

Sword Register 115

Type: Shinshinto wakizashi

Nagasa: 3.4 cm

Moto-haba: 2.9 cm

Saki-haba: 2.1 cm

Sugata: Hira-zukuri with shallow koshi-zori and low iori-mune, quite a wide mihaba with little tapering towards the kissaki which gives it a strong but graceful impression and the appearance of great sharpness.

Jihada: A compact ko-mokume-hada with some larger inclusions, slightly looser in the area of the habaki.

Hamon: Ko-choji-gunome midare composed mainly of dense nioi but with some ko-nie and nioi based ashi. The boshi is slightly midare-komi and ko-maru with kaeri on the omote whilst similar on the ura but with much shorter kaeri. A small yakidashi is on both sides of the blade which goes over the ha-machi into the very top part of the nakago.

Nakago: Ubu nakago with one mekugi-ana, ha-agari kui-jiri and kesho yasurime. Signed on the omote CHOUNSAI TSUNATOSHI and dated on the ura TEMPO JUSAN NEN HACHI GATSU JITSU (1842).

As this sword is in hira-zukuri (no shinogi or ridge line) it gives a very sharp impression and as there is no yokote and ko-shinogi, the kissaki appears to be rather larger than it really is. The beautiful and skilfully constructed hamon, which is in perfect proportion to the rest of the blade, is an excellent example of Bizen-den and probably inspired by Nagamitsu or Kagemitsu from the 14th century Bizen Osafune school, although the small pattern of the ji-hada distinctly indicates shinshinto workmanship. (It is gratifying seeing details of ji-hada in shinshinto works, which are commonly found with muji-hada, however modern polishing techniques and expert polishers, may reveal these “hidden ji-hada”). The very low iori-mune is also a shinshinto characteristic.

The swordsmith Tsunatoshi, whose personal name was Kato Hachiro, was from Yonezawa in Uzen province and together with his older brother, Kato Tsunahide, went up to the Azubu district of Edo, where he was paid a stipend by the Uesugi clan.

The Kato Tsunahide mon prospered greatly in Edo under the leadership of Tsunahide who produced many swords with toran-midare hamon, which was popular at the time. However many believe that the group even surpassed the Suishinshi Masahide school, certainly as far as Bizen-den, which seems to have been preferred by Tsunatoshi, is concerned. One of their talented pupils was Koyama Munetsugu who excelled at the juka-choji-midare of the Bizen Ichimonji school and it is generally thought that, although Tsunahide was the leader and main teacher of the school, judging by his workmanship, Munestugu was mostly influenced by Tsunatoshi.

Tsunatoshi called himself “Chounsai” (as in the present sword) and this name passed down to his son, Koretoshi, after which, from Ansei gannen (1854) he was called “Chojusai”. From this time he began to make a number of swords in co-operation with his son Koretoshi, who became the nidai Tsunatoshi on the death of his father at the age of 66 in 1862.

The present sword, made when Tsunatoshi was 46 years of age and at the prime of his life and production abilities. Fujishiro rates Tsunatoshi as Jo-saku and this sword was ranked Tokubetsu Hozon by NBTHK at their June 2010 shinsa

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