

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

tachi, mei: Masahiro saku (正広作) (Mihara, end of Nanbokuchō period to Ōei [応永, 1394-1428])

Measurements

nagasa 63.2 cm, *sori* 1.4 cm, *motohaba* 2.5 cm, *sakihaba* 1.6 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 2.3 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 17.0 cm, no *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: *shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune*, slender *mihaba*, noticeable taper, relatively narrow *shinogi-ji*, high *shinogi*, thick *kasane*, some *funbari*, deep *sori* with a tendency towards *sakizori, chū-kissaki*

Kitae: standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features plenty of *ji-nie*, prominent *chikei*-like elements, and a *shirake-utsuri* at the base

Hamon: *hoso-suguha* in *ko-nie-deki* with a rather tight *nioiguchi* that starts with a brief *yakiotoshi* and that is mixed with a little bit of *hotsure*, interrupted *yubashiri* that appear parallel to the *ha* at the mid-blade section, *nijūba* along the *monouchi*, and fine *kinsuji*

Bōshi: *sugu* with a *ko-maru-kaeri* and faint *nijūba*

Nakago: *uba, ha-agari kurijiri, kiri-yasurime*, one *mekugi-ana*, the *haki-omote* side bears centrally on the *hira-ji*, and running over the *mekugi-ana*, a large and thickly chiseled *sanji-meい*

Explanation

The Mihara School flourished in the Mihara region of the same name in Bingo province. Works from the end of the Kamakura to the Nanbokuchō period are classified as Ko-Mihara, lit. “early Mihara,” with Masaie (正家) and Masahiro (正広) being the most representative smiths of this group. The school then continued to exist until the end of the Muromachi period and such post-Nanbokuchō works are classified as just Mihara. Bingo was home to many manors that were ruled by Yamato shrines and temples, e.g. by the Tōji (東寺) and the Rengeō'in (蓮華王院). Thus, there were frequent and regular exchanges between Bingo and Yamato, and so Mihara School blades show certain Yamato characteristics accordingly, with many Mihara blades being hardened in *suguha* for example. Compared to Yamato blades however, Mihara works usually have lesser *nie* along their *jiba*, a *kitae* with a more prominent amount of *mokume* combined with a *shirake-utsuri*, a *suguha* with a tighter *nioiguchi*, and a more calm *bōshi* with a noticeably roundish *kaeri*.

This is an *ubu zaimei tachi* by Mihara Masahiro that can be dated between the end of the Nanbokuchō period to the early Muromachi period Ōei era. The *meikan* list six Masahiro smiths working in Bingo province, with their transmitted active eras being Jōji (貞治, 1362-1362), Shitoku (至徳, 1384-1387), Kakyō (嘉慶, 1387-1389), Ōei (応永, 1394-1428), Bunmei (文明, 1469-1487), and Eishō (永正, 1504-1521). Dated Mihara Masahiro works are rare and only a few from the eras Shitoku and Ōei are known.

This *tachi* has a high *shinogi* and a thick *kasane* which are both Yamato characteristics. The *kitae* is a standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features plenty of *ji-nie* and a *shirake-utsuri* in places. The *hamon* is a *hoso-suguha* in *ko-nie-deki* with a rather tight *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *hotsure*, *yubashiri*, and *nijūba*, and the *bōshi* is calm and has a roundish *kaeri* that features some *nijūba*. Thus, we clearly recognize the characteristic features of the Mihara School. Highlights of this blade are its interrupted *yubashiri* that appear in the mid-blade section along the *ha* and its *nijūba* along the *monouchi* and it is interesting that these features are also seen on a Masahiro *tachi* that is dated with the Shitoku era (*jūyō* at the 27th *jūyō-shinsa*), although on this blade in a much more prominent manner and with *sanjūba* as well. This blade here is of a *tachi-sugata* with a slender *mihaba*, a thick *kasane*, and a *sori* that tends towards *sakizori* whereupon it can be dated to the end of the Nanbokuchō to the early Muromachi period. There is plenty of *hiraniku* and the blade is an important reference for studies on the workmanship and the active periods of the Mihara Masahiro smiths.