

UK Sword Register No. 129

Type: Shinto wakizashi

Nagasa:

Sugata: Shinogi-zukuri with shallow tori-zori, chu-kissaki and low iori-mune

Ji-hada: Slightly "distressed itame-hada

Hamon: Gunome-midare in nie-deki, the boshi on the omote slightly midare-komi whilst that on the ura is sugu and ko-maru, both sides with a short kaeri.

Jihada: Somewhat distressed and scuffed itame-hada

Nakago: Ubu with a single mekugi-ana, yoko-yasuri-mei, some corrosion obscuring part of the first character. Signed on e omote: HIZEN KUNI FUJUWARA TADAYOSHI.

This sword has suffered some rust damage but has been professionally restored and cleaned. This has left the ji slightly distressed but still quite healthy. The sword was in mounts from the Satsuma rebellion which may account for its rather poor condition.

Although the mei is slightly corroded, it clearly reads as stated above. Of course, the name Tadayoshi is intrinsically associated with the mainline swordsmiths of the Hashimoto family from Hizen province, However, there is reason to believe that this blade may have been made by a rather rare Tadayoshi who went under the title of Tosa (no) Kami. I base this speculation mainly on the mei and especially on the unusual construction of the character WARA in Fujiwara and of both the characters in TADAYOSHI, It also seems that the gunome midare is a characteristic of Tosa (no) Kami 's workmanship.

Tosa (no) Kami Tadayoshi is an interesting phenomenon and there is a great deal of speculation on both his family connections and his swordmaking credentials. One theory states that his teacher was Iyo (no) Jo Munetsugu, who was also one of shodai Tadayoshi's teachers. This theory further bases this contention on the workmanship which is said to be more like that of Munetsugu rather than that of shodai Tadayoshi. Certainly with the sword under discussion here, normal Hizen-to characteristics, such as well formed dense nie, thick nioi-guchi etc are not immediately obvious and may indeed be more like the workmanship of Munetsugu.

Alternatively, Tosa (no) Kami may have indeed been part of the extended Hashimoto family. He may well have even been a son or pupil of shodai Tadayoshi. , When shodai Tadayoshi changed his name to Tadahiro on acquiring the title of Musashi Daijo, Tosa (no) Kami was charged to maintain and inherit the Tadayoshi name, which was popular throughout the country.

It would seem that the Nabeshima Han greatly valued the Tadahiro name and it passed on to shodai's heir who became Omi Daijo Tadahiro. The shodai Tadayoshi, therefore, was also the shodai Tadahiro and Tosa (no) Kami was the nidai Tadayoshi. When it was time for (the nidai) Tadahiro's heir to inherit the leadership of the sword-making family, the Tadayoshi name was relinquished by Tosa (no) Kami and adopted by the sandai Tadayoshi, Mutsu (no) Kami.



Hiizen Kuni Fujiwara Tadayoshi

Clive Sinclair
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