

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

tantō, mei: Kunimitsu (国光) (Shintōgo)

Measurements

nagasa 23.9 cm, *uchizori*, *motohaba* 2.1 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 10.2 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.15 cm

Description

Keijō: *hira-zukuri, mitsu-mune*, normal *mihaba* and *kasane*, *uchizori*

Kitae: *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features plenty of *ji-nie*, much *chikei*, and a *nie-utsuri*

Hamon: *nie-laden chū-suguha-chō* with a wide, bright, and clear *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *sunagashi* and plenty of *kinsuji*

Bōshi: *sugu* with a relatively wide *ko-maru-kaeri*, *ara-nie*, and *hakikake* at the tip

Horimono: on both sides a *katana-hi* with *tsure-bi* that runs as *kakii-nagashi* into the tang

Nakago: *ubu, kurijiri, katte-sagari yasurime*, two *mekugi-ana*, the *sashi-omote* side bears centrally under the first, the *ubu-mekugi-ana*, a *niji-meい* of which the character for *Kuni* is affected by the second *mekugi-ana*

Explanation

Shintōgo Kunimitsu (新藤五国光) is regarded as the de facto founder of the Sōshū tradition and he trained the three famous and outstanding master students Yukimitsu (行光), Masamune (正宗), and Norishige (則重). Kunimitsu's workmanship reminds us of Awataguchi works at first glance but what differs him are the prominent *chikei* and *kinsuji* along the *jiba* of his blades. He focused on a *suguha* which he hardened in various ways, e.g. as *ito*, *hosō*, *chū*, and *hiro-suguha*. Together with Tōshirō Yoshimitsu (藤四郎吉光), Kunimitsu is regarded as best *tantō* maker of all times.

This *tantō* shows an *itame* that features plenty of *ji-nie*, much *chikei*, and a *nie-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *chū-suguha-chō* with a wide, bright, and clear *nioiguchi* whose *ha* is brimful with sparkling *nie*. In addition, *sunagashi* and plenty of *kinsuji* appear and therefore we clearly recognize all the characteristic features of Shintōgo Kunimitsu. The condition of this *tantō* is extremely good and the *jiba* does not display any non-uniform areas at all whereupon we can regard this blade as one of Kunimitsu's masterworks. During the Edo period, this *tantō* was a heirloom of the Uesugi (上杉) family.