

Jūyō-tōken at the 48th *jūyō shinsa* held on October 11, 2002

naginata-naoshi wakizashi, mumei: Tanshū Hōjōji (但州法城寺)

Measurements

nagasa 47.2 cm, *sori* 0.85 cm, *motohaba* 2.8 cm, *sakihaba* 2.45 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 15.2 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 14.15 cm, only very little *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: naginata-naoshi-zukuri, iori-mune, normal mihaba, no noticeable taper, high shinogi, relatively thin kasane, shallow sori, ō-kissaki

Kitae: rather standing-out itame that is mixed with mokume and that features plenty of fine ji-nie, much fine chikei, and a midare-utsuri

Hamon: ko-nie-laden chōji-midare that is miced with gunome, ko-gunome, manu ashi, yō, hotsure, sunagashi all over the blade, and many long kinsuji, the ellements of the ha are rather small dimensioned

Bōshi: yakitsume with kinsuji and hakikake at the tip

Nakago: ō-suriage, very shallow kurijiri, deeply slanting katte-sagari yasurime, two mekugi-ana, mumei

Explanation

Hōjōji (法城寺) was a place in Tajima province (Tanshū) and as the famous Nanbokuchō-period *naginata* smith Kunimitsu (国光) lived and worked there, the name became a synonym for this smith. The *meikan* list two generations Kunimitsu, the first around Jōji (貞治, 1362-1368) and the second around Ōei (応永, 1394-1428). Extant unsigned works that are attributed to Hōjōji are mostly comprised of *naginata-naoshi katana* and *wakizashi* which show a flamboyant *chōji-midare* that reminds us at first glance of Bizen-Ichimonji works. However, their *jiba* is more *nie-laden*, the *kitae* of a larger forging structure with *chikei*, the *hada* stands out, and the *ha* features many *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. Signed works by Kunimitsu are very rare and only such *tantō* and *hira-zukuri wakizashi* are known. These signed blades show a relatively busy *midareba* that is mixed with *chōji*, a *suguha* in *ko-nie-deki*, or a *nie-laden ko-notare* that is mixed with *gunome* and prominent *sunagashi*. That is, there is a noticeably difference between the interpretations of unsigned works traditionally attributed to Hōjōji and signed Kunimitsu blades.

This blade was originally a *naginata* which has been shortened and reworked into a *wakizashi*. The *kitae* is a rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features plenty of *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, and a *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *ko-nie-laden chōji-midare* that is mixed with *gunome*, *ko-gunome*, *ashi*, *yō*, and many *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. Thus, we recognize the characteristic features of Tanshū Hōjōji whereupon we are in agreement to the period attribution. The *jiba* is rich in *hataraki* and of a truly ambitious interpretation.