

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

tachi, mei: Shigetsugu (重次)

Measurements

nagasa 71.5 cm, *sori* 0.8 cm, *motohaba* 2.75 cm, *sakihaba* 1.7 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 3.0 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 19.6 cm, no *nakago-sori*

Description

Keijō: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, normal *mihaba* and *kasane*, noticeable taper, some *funbari*, shallow *sori*, *chū-kissaki*

Kitae: rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, some *jifu* in places, and a *midare-utsuri*

Hamon: *nie*-laden *suguha-chō* with some gently undulating *notare* that is mixed with *ko-midare*, *ko-gunome*, *ko-chōji*, many *ashi* and *yō*, some prominent *nie* in places, *hotsure*, and much *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*

Bōshi: *sugu* and running out as *yakitsume* with fine *hakikake*

Horimono: on both sides a *koshi-bi* along the *shinogi* that runs into the tang, on the *haki-omote* side as *kaki-nagashi* and on the *ura* side ending in *marudome*

Nakago: *suriage*, shallow *kurijiri*, both old and new *yasurime* are *ō-sujikai*, two *mekugi-ana*, the *haki-ura* side bears centrally under the second, the *ubu-mekugi-ana*, and at the *nakago-jiri*, a large and thickly chiseled *niji-mei*

Explanation

It is said that the Aoe School of Bitchū province was founded by the smith Yasutsugu (安次) around Shōan (承安, 1171-1174). The school flourished up to the late Nanbokuchō period and gave rise to many great master smiths. Blades made up to the middle of the Kamakura period are referred to as Ko-Aoe (古青江), “early Aoe,” with the most representative smiths from this group being Moritsugu (守次), Tametsugu (為次), Tsuguie (次家), Tsugutada (次忠), Sadatsugu (貞次), Yasutsugu (康次), Kanetsugu (包次), Tsunetsugu (恒次), Toshitsugu (俊次), Suketsugu (助次), and Shigetsugu (重次), the maker of this blade, and with most of the smiths sharing the character for *Tsugu*. The workmanship of the Ko-Aoe group features a rather standing-out *kitae* that is mixed

with a prominent amount of *mokume* and that appears as *chirimen-hada*. Many blades are mixed with *jifu* and the *hamon* is usually a *ko-nie*-laden and calm *suguha-chō* which may be mixed with some *ko-midare* and which is therefore of a somewhat more sober taste than contemporary Bizen *hamon*. Apart from that, Ko-Aoe smiths usually signed on the *haki-ura* side and finished their tangs with *ō-sujikai yasurime* what distinguishes them from Ko-Bizen and other smiths of that time as well.

This *tachi* shows a rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, some *jifu* in places, and a *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *nie*-laden *suguha-chō* with some gently undulating *notare* that is mixed with *ko-midare*, *ko-gunome*, *ko-chōji*, many *ashi* and *yō*, and much *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. Thus, we clearly recognize the characteristic features of the Ko-Aoe group. The classical *hamon* with its abundance of *nie* and its *hataraki* within the *ha* like the *ashi*, *yō*, *kinsuji*, and *sunagashi* is highly tasteful. When it comes to extant works by Ko-Aoe Shigetsugu, most famous are the *tachi* signed *sanji-me* “Shigetsugu saku” that was once a heirloom of the Kishū-Tokugawa family and the three *jūyō-bijutsuhin tachi*. All these blades are signed on the *haki-omote* side whereas this blade is signed in the Ko-Aoe typical manner on the *haki-ura* side. Therefore, this blade is not only valuable as Shigetsugu works are very rare but as it is also an important reference for studies on this smith.