi koshirae’s picture, and the koshirae and the tachi bag. Describing its origin, the entry says it is from “ancient times when the Udaisho (general) Yoritomo presented this tachi to Kudo Saemon-jo Naritaka. Suketsune’s son Yamato-no-kami Suketoki whose childhood name was Inubo-maru. Later Suketoki’s descendant become a retainer in Sekishu (Iwami, Shimane prefecture), and at that time he presented the tachi to the Narinaga family and they have owned it since then.

In other words, from this and other studies, Kudo Suketoki who is son of Kudo Suketsune (a military commander from the end of the Heian to the early Kamakura period who was killed by the Soga brothers) was presented with this tachi by Minamoto Yoritomo. Later, Uchida Munemochi and the Uchida family who were Naritaka’s

successors received this tachi. In the Nambokucho period, the Uchida family's home was moved from Totoumi to Iwami Kuni. Later, around the mid-Muromachi period, they became retainers of the Masuda Gozoku (a powerful and wealthy family), and at that time they presented this tachi to the Masuda. Since then, up to the time the "Bocho Kokiko" was published, this tachi belonged to the Masuda family.

Later, in Showa 55 (1980) it was classified as Kokuho, and the owner's name was listed as the Masuda family. From this, we can see that from medieval times to today, the tachi was respected and cherished as a Matsuda family treasure. It is a masterpiece with an interesting history.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Juyo Tosogu

Karako yugi-zu (image of a Chinese child at play) fuchi and kashira Mei: Omori Teruhide

Omori Teruhide is the nephew of Yokoya Somin's student Terumasa, and he inherited the leadership of the Omori school in its second generation. Displaying an excellent level of skill and exuberant spirit, he established the Omori school's wave design called "Omori nami". The Omori wave's full volume and deep carving technique is remarkable. The school's themes are extensive however, and include subjects such as shishi, animals, and designs of individual people.

As I mentioned, Teruhide established the "Omori nami" technique, and produced many master works. Also, on a shakudo or shibuichi nananako-ji, using takabori-zogan-iroe, his basic technique, he produced many master works. Among these, this is an excellent example.

The design is based on the Maruyama school's "Karako yugi zu" themes (a child at play). The Maruyama school is known for its realistic style when painting, and this is a famous design or fusuma-e (paintings on sliding paper covered doors) at Kennin-ji (Kennin Temple) in Kyoto. Notably, by using a bright scarlet copper effectively and extensive use zogan-iroe (color inlay), we sense motion and have the feeling that the karako (child) at play appears to be having fun. Due to a good balance of space and an excellent carving technique, we seem to feel that we can hear the cheerful child's voice. This is an excellent example of this style of work.

Teruhide produced delicate and bold feelings in many master works, not only with the wave or "Omori nami" theme. He used zogan-iroe with a precise composition, and with excellent skill for many themes. This work reminds us of his extraordinary skill.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 761

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 760 Shijo Kantei To is July 5, 2020. 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, 2020 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 7 bu (71.81 cm)

Sori: 4.5 bu (1.36 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 2 bu 2 rin (3.7 cm)

Nakago length: 7 sun 4.5 bu (22.57 cm)

Nakago sori: none

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. This katana has a standard width, and the widths at the moto and saki are different. There is a very shallow sori, and a chu-kissaki. The jigane is a tight ko-itame-hada, and there are ji-nie and chikei. On the shinogi-ji there is a prominent masame hada. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are ashi, yo, a dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, sunagashi and a bright nioiguchi. The nakago is ubu, the tip is kurijiri, and the yasurime are a shallow katte-sagari. There is one mekugi ana. On the omote the first kanji is close to the mekugi-ana, and under it, almost centered on the shinogi line, there is a long kanji signature. The ura has a kin-zogan (gold inlay) setsudan-mei.

Usually this smith's rough ha-nie are prominent.

Shijo Kantei To No. 759 in the April, 2020 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a wakizashi by the Nidai Tadahiro.

In voting, a majority of people voted for the Nidai Tadahiro.

The ji has a tight ko-itame hada, there are abundant, dense ji-nie, fine chikei, and the jiteteu shows Hizen's unique Konuka-hada. The suguha hamon has a very clear belt-

like nioiguchi. The boshi is parallel with the fukura, the point is komaru and there is a return. These characteristics are typical of the nidai's style.

Some people also voted for the Shodai Tadayoshi.

During the time when the Shodai Tadayoshi signed his work Tadahiro, many of his works are just like this. He has a few works where the nakago tip is iriyama-gata, the yasurime are kiri, or kate-agari, and at this time, votes for the Shodai Tadayoshi are treated as a correct answer.

However, the Shodai's kate-sagari yasurime are very rare, and most of them are a shallow kate-sagari. If you consider this, it would be better to look at this as the Nidai's work.

For an almost correct answer, some people voted for the Sandai Tadayoshi.

Among the Nidai Tadayoshi's swords, it has been pointed out that there are signatures by the Nidai, but some signatures are the Sandai Tadayoshi's daimei. Among the Sandai's nakago tips, only during his early work do we see examples of iriyamagata. Later, the nakago jiri or nakago tips become kurijiri, and the yasurime are always kate-sagari. These details are different from what was said in the hints, so it is important to pay close attention to these details.

The Hizen to suguha has a very clear belt-like nioiguchi and is different from Tsuda Echizen no kami Sukehiro's suguha where the inner edge of the hamon's nioiguchi and the area going into the interior of the hamon shows smoky looking nie. In case where there is a rich hiraniku, it is sometimes difficult to see the belt-like suguha nioiguchi. In this case, you put a sword under an incandescent lamp and raise the blade to examine the hamon. As the picture shows, if you then rotate the sword gradually from the edge to mune, and move the blade from left to right to examine the entire hamon. You can examine the width of the nioiguchi in this way, and it will be easier to recognize a belt-like shape.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai