

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

katana, mumei: Niji Kunitoshi (二字国俊)

Measurements

nagasa 68.0 cm, *sori* 1.4 cm, *motohaba* 2.75 cm, *sakihaba* 1.85 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 2.7 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 20.6 cm, no *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, relatively wide *mihaba*, noticeable taper, deep *koshizori*, somewhat compact *chū-kissaki*

Kitae: standing-out ko-itame that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *ji-nie* and fine *chikei*
Hamon: ko-nie-laden chōji-chō that is mixed with *ko-gunome*, *ashi*, *yō*, *sunagashi*, and *kinsuji* and that features prominent ups and downs

Bōshi: tending to sugi and with a *maru-kaeri* with *hakikake*

Nakago: ō-suriage, shallow *kurijiri*, *kiri-yasurime*, four *mekugi-ana* (three plugged), *mumei*

Explanation

According to tradition, Kunitoshi was the son of Rai Kuniyuki (来国行), Works that lack of the preceding character for "Rai" in the *mei* are referred to as "Niji Kunitoshi" (lit. "two character Kunitoshi") whereas those signed with the three characters, i.e. "Rai" plus "Kunitoshi," are referred to as "Rai Kunitoshi." In terms of extant dates of both categories, it is perfectly possible that we are facing the work of a single smith. The mentioned two terms are used to distinguish between the different artistic phases of the smith, although they may also be used to refer to two different smiths. That is, this question of one or two Kunitoshi smiths has not yet been answered. In terms of workmanship, Niji Kunitoshi blades are of a powerful shape with a wide *mihaba* and an *ikubi-kissaki* and show a flamboyant *chōji-based midareba* that reminds us of Bizen Ichimonji works. The *ha* is *ko-nie-laden* and the *kitae* is mostly relatively large structured and stands out, which is the same case with Rai Kuniyuki.

This blade is *ō-suriage mumei* and shows a flamboyant *chōji-midare hamon* with prominent ups and downs that reminds us at first glance of works by the Fukuoka-Ichimonji School. However, the *nie* in *ha* and *ji* are too prominent for Fukuoka-Ichimonji and the blade also lacks a *midare-utsuri* that is so typical for this school and therefore the attribution must be to Niji Kunitoshi. A masterwork among all blades that are attributed to this smith, displaying an excellent *deki*.