

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

*wakizashi, gaku-mei*: Kunisuke (国資)

## Measurements

*nagasa* 54.5 cm, *sori* 1.6 cm, *motohaba* 2.65 cm, *sakihaba* 1.85 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 2.7 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 14.85 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.1 cm

## Description

*Keijō*: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, normal *mihaba*, noticeable taper, thick *kasane*, deep *toriizori*, rather compact *chū-kissaki*

*Kitae*: standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume*, on the *omote* side at the base with *nagare*, and that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, and a faint *shirake-utsuri*

*Hamon*: *chū-suguha-chō* with a little bit of gently undulating *notare* in *ko-nie-deki* that is mixed with some *ko-ashi*, prominent *mura-nie* in places, a few *hotsure* here and there, *kinsuji*, and plenty of *sunagashi*

*Bōshi*: on the *omote* side *sugu-chō* with a brief *ko-maru-kaeri* and *hakikake* at the tip, on the *ura* side *sugu* with a brief *ko-maru-kaeri*

*Horimono*: on both sides a *bōhi* that ends in *kakudome* above of the *gaku-mei* and then continues as *kakitōshi* on the *omote* side and that runs in a continuous manner as *kakit – oshi* through the tang on the *ura* side

*Nakago*: *ō-suriage*, very shallow *kurijiri*, both new and old *yasurime* are *kiri*, one *mekugi-ana* (with an additional *mekugi-ana* in the *gaku-mei* part), the *sashi-omote* side bears below of the *mekugi-ana* and towards the *mnekugi-ana* a thick and largely chiseled two-character *gaku-mei*

## Explanation

The Enju School of Higo province was founded by Tarō Kunimura (太郎国村) who is said to have been a grandson (from a daughter married into another family) of the Yamashiro master Rai Kuniyuki (来国行). The school then flourished from the end of the Kamakura to the Nanbokuchō period in the town of Waifu (隈府) which was located in the Kikuchi district (菊池郡) of Higo province. The school gave rise to many greatly skilled smiths, like for example Kuniyoshi (国吉), Kunitoki (国時), Kuniyasu (国泰), Kunitomo (国友), Kunisuke (国資), Kuninobu (国信), and

Kunitsuna (国綱). The workmanships of these smiths is very similar and it can be said that the Enju style basically resembles the style of the Rai School with the difference that Enju blades show a more prominent amount of *masame* in the *kitae*, a *shirake-utsuri*, a *hamon* with a somewhat subdued *nioiguchi*, calmer *hataraki* within the *ha*, and a *bōshi* with a relatively large and round *kaeri* that runs back in a brief manner.

It is said that Kunisuke was the son of Kunimura and as far as extant dated works are concerned, there exists a *tantō* from the end of the Kamakura period that is dated with the second year of (嘉暦, 1327). The extant body of work of Kunisuke tells us that he was one of the most skilled Enju smiths.

This blade is an *ō-suriage wakizashi* that retains a deep *toriizori*-style curvature. The *kitae* is a standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, and a faint *shirake-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *chū-suguha-chō* with a little bit of gently undulating *notare* in *ko-nie-deki* that is mixed with a few *ko-ashi*, *hotsure*, *kinsuji*, and *sunagashi*, and the *bōshi* shows a brief *kaeri* whereupon we recognize the characteristic features of the Enju School. The *suguha* is hardened in *ko-nie-eki* but displays strong *mura-nie* in places and is so with the prominent *kinsuji* and *sunagashi* and the variety of the *ha* in general of an ambitious interpretation. Another strong point of this blade is its very healthy *sugata* retaining a thick *kasane* and a deep *toriizori*-style curvature. The characters are signed relatively close to each other and the chisel strokes are the thickest seen among Enju smiths. This and the fact that the right inner part of the “Kuni” character is not executed in an earshaped manner, as most of the other Enju smiths did, is very typical for the signature style of Kunisuke. The *mei* is very crisp and perfectly legible and so we have here a masterwork among all blades known by this smith.