

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

tantō, mei: Rai Kunitoshi (来国俊)

Measurements

nagasa 24.3 cm, *uchizori*, *motohaba* 2.05 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 10.8 cm, no *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: *hira-zukuri*, *mitsu-mune*, standard *tantō-sugata* with a harmonious *mihaba* and *nagasa* and an *uchizori*, the *kasane* is thick

Kitae: dense and finely forged *ko-itame* that is mixed with *jifu-chō* and with *ō-hada* in places and that features *ji-nie* and a *nie-utsuri*

Hamon: classical *ko-nie-laden chū-suguha*

Bōshi: *sugu* with a long running-back *ko-maru-kaeri*

Nakago: *ubu* (just the tip is a little bit cut off), *kirijiri*, *kiri-yasurime*, two *mekugi-ana*, the *sashi-omote* side bears centrally under the first, the *ubu-mekugi-ana* a finely chiseled and largely interpreted *sanji-me* of which the character for "Rai" is partially lost due to the second *mekugi-ana*

Explanation

According to tradition, Kunitoshi was the son of Rai Kuniyuki (来国行). The question of if Niji Kunitoshi and Rai Kunitoshi were the same smith has yet not been settled. As far as extant dated works are concerned, the active period of "both" smiths ranges from Kōan one (弘安, 1278) to Genkō one (元亨, 1321), which corresponds to roughly fourty years and that does by no means rule out that we are facing here the career of a single smith. However, we see differences in the style of Niji Kunitoshi and Rai Kunitoshi works. The former show a magnificent *sugata* combined with a flamboyant *chōji-midare hamon* and the latter a more normal to slender *sugata* that is mostly combined with an elegant *suguha-chō hamon*. That is, we also distinguish between Niji Kunitoshi and Rai Kunitoshi on a mere stylistic level. Incidentally, there is only one signed *tantō* by Niji Kunitoshi and relatively many such by Rai Kunitoshi extant.

This is a textbook example of a Rai Kunitoshi *tantō*. It has an elegant *sugata* with *uchizori* and a fine and beautifully forged *kotae* that is combined with a classical *suguha*. A magnificent work whose *jiba* is very healthy. The signature style suggests that this is an early Rai Kunitoshi work which dates around Shōō (正応, 1288-1293) and Einin (永仁, 1293-1299).