

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

katana, kinzōgan-mei: Rai Kuniyuki (来国征)

Measurements

nagasa 66.6 cm, *sori* 1.0 cm, *motohaba* 2.8 cm, *sakihaba* 2.1 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 3.7 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 19.3 cm, no *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: *shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune*, wide *mihaba*, relatively shallow *sori*, *chū-kissaki*

Kitae: rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* that features plenty of *ji-nie* and fine *chikei*

Hamon: *ko-nie-laden hiro-suguha-chō* that is mixed with *ko-chōji*, *ko-midare*, connected *ashi* and *yō*, fine *sunagashi*, and on the *omote* side at about the mid-blade section with some *nijūba*-like *yubashiri*

Bōshi: on the *omote* side *sugu* with *hotsure* and a rather pointed *kaeri*, on the *ura* side a little *midare-komi* with a *maru-kaeri*

Nakago: *ō-suriage, kirijiri*, gently slanting *katte-sagari yasurime*, two *mekugi-ana* (one plugged), the *sashi-omote* side bears centrally under the first *mekugi-ana* the attribution "Rai Kuniyuki" inlaid as *kinzōgan-mei*

Explanation

Kuniyuki was the de facto founder of the Rai School. There is only one signed *tantō* but relatively many signed *tachi* of him extant. No dated works are known but as we know a blade of Niji-Kunitoshi (二字国俊), who is said to have been his son, that is dated Kōan one (弘安, 1278), the traditional *meikan* dating of Kuniyuki to around Kōgen (康元, 1256-1257) appears to be appropriate. Kuniyuki made blades with a slender, a standard, and a wide *tachi-sugata*.

This is an *ō-suriage mumei katana* which bears an attribution to Rai Kuniyuki that is inlaid via a *kinzōgan-mei*. Although the *kinzōgan-mei* was not added earlier than Meiji (明治, 1868-1912), it was very carefully executed. The blade is wide and shows a *kitae* in *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features plenty of *ji-nie*. The *hamon* is a *hiro-suguha-chō* that is mixed with *ko-chōji* and *ko-midare* and that displays a *ha* full of *ha-nie* and rich in magnificent *hataraki* like *ashi* and *yō*. Thus, in terms of style and quality, we are in agreement with the attribution and we have here a particularly masterly blade among all works that bear an attribution to this smith.