

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

*naginata-naoshi wakizashi, mei*: Kunisuke (国資)

## Measurements

*nagasa* 55.0 cm, *sori* 1.5 cm, *motohaba* 3.05 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 15.4 cm, no *nakago-sori*

## Description

*Keijō*: *naginata-naoshi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, wide *mihaba*, no noticeable taper, wide *shinogi-ji*, high *shinogi*, noticeably thin *kasane*, shallow *sori*

*Kitae*: *itame* that is mixed with *mokume*, that tends from the mid-section throughout the lower half of the blade prominently to *nagare-masame*, and that features plenty of *ji-nie*, much fine *chikei*, and a *shirake*-like *utsuri*

*Hamon*: *chū-suguha* in *ko-nie-deki* with a bright and rather tight *nioiguchi* that is mixed with some gently undulating *notare* in places, a little bit of *ko-gunome*, a few *ko-ashi*, and along the upper half of the blade with *hotsure* and fine *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*

*Bōshi*: *sugu-chō* running out as *yakitsume* on the *omote* side and featuring a brief and somewhat pointed *kaeri* on the *ura* side, both sides show a little bit of *hakikake*

*Horimono*: traces of a thin *hi* can be seen along the *shinogi* in the upper half of the tang of the *omote* and in the middle of the tang on the *ura* side

*Nakago*: *suriage*, *kurijiri* that tends to *ha-agari*, *kirijiri*, two *mekugi-ana*, the *sashi-omote* side bears centrally under the second *mekugi-ana* a large and thickly chiseled *niji-mei*, with the character for “Kuni” being slightly affected by the second *mekugi-ana*

## 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 was originally a *naginata* that has been reworked into a *wakizashi*. The *kitae* is an *itame* that is mixed with *mokume*, that tends from the mid-section throughout the lower half of the blade prominently to *nagare-masame*, and that features plenty of *ji-nie*, much fine *chikei*, and a *shirake*-like *utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *chū-suguha* in *ko-nie-deki* with a rather tight *nioiguchi* that is mixed with some gently undulating *notare*, a little bit of *ko-gunome*, some *ko-ashi*, and along the upper half of the blade with *hotosure* and fine *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. Thus, we clearly recognize the characteristic features of the Enju School. Highlights of this blade are its fine and excellently forged *kitae* with its plenty of *ki-nie* and much fine *chikei*, its *suguha* with a bright *nioiguchi*, and the fact that it is signed. The two characters are signed relatively closely together and with the thickest chisel seen among Enju smiths, and another characteristic of Kunisuke's *mei* is that he did not execute the right inner part of the character for "Kuni" in that ear-shape as the other Enju smiths did. The blade preserves plenty of *hira-niku* and so we have here a masterwork that stands out among all known works of Kunisuke.

Now this blade was originally a *naginata* but its *mei* is found on the *haki-ura* side, which is rare for Enju works. But there exists an Enju Kunitoki *katana* with a *gaku-mei* (jūyō at the 35<sup>th</sup> jūyō-shinsa) that is signed in the same way. The *mune* of this *naginata-naoshi wakizashi* bears two *kirikomi* what shows that the blade had earned its merits in a fight or fights.