

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

tachi, mei: Bizen no Kuni-jū Osafune Morikage (備前国住長船盛景)

kinzōgan-mei: Meireki ninen jūichigatsu muika mitsu-dō kiri-otoshi Yamano Ka'emon no Jō Nagahisa + *kaō* (明暦貳年十一月六日・三ツ胴切落・山野加右衛門尉永久「花押」) - "Yamano Ka'emon no Jō Nagahisa cut with this blade on the sixth day of the eleventh month of Meireki two (1656) through three bodies)

Measurements

nagasa 82.75 cm, *sori* 2.3 cm, *motohaba* 3.2 cm, *sakihaba* 2.15 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 5.1 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 21.0 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.1 cm

Description

Keijō: *shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune,* wide *mihaba*, long *nagasa*, no noticeable taper. narrow *shinogi-ji* in relation to the *mihaba*, thick *kasane*, some *funbari*, deep *sori*, *ō-kissaki*

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

Hamon: *suguha-chō* in *ko-nie-deki* with a tight and somewhat subdued *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *ko-gunome*, *ko-ashi*, *saka-ashi*, some few *yō*, and fine *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*

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

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

Nakago: *suriage, kirijiri*, the old *yasurime* are *katte-sagari*, the new *yasurime* are *kiri*, three *mekugi-ana*, the *haki-omote* side bears below of the second *mekugi-ana* and towards the *nakago-mune* a small and finely chiseled *naga-meい*, the *ura* side bears in three rows the gold inlaid result of a cutting test

Explanation

It is said that the Bizen-based Ōmiya (大宮) School started with its ancestor Kunimori (国盛) moving from the Ōmiya neighborhood of the same name, then located in Inokuma (猪熊) in Yamashiro province, to Bizen. Morikage, who signed with "Bishū Osafune Morikage" and other *naga-meい*, has been regarded as the most representative smith of this school. In recent years however, a new theory was established which states that due to similarities in workmanship and the fact that signatures are chiseled in *gyaku-tagane* (partially opposite stroke order than written

with a brush), this Morikage belonged like Chikakage (近景) and Yoshikage (義景) to a local Osafune side line and that it was the smiths Morikage (same characters) and Moritsugu (盛継) who signed in large characters with a thick chisel were actually the Ōmiya smiths and the ones who were descendants of former Yamashiro-based master Kunimori. The workmanship of Morikage is quite diversified and we see a *notare*-based *ha*, a flamboyant *midareba* that is rich in variety and mixed with *chōji* and *gunome*, a *deki* that bases on an angular *gunome*, or a *suguha* that is similar to Aoe works.

This *tachi* shows a rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, some *jifu*, and a *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *suguha-chō* in *ko-nie-deki* with a tight *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *ko-gunome*, *ko-ashi*, *saka-ashi*, and fine *kinsuji* and *sunagashi* and so the blade does remind us of Aoe or Un group works in *suguha* at first glance. As mentioned however, this was one of the various styles in which Morikage worked and the *deki* of this blade is outstanding. The blade is with its wide *mihaba*, long *nagasa*, and *ō-kissaki* of a magnificent and impressive *tachi-sugata* that prominently reflects the typical blade styles from the heydays of the Nanbokuchō period. In addition, the blade is with its thick *kasane* quite robust and both *ji* and *ha* are in a perfectly healthy condition as well. The *mei* is chiseled in *gyaku-tagane* and it has to be pointed out that the signature does not use the syntax “Bizen no Kuni Osafune-jū...,” i.e. “resident of Osafune in Bizen province,” but “Bizen no Kuni-jū Osafune...,” i.e. “Osafune ..., resident of Bizen province.” This tells us that the blade was made at a time when certain smiths used Osafune no longer as a reference to their place of residence but as a trade name. Thus we have here an important reference for studying the workmanship and signature style of Morikage and during the Edo period the blade was a heirloom of the Nabeshima (鍋島) family who were the *daimyō* of the Hizen fief.