

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

katana, mumei: Aoe (青江)

Measurements

nagasa 72.8 cm, *sori* 1.4 cm, *motohaba* 2.95 cm, *sakihaba* 2.15 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 3.5 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 22.5 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.1 cm

Description

Keijō: shinogi-zukuri, mitsu-mune, wide mihaba, no noticeable taper, thick kasane, shallow sori, elongated chū-kissaki

Kitae: standing-out itame that is mixed with *mokume* and that appears as *chirimen-hada*, there is fine *ji-nie* and a *dan-utsuri*, i.e. a *midare-utsuri* towards the *mune* combined with a *suji-utsuri* that runs parallel to the *ha*

Hamon: hoso-suguha-chō with some gently undulating *notare* in *ko-nie-deki* that is mixed with *ko-gunome*, angular elements, *ko-chōji*, *ko-ashi*, *yō*, fine *sunagashi*, and some *nie-suji*-like elements in places

Bōshi: sugu with a *ko-maru-kaeri* and fine *hakikake* at the tip

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

Nakago: ō-suriage, kirijiri, katte-sagari yasurime, three mekugi-ana, mumei

Explanation

“Swords from Bitchū” are already found in the early 11th century work *Shin Sarugaku Ki* (新猿楽記) that lists noted products of all provinces. The Aoe school that emerged later and flourished at the downstream of the Takahashi River continued to live from that fame. Generally, works made by this school up to the mid-Kamakura period are referred to as Ko-Aoe and those made later and throughout the Nanbokuchō period to just as Aoe. The workmanship of the Ko-Aoe school displays mostly a *suguha-chō* in *ko-nie-deki* with a rather subdued *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *ko-midare*. From the late Kamakura period on, the *nie* become more unobtrusive and with the Nanbokuchō period, the school focussed on a *saka-chōji-midare* with a tight *nioiguchi* that bases on a bright and clear *suguha*.

This blade shows a standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that appears as a *chirimen-hada*. In addition, there is fine *ji-nie* and the *hamon* is a *hoso-suguha-chō* with some gently undulating *notare* in *ko-nie-deki* that is mixed with *ko-gunome*, angular elements, *ko-chōji*, *ko-ashi*, and *yō* and therefore we clearly recognize the characteristic features of the Aoe School. Another very typical feature of this school is the *dan-utsuri* which is composed of a *midare-utsuri* towards the *mune* and a *suji-utsuri* that runs parallel to the *ha*. With its wide *mihaba*, no noticeable taper, thick *kasane*, elongated *chū-kissaki* and the mentioned interpretation of the *jiba*, the blade can be dated around Kenmu (建武, 1334-1338). The *deki* is outstanding among all works attributed to this school and a delightful highlight of the blade is its magnificent *sugata* with its large dimensions and massive feel in hand.