

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

katana, mumei: Unji (雲次)

Measurements

nagasa 73.4 cm, *sori* 1.6 cm, *motohaba* 3.2 cm, *sakihaba* 2.0 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 3.2 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 18.2 cm, only very little *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, wide mihaba, relatively noticeable taper, deep koshizori, chū-kissaki
Kitae: overall finely standing-out itame that is mixed with mokume and that features ji-nie and fine chikei

Hamon: suguba-chō in ko-nie-deki with a rather tight and bright nioiguchi that is mixed with angular gunome, ko-gunome, some slanting elements, ashi, yō, kinsuji, and sunagashi

Bōshi: on the omote side sugu, on the ura a gently undulating notare-komi, on both sides featuring a ko-maru-kaeri with hakikake

Horimono: on both sides a bōhi that runs as kaki-nagashi into the tang

Nakago: ō-suriage, ha-agari kurijiri, on the omote side kiri-yasurime, on the ura side katte-sagari yasurime, two mekugi-ana, mumei

Explanation

The Ukan manor (宇甘庄) of Bizen province was home to a group of swordsmiths which was active from the end of the Kamakura to the Nanbokuchō period. The smiths of this group, for example Unshō (雲生), Unji (雲次), and Unjū (雲重), shared the character for “Un” whereupon they are referred to as “Un group.” One theory says that Unji was the son of Unshō. Extant dated blades go back to the eras Shōwa (正和, 1312-1317), Bунpō (文保, 1317-1319), and Kenmu (建武, 1334-1338) and so his active period is relatively clear. The workmanship of the Un group differs from that of the contemporary Osafune School as Un blades are mixed with Yamashiro elements and as they were also significantly influenced by the style of the Aoe (青江) School from neighboring Bitchū province. Thus, it can be said that the Un blades are somewhat of an outlier within Bizen works.

This blade shows an overall finely standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *ji-nie* and fine *chikei*. The *hamon* is a *suguha-chō* in *ko-nie-deki* with a rather tight *nioiguchi* that is mixed with angular *gunome*, *ko-gunome*, *ashi*, and *yō* and so we recognize Aoe elements being mixed with the Bizen tradition and the characteristic features of the Un group, in particular those of Urji. The blade is a masterwork among all works attributed to this smith and is of both an excellend *deki* and condition and due to its magnificent *sugata* highly impressive.