

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

tantō, mei: Kunimitsu (国光) (Shintōgo)

Measurements

nagasa 23.1 cm, *uchizori* , *motohaba* 1.85 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 9.85 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.2 cm

Description

Keijō: *hira-zukuri*, *mitsu-mune*, slender *mihaba*, *uchizori*

Kitae: excellently forged *itame* that features plenty of *ji-nie*, much *chikei*, and a *nie-utsuri*

Hamon: *nie*-laden *hoso-suguha* with a wide, bright, and clear *nioiguchi* that is mixed with some *ara-nie*, *hotsure*, *yubashiri*, and fine *kinsuji*

Bōshi: brief *ko-maru-kaeri* with *ara-nie*

Horimono: on the *omote* side a *suken*, on the *ura* side a *koshi-bi*, both ending in *marudome*

Nakago: *ubu*, shallow *ha-agari kurjiiri*, *katte-sagari yasurime*, one *mekugi-ana*, the *sashi-omote* side bears under the *mekugi-ana* and somewhat towards the cutting edge side of the tang a *niji-mei* that is signed in the typical manner of this smith

Explanation

Shintōgo Kunimitsu (新藤五国光) is regarded as the de facto founder of the Sōshū tradition and he trained the three famous and outstanding master students Yukimitsu (行光), Masamune (正宗), and Norishige (則重). Kunimitsu's workmanship reminds us of Awataguchi works at first glance but what differs him are the prominent *chikei* and *kinsuji* along the *jiba* of his blades. He focused on a *suguha* which he hardened in various ways, e.g. as *ito*, *hoso*, *chū*, and *hiro-suguha*. Together with Tōshirō Yoshimitsu (藤四郎吉光), Kunimitsu is regarded as best *tantō* maker of all times.

This is a slender and small dimensioned *tantō* with *uchizori* that reflects the classical *tantō-sugata* from the end of the Kamakura period. The *kitae* is an excellently forged *itame* and features plenty of *ji-nie*, much *chikei*, and a *nie-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *nie*-laden *hoso-suguha* with a wide, bright, and clear *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *hotsure*, *yubashiri*, and fine *kinsuji*. Thus, we clearly recognize the characteristic features of this smith. The completely intact and crisp signature adds to the value of this work and is a textbook example for Kunimitsu's so elegant signature style.