

**NBTHK SWORD JOURNAL
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**2021 GENDAI TOSHOKU TEN
2021 Modern Sword and Sword Associated Craft Exhibition**

Tachi, Katana, Wakizashi, Naginata, and Yari section

Prince Takamatsu Memorial Prize

Type: Tachi

Mei: Masatada saku

Reiwa 3 nen (2021) Shogatsu hi (new year)

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu (71.5 cm)

Sori: 8 bu 1 rin (2.45 cm)

Motohaba: 1 sun 4 rin (3.15 cm)

Sakihaba: 7 bu 1 rin (2.15 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu 5 rin (0.75 cm)

Sakikasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Kissaki length: 9 bu 9 rin (3.0 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 7 bu 7 rin (20.5 cm)

Nakago sori: 8 rin (0.25 cm)

Commentary

This is a shinogi zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. The blade is slightly wide, and the difference in widths at the moto and saki is relatively small. The blade is thick, there is a large koshizori with funbari, even the tip has sori, and there is a short chu-kissaki which resembles an ikubi style kissaki. The jigane has a tight ko-itame hada, and there are ji-nie. The entire hamon is high, and

there is a choji midare hamon mixed with ko-gunome and togari. There are frequent ashi and yo, the hamon is nioideki, and the entire nioiguchi is bright and clear. The boshi is midarekomi, the omote tip is togari, the ura tip is a togari-like komaru, and there is a return. The horimono on both on the omote and the ura are bohi carved through the nakago. The nakago tip is a slightly shallow ha-agari kurijiri and the yasurime are suji-chigai. There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote above the mekugi-ana on the center, there is a large size three kanji signature made with a thick tagane (chisel), and the ura has a date.

The smith, Kitagawa Masatada comes from Higashi-Omi city in Shiga Prefecture, was born in Showa 54, and is 41 years old. He studied photography at the Osaka Art University and wanted to become a photographer. However, when he was in school, he saw a program showing Japanese sword forging and he became fascinated by the art from that time. Since that time, his aspiration was to become a sword smith. In Heisei 14 (2002), as soon as he graduated from the university, he went to the smith Miyairi Norihiro and asked if he could become his student.

After 6 years of training, Masatada received his sword smith's license, and the following year, for the first time he entered a sword in the Shinsaku Meito Ten exhibit, and received an excellence award and a promising newcomer's award. Since then, he has continuously received awards, such as two special awards, seven excellence awards, and three diligence or hard work awards. Also, in Heisei 24 (2012) Shiga Prefecture created a program aimed at young people to encourage them to pursue traditional technology and arts, and Masatada received the "Omi prefecture Promising Youth" award which is given to excellent promising and skilled persons who are active in learning traditional crafts. Masatada later received a "Shiga Prefecture Cultural Encouragement Award". In the last year he received a "Cultural Award" and a "Cultural Service Award" from the city. Appreciation of his skill and work is constantly growing.

Masatada's focus is on choji midare hamon and his hamon are always original, bright and clear, and he has a sufficient foundation to enable him to produce a master work. At this time, he has now received the first prize or "Prince Takamatsu Memorial Award" for three continuous years.

This sword reminds us of a mid-Kamakura period tachi with its wide shape, and with a small difference in the widths at the moto and saki, and the large koshizori. The tip has sori, the blade is well balanced, there is an ikubi-kissaki, and a strong shape.

In addition, there is a gentle feeling in the hamon which complements the dynamic tachi shape. There is a wide hamon mixed with many kinds of shapes, and from the moto to the tip, this is a lively midare hamon. There are variations in the hamon, and there are abundant ashi and yo. This is modeled after Fukuoka Ichimonji work, and it is a gorgeous work without any weak points or elements.

After winning the top award for three continuous years, appreciation of Masatada's work is increasing. At the same time, we are expecting his work to progress and are expecting Masatada to play a continuous part in the world of the of Japanese sword.

Explanation and photo by Ishii Akira

Shijo Kantei To No. 774

The deadline to submit answers for the issue No. 774 Shijo Kantei To is August 5, 2021. 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 August 5, 2021 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 1.5 bu (73.17 cm)

Sori: 8 bu (2.4 cm)

Motohaba: 9 bu 2 rin (2.8 cm)

Sakihaba: 6 bu 6 rin (2.0 cm)

Motokasane: 2 bu (0.6 cm)

Sakikasane: 1 bu 5 rin (0.45 cm)

Kissaki length: 1 sun 3 bu 5 rin (4.1 cm)

Nakago length: 6 sun 6 bu (20.0 cm)

Nakago sori: 1 bu (0.3 cm)

This is a shinogi-zukuri tachi with an ihorimune. It is wide, and there is little difference in the widths at the moto and saki. Although the blade is suriage, there is a large koshizori, the tip has sori, and there is a large kissaki. The jigane has an itame hada mixed with mokume hada, and the entire ji is tight. There are abundant dense nie, frequent chikei, clear midare utsuri and a bright steel color. The hamon and boshi are as seen in the picture. There are ashi and yo, and the entire hamon has saka-ashi. There is a bright nioiguchi, ko-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi. The horimono on the omote and the ura are bo-hi finished with marudome on the bottom of the hi. Under the on the omote there are bonji and a kurikara; the ura has bonji and a suken, and part of the horimono extends into the nakago. The nakago is suriage, and the nakago tip was originally kuri-jiri. The yasurime, both new and old, are katte-sagari. There is one mekugi-ana, and on the omote, on the bottom half of the nakago, there is a long kanji signature along the mune side.

Token Teirei Kansho Kai for June, 2021

Date: June 1 2 (the second Saturday of June)

Location: Token Hakubutsukan auditorium

Lecturer: Hinohara Dai

**Kantei To No. 1: Tachi
Tokubetsu Jujo Token**

Kinzogan-mei: Shikkake Norinaga suriage kore
Honnamisaki with kao (Koshitsu)

Length: slightly over 2 shaku 3 sun 3 bu

Sori: slightly over 9 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihori-mune

Jigane: itame mixed with nagare-masame hada; on the omote there is a prominent masame hada, and the hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie, and frequent chikei.

Hamon: suguha based hamon with notare; mixed with continuous gunome; the edge has frequent hotsure and nijuba. There are ashi, yo, a slightly dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: midarekomi, yakizume, and there are strong hakikake.

**Kantei To No. 2: katana
Tokubetsu Jujo Token**

Mumei: Taima (kinzogan mei)

Length: 2 shaku 2 sun 9.5 bu

Sori: slightly over 5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame hada mixed with nagare-masame hada; on the ura there is a prominent masame hada, and the hada is visible. There are abundant ji-nie, and frequent chikei.

Hamon: suguha style hamon mixed with ko-gunome and ko-notare. There are ashi, yo, large bright clear nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: straight with komaru and a short return.

Comments:

The No.1 Kantei To is a Tokubetsu Juyo Token Shikkake Norinaga blade. This has a kinzogan mei by the Honnami's 10th generation Koshitsu and a value of 20 gold pieces is listed in an origami by the 12th generation Kojo. This blade is also remembered at the NBTHK as being the in the first Juyo Token shinsa, and was the first katana classified as Juyo Token.

At this time, the reason why we showing this sword together with a mumei Taima school katana is that people often ask "Is this a Taima sword". We decided to compare both blades and to try to recognize differences between them.

This Taima work is a katana with abundant prominent strong ha-nie, kinsuji and sunagashi and frequent hataraki inside of the hamon. Taima's mumei work which has been judged as Taima, is known for prominent strong ha-nie and kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki. From this point of view, an opinion that this is Taima work is reasonable.

The No.2 Kantei To Taima sword also has strong ha-nie, and prominent kinsuji and sunagashi hataraki.

Here, the focus is on the appearance of the hotsure on the edge of the hamon.

This is a Yamato-den work and hotsure is naturally present, but the No 2 Taima sword's hotsure is fine or fine-grained and sophisticated. In general, many works by Taima and Teigai have hotsure which appear like this, the hakikake in their boshi are frequent and are notably fine-grained.

Compared to this, on the No.1 katana, in some places, the hotsure have a thick slightly striped appearance, and are slightly less fine-grained, and leave a less sophisticated impression.

This kind of hotsure is seen sometimes in go-kaden mainstream smith's work. Often, we see examples which have been thoroughly examined in swords by smiths such as Norishige, Tametsugu, Sanekage, Ko-Uda, Shikkake, Ishikawa Naotsuna or Hoju. If I have to choose one of these, it should be noted that they are not mainstream school works, even though they are from go-kaden smiths, and many of these works are not from the higher ranked smiths.

From this, we can say their boshi hakikake are strong and powerful. But compared with blades judged as being Taima and Teigai masterpieces, the hakikake is slightly less fine-grained.

Koshitsu judged this as a suriage Norishige work, and Kojo agreed with that opinion, and issued an origami.

From the shape, this is supposed to be from around the latter half of the Kamakura Period. From the jiba (jigane and hamon), this looks like a Yamato masterpiece.

However, this masterpiece has strong ha-nie and frequent hataraki inside of the hamon, the same as Taima work. But from the more sophisticated level of work, and the continuous gunome hamon, the opinion that this is Norinaga's work seems to be more reasonable than this being Taima work.

In other words, this is a work by Norinaga, but among Norinaga's work, this has more prominent ha-nie, abundant hataraki in the hamon, and is a masterpiece katana. You can recognize that this is a masterpiece and you can recognize the quality of the first sword classified as Tokubetsu Juyo Token.

Kantei To No. 3: Katana

Mei: Written in red ink: Rai Kunimitsu
77 sou (writer's age) Shoan

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 6 bu
Sori: 5 bu

Style: shinogi-zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume, and the hada is visible; there are abundant ji-nie and frequent chikei.

Hamon: chu-suguha style hamon mixed with ko-choji and ko-gunome; the hamon edge has hotsure and kuichigaiba. There are ashi and yo, a slightly dense nioiguchi, abundant nie, bright and clear nie, and frequent kinsuji and sunagashi.

Boshi: the omote is almost straight, and the the ura is a slight midarekomi: both sides have a komaru tip.

Horimono: on the omote and the ura there are bo-hi; on the omote the hi is carved is through the nakago; on the ura the hi is finished on the nakago.

Comments:

Shoan was the Tokyo Teishitsu Museum's curator (prior to the war) Inou Shinri who judged this as Rai Kunimitsu's work, wrote Kunimitsu's name in red ink, and classified the sword as Tokubetsu Juyo Token.

A while ago, we displayed this katana in this meeting. This is judged as being Rai Kunimitsu's suguha work. However, included in the judgement that this is his work, the jiba has strong nie, frequent chikei and kinsuji hataraki, and you can recognize hotsure and kuichigaiba on the edge of the hamon. However, there is no prominent characteristic Rai-hada and nie-utsuri.

The first time, we exhibited this as a Kantei-To, for the above reasons, we thought many people would vote for Taima and Soshu Yukimitsu. However, at the Kansho Kai meetings, from the beginning, many people looked at this as Rai Kunimitsu and Rai Kunitsugu work.

One of reason for that opinion is supposed to be the suguha appearance. There is a slightly wide hamon, a slightly dense nioiguchi with a chu-suguha, there is a bright nioiguchi, frequent ashi and yo, and the style present in the tips of the ashi is often

seen in choji ashi in Kyoto work, and the boshi is straight with a komaru.

This kind of characteristic suguha was common with the Yamashiro mainstream Rai school smiths such as Rai Kunitmitsu and Kunitsugu, and with other Rai groups and other schools' smiths such as Settsu Nakajima-Rai, Echizen and Echigo Rai. This is supposed to be one of the characteristic points in judging this as Rai school work.

Looking at this as Rai school work, from the wide blade and the long kissaki shape, it was judged as work from the latter half of the Kamakura period to the early half of the Nanbokucho period. From the sophisticated jiba, it can be narrowed down to Yamashiro mainstream work. And from the entire blade's strong nie, there is an emphasis on the Shoshu Den style, so it seems people judged this as Rai Kunimitsu work.

Today, the No.1 to No.3 katana are from around the latter half of the Kamakura Period to the early part of the Nanbokucho period, and have a suguha style hamon with a bright nioiguchi.

The reason why we exhibited these katana is that at first appearance, they seem to lead to different judgements, and each blade has reasons for its judgment/identity.

When you examine these blades, compare them and carefully examine the differences between them.

Kantei To No. 4: Katana

Mei: Fuyuhiko saku

Length: 2 shaku 3 sun 8 bu

Sori: 9 bu

Style: shinogi zukuri

Mune: ihorimune

Jigane: itame mixed with nagare hada and the hada is visible; there are ji-nie, chikei, and a dark steel color.

Hamon: suguha style; the hamon is wide, and contains kogunome, some tobiyaki and muneyaki. There are ashi, yo, a worn down nioiguchi, nie, and sunagashi.

Boshi: there is a wide yakiba in an ichimai style and frequent hakikake.

Comments:

Today, all the kantei-to are suguha or have a suguha style hamon. No. 4 and No. 5 are Muromachi period suguha styles.

The No.4 Fuyuhiko katana has a standard width, and the sori at the koshimoto is not prominent. The upper half has a strong sori, and from this you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi period. The jigane color is dark, and this shows the North's characteristic point.

The boshi is an ichimai style, with a wide yakiba, and this characteristic is seen often in Sue-Koto work. The yakiba at the koshimoto is conspicuously low, and resembles a yakidashi, and this is also seen often in Fuyuhiko's work.

In voting, some people voted for Osafune Tadimitsu. However, if this were Tadimitsu's work, the jigane would be a brighter color, there would be more refined forging, and the hamon would have a brighter nioiguchi.

Also, among the following characteristics, it is uncertain which characteristics Fuyuhiko intended to have present: the katana has what looks like clay-drop (the presence of small holes in the clay coating during yaki ire) tobiyaki and muneyaki everywhere, and there is an impression of unorganized or unplanned ashi and yo, and these characteristics are not seen before Sue Bizen suguha master works. From these details, it is difficult to rank or evaluate the blade.

Kantei To No. 5: wakizashi

Mei: Taira Nagamori

Length: 1 shaku 8 sun 4 bu

Sori: 6 bu

Style: inokubi-zukuri

Mune: mitsumune

Jigane: itame mixed with mokume, and the entire ji is tight. There are abundant ji-nie, fine chikei, and a clear jigane.

Hamon: togari and continuous gunome at the koshi-moto, and above this, it is suguha mixed with ko-gunome.

Boshi: wide yakiba, notare-komi, with a komaru. Appears to be biased or shifted towards the mune side; there is a long return.

Comments:

This blade is from the latter half of the Muromachi period, and is a wakizashi by the well known Nagamori from the Taira-Takada school.

Among the Taira-Takada school smiths, Nagamori is noted as a highly skilled smith. The jiba (jigane and hamon) are very clear, and this is one of the best pieces produced by him. In voting, people voted for Muramasa, Heianjo Nagayoshi, Shimada, Kanesada, and other Sue-Bizen names.

Actually, the refined forging along with the clarity of the jiba are comparable Sue-Bizen masterpieces.

The bottom half has a midare hamon, and the upper half has a suguha style hamon style similar to what is often seen in work by Muramasa, Heianjo Nagayoshi, and in Sue-Seki work.

Looking at the shape, it is slightly wide, the widths at the moto and saki are not very different, and the upper half has a prominent saki-zori, and from these details, you can judge this as work from the latter half of the Muromachi Period.

As I explained above, the clarity of the jiba is comparable to mainstream smith masterpieces, but the Taira-Takada characteristic points are seen in the midare-hamon area at the

koshimoto. This part of the hamon is slightly long, and there is a very tight nioiguchi with yo, and this is seen often in Takada work. Also, the inside of the upper half's suguha hamon has small sharp yo, which appear to be a like a needle's tip, and the tight nioiguchi is another characteristic point.

However, this appears to be a custom ordered work, and this shape and style is not seen often among the many Taira-Takada works. This appears like a naginata naoshi shaped wakizashi, and we almost never see this shape in other Sue-Bizen work. From this, we believe that this is a local or custom styled work.

There is a refined and clear jiba, and this is Nagamori's best masterpiece.

Shijo Kantei To No. 772 in the May, 2021 issue

The answer for the Shijo Kantei To is a tanto by Omi Daijo Tadahiro.

The jigane is tight ko-itame hada, there are abundant dense nie and fine chikei. There is also a unique Hizen komenuka-hada, and the hint refers to this. The suguha hamon is often seen in Hizen work, and the nioiguchi's width shows a very clear belt-like suguha. The boshi is parallel to the fukura, there is a komaru and a return and these are also Hizen characteristic points.

There are few Nidai Tadayoshi tantos. Sometimes we see a standard width or a slightly wide blade, which is long and thick with uchizori. We can say that this is a short tanto for the Nidai.

In voting, a majority of people voted for the Nidai Tadahiro, and a few people voted for Musashi Daijo Tadahiro (the shodai Tadahiro). His belt-shaped suguha is just like this one and was established during the Musashi Daijo Tadahiro period and mass produced from then. The nakago tip is iriyama-gata, the yasurime

most of time are kiri, and at this time, we treated the shodai Tadayoshi answer as a correct answer. However, in the Tadayoshi period his nakago tips were kurijiri, and the yasurime were a shallow katte sagari or katte sagari. Around this period, we can see his classic suguha hamon work, modeled after old work.

The last time I digressed a bit, and at this time I am returning to a former subject, and will talk about token oil and about putting oil on a blade.

Many veterans would say “why do you have to discuss this since everyone knows about this”. There are some small things to be aware of when putting oil on a blade, and I want to talk about this for people unfamiliar with handling a sword.

The purpose of putting oil on a blade is to protect it from rust, and people are supposed to put oil on a blade carefully and without putting on an excess of oil. Putting too much oil on a blade is supposed to be worse than using too little oil.

If there is too much oil on a sword, this sometimes can lead to an oil generated rust called “abura sabi” (oil rust). When putting swords into a fireproof safe, people used to recommend putting the nakago down and the tip up. This is because if the kissaki is down, over a long period of time the oil on the sword will travel down, and remain on the tip or kissaki. Under such conditions, the oil can lead to rust developing, and one should protect the swords from this. Also, if too much oil is present, it can be absorbed into the shirasaya, and travel to the surface of the shirasaya and stain the surface, so we should be careful.

Explanation by Hinohara Dai