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Meito Kansho: Examination of Important Swords

Tachi, Katana, Wakizashi, and Yari Section
Prince Takamatsu Memorial Prize

Type: Tachi

Mei: Masatada saku
Reiwa 2 nen 2 gatsu hi

Length: 2 shaku 6 sun 1 bu (79.1 cm)
Sori: 1 sun 1 rin (3.05 cm)
Motohaba: 1 sun 9 rin (3.3 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 7 rin (3.25 cm)
Nakago length: 7 sun 3 bu 3 rin (22.2 cm)
Nakago sori: 7 rin (0.2 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is wide and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. It is thick and long with a large koshizori, and funbari. The tip has sori, there is a short chu-kissaki which resembles an inokubi kissaki. The jigane has a tight ko-itame hada and there are ji-nie. The entire hamon is high, and is a choji-midare hamon mixed with ko-gunome, and togari. There are frequent ashi and yo, the hamon is nioi-deki, and on the ura side at the koshimoto there are uneven nie. The entire nioiguchi is bright and clear. The boshi is midarekomi, and on the omote the point is komaru, and on the ura, the point is round, and there is a return. The nakago tip is kurijiri and the yasurime are a deeply filed sujikai. There is one mekugi-ana. On the omote, under the mekugi-ana, and along the center there is a three kanji signature. On the ura, there is a sword making date.

The smith, Kitagawa Masatada was born in Shiga Prefecture's Higashi Omi City. He was born in Showa 54 (1980) and is now 40 years old. He studied photography in school and had intended to become a photographer. While he was in school, he saw a program about making Japanese swords on TV and was intrigued by the forging images. Since then he decided that he wanted to become a sword smith. In Heisei 14,

(2002) as soon as he graduated school, he asked Miyairi Norihiro if he could become his student. After a 6 year apprenticeship, in Heisei 20 (2008) he received his sword smith's license. The following year he exhibited at the Shinsaku Meito Ten for the first time and received an excellence prize and the promising newcomer's award. Since then, he has received one special prize, seven excellence awards, three achievement awards, and has received an award in every Shinsaku Meito ten.

In Heisei 24 (2012), under Shiga Prefecture's special program to encourage young people to learn special skills, he was certified as an "Omi youth master smith" which was recognition given to especially promising craftsmen. Then two years ago, his achievements were evaluated again, and he received the "Shiga Prefecture Cultural Recognition award". Last year he received a "Cultural Award" and a "Distinguished Service Award" from the city, and has received extensive recognition from many organizations.

He specializes in choji midare hamon which are always fresh appearing and bright and clear, and we can recognize that he now has sufficient experience which can enable him to produce master works. At this year's Shinsaku Meito Ten he received the first prize or the "Prince Takamatsu Memorial Award", and this follows his winning the same award last year.

This sword is reminiscent of a mid-Kamakura period tachi which is wide, and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. There is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, the balance is good, and there is an inokubi kissaki along with a strong shape. In addition, the gentle hamon balances the dynamic shape, with its high choji hamon, mixed with other elements. Going from the moto to the saki, the midare hamon also shows variations. There are frequent ashi and yo modeled after Fukuoka Ichimonji work and this entire work exhibits no weak details.

This is now two consecutive years that Masatada has won the top prize, and we are looking forward to seeing his future work. We expect him to continue his successful activities in the Japanese sword world.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira.

Tosogu Kansho

**2020 Gendai Toshoku Exhibit,
Engraving section
Kunzan Award**

**Ten shinku Kosen Jihimu Hanrei (kanji inscription) sukashi tsuba
Mei: Reiwa canoe-ne toshi, Yoshiyuki saku**

This year, in the "Gendai Toshoku Ten Engraving division" the Kunzan Award was inaugurated. This work is by Kawashima Yoshiyuki in Shizuoka prefecture. This is the fifth time he has won the Special prize. Kawashima Yoshiyuki has now moved from being a Heisei period master smith to become a Reiwa period master smith.

This is a master work, and the workmanship exhibited here allows us to call Yoshiyuki a master of sukashi engraving work and clearly demonstrates his excellent skills. His skills certainly improve year by year, and his work is always exceptional, and is amazing for someone his age of 72.

From this work, we can observe his abilities and unlimited love for iron. We can see that iron, although it is only a simple metal, has many possibilities and properties which permit it to be used in creative ways.

The history and geography scholar Mr. Senda Minoru said that a way of recognizing that Japanese civilization is essential is to send a message of politeness and sophistication to the world (from Senda Minoru "The sophistication of Japanese civilization"). This tsuba embodies both values while using the charm of iron.

The tetsu kanji character has two radicals which can be decomposed or separated to read as "the king of gold". Kawashima is "the King of iron tsuba", and will leave his name in sword history.

The "Ten shinku Kosen jihimu Hanrei" kanji originally included one different kanji (the "shin" kanji was originally different). In his speech, Mr. Kawashima Yoshiyuki said he carved the kanji this way due to the fact it was ordered this way.

The kanji reading is: "Ten Kosen o muna-shu surukoto nakare toki ni Hanrei naki-ni-shimo arazu".

This is a poem written on a cherry branch in the Nambokucho period (in the Taiheiki, volume 4). This occurred when the emperor Godaigo was a prisoner, and Kojima Takanori, his loyal retainer, wrote this for him. The meaning of the original Chinese poem is that heaven will never abandon Kosen (the Chinese Shunju period king of Etsu), and in times to come, royal retainers like Hanrei would be there to help him. Hanrei is the royal retainer who helped Kosen defeat Go (his enemy), and later destroy Go.

Explanation Kurotaki Tetsuya

Shijo Kantei To No. 764

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No.764 Shijo Kantei To is October 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 October 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 4sun5bu 5 rin (74.4 cm)

Sori: 4 bu 5 rin (1.4 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 5 rin (3.2 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 5 rin (2.3 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.8 cm)

Sakikasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 4 bu 5 rin (4.4 cm)

Nakago length: slightly less than 7 sun 5 bu (22.35 cm)

Nakago sori: slight

This is a shinogi-zukuri katana with an ihorimune. It is wide and the widths at the moto and saki are not too different. It is thick, there is a shallow sori, a long chu-kissaki, rich hiraniku, and the blade is heavy. The jitetsu is ko-iame hada mixed with nagare-hada, the entire ji is tight, and there are abundant ji-nie and chikei. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture, and the top of the hamon has uneven yubashiri which become nijuba. There are frequent ashi, abundant nie mixed with rough nie, the nioiguchi has wide and tight areas, and is bright and clear. There are wide nie suji and frequent sunagashi. The nakago is ubu, the tip is narrow and is a iriyama-gata style. The yasurime are katte-sagari. There is one mekugi ana. On the omote under the habaki, along the mune side there is a mon, and under it, also along the mune side there is a long kanji signature.

Shijo Kantei To No. 762 in the July, 2020 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Awataguchi Yoshimitsu.

On this tanto, the width and thickness are standard. The size is slightly small, it is uchizori, and from the shape, you can judge this as mid-Kamakura period work.

In voting, the majority of people voted for Yoshimitsu, and for another accepted answer, some people voted for Kuniyoshi. Besides these, a few people voted for Shintogo Kunimitsu.

The Yoshimitsu jigane has some Awataguchi school characteristic nashiji hada. There is also a slightly large pattern itame and mokume hada compared with the nashiji areas, and the hada is visible.

Compared with this, Kuniyoshi has many tight nashiji areas, and we often see uneven nijuba on his hamon.

Shintogo Kunimitsu's work is based on the Awataguchi school style, and theoretically, he emphasizes the jiba's (jihada and hamon) nie, chikei, and kinsuji, and his style is similar to Yoshimitsu's.

In the case of Shintogo Kunimitsu's work, if the jiba has strong nie, frequent chikei, kinsuji, and sunagashi, it is relatively easy to judge differences from Yoshimitsu's work. However, if Shintogo Kunimitsu's work is a calm style, it has many gentle ha-nie, and less chikei and kinsuji. Also, it is similar to Yoshimitsu's nie style, and if Kunimitsu's "old

man's beard" nie are not seen as in this case, it could be difficult to observe differences from Yoshimitsu's work.

With the Shijo Kantei To, particularly if you have to judge by studying oshigata, it can sometimes be confusing and difficult. In the case of this tanto however, there are continuous ko-gunome, and the hamon is a little narrower around the fukura, and these characteristics are supposed to provide a reference. Also, I wrote the hint that there is an "excellent two kanji signature made with a fine chisel" to help you to judge the smith's name.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai