

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

wakizashi, mei: Nobukuni (信国) (Saemon no Jō, 左衛門尉)

Measurements

nagasa 33.6 cm, only a hint of *sori*, *motohaba* 2.8 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 11.2 cm, no *nakago-sori* 0.1

Description

Keijō: *hira-zukuri*, *mitsu-mune*, wide *mihaba*, prominently *sun nobi*, relatively thick *kasane*, only a hint of *sori*

Kitae: *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that tends to *nagare* in places, in addition *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, and a faint *nie-utsuri* appear

Hamon: *suguha* in *ko-nie-deki* with a tight *nioiguchi* that is mixed with a little bit of *ko-gunome* and with plenty of *ashi* and *yō*

Bōshi: wide *kaeri* that tends to *ko-maru*, that features *hakikake* at the tip, and that runs back with some *muneyaki*

Horimono: on the *omote* side a wide *katana-hi* that runs with *kaki-tōshi* through the tang and that features inside a relief of a *kurikara*, the *omote* side shows a *bonji* and *gomabashi*

Nakago: *ubu*, bulbous *kurijiri*, gently slanting *katte-sagari yasurime*, one *mekugi-ana*, the *sashi-omote* side bears centrally under the *mekugi-ana* and partially in the *hi* a thickly chiseled *niji-mei*

Explanation

Nobukuni was a noted school of Kyōto-based swordsmiths that flourished from the Nanbokuchō to the Muromachi period. Entering the Muromachi period, there were the two representative Nobukuni masters who signed with Saemon no Jō Nobukuni (左衛門尉信国) and Shikibu no Jō Nobukuni (式部丞信国) respectively, and as the body of dated works of both of them goes back to the Ōei era (応永, 1394-1428), they are usually summarized as Ōei-Nobukuni (応永信国). A characteristic feature of Saemon no Jō Nobukuni is the way he signed the left inner part of the character for *kuni*. Both Saemon no Jō and Shikibu no Jō forte were elaborate *horimono*. Each Nobukuni generation mainly either stuck to the traditional *suguha* of *Kyō-mono* or the *notare* that follows the style of Sōshū Sadamune (貞宗). With the generation that was active at the end of the Nanbokuchō and entering the Muromachi period and the Ōei-Nobukuni smiths however, we see the workmanship of the school being enlarged with a new approach, that is, we also see a hardening in a *gunome*-based *midareba*.

This *wakizashi* is a work of Saemon no Jō Nobukuni that is hardened in a classical *suguha*, with the *sugata* and the *horimono* showing both clearly the characteristics of the time and the school. A masterwork among all blades known by this smith.