

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

wakizashi, gaku-me: 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-me and then continues as kakitōshi on the omote side and that runs in a continuous manner as kikit – 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-me part), the sashi-omote side bears below of the mekugi-ana and towards the mnekugi-ana a thick and largely chiseled two-character gaku-me

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 baically 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 (嘉曆, 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.