

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

*tantō, mei:* Minamoto Shikibu no Jō Nobukuni - Ōei sanjū?-nen jūnigatsu hi (源式部丞信国・応永三十〇年十二月日) - "On a day in the twelfth month of Ōei 3? (1424-1428)"

## Measurements

*nagasa* 28.3 cm, *no sori*, *motohaba* 2.9 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 10.4 cm, *no nakago-sori*

## Description

*Keijō: hira-zukuri, mitsu-mune*, rather short *nagasa* in relation to the *mihaba*, thick *kasane*, *no sori*

*Kitae: standing-out itame-nagare* that features *chikei* and plenty of *ji-nie*

*Hamon: nie-laden and large dimensioned gunome-midare* with a bright and clear *nioiguchi* that is mixed with *ko-notare*, some *chōji*, *kinsuji*, *sunagashi*, *tobiyaki*, and that appears with the *muneyaki* as *hitatsura*

*Bōshi: kaen* with plenty of *hakikake* and a rather pointed *kaeri* which runs back as *muneyaki*

*Nakago: ubu*, bulbous *kurijiri*, *kirijiri*, two *mekugi-ana*, the *sashi-omote* side bears centrally a relatively large *rokuji-meい* and the *ura* side an identically positioned and interpreted date

## Explanation

Nobukuni was a noted school of Kyōto-based swordsmiths that flourished from the Nanbokuchō to the Muromachi period. This *tantō* is a work of one of representative Ōei-Nobukuni masters, Shikibu no Jō Nobukuni. A theory says that Shikibu no Jō Nobukuni was the younger brother of Saemon no Jō Nobukuni (左衛門尉信国) but the exact relationship of the two smiths is a task for future studies. As this *tantō* is signed with the prefix "Minamoto" (源), it becomes clear that we are facing here a clan name and not, as assumed in the past, a part of Saemon no Jō Nobukuni's first name who signed with this character too, as a prefix, and whose name was thus often read as Genzaemon no Jō Nobukuni (源左衛門尉信国). In other words, his *mei* must be read as "Minamoto Saemon no Jō Nobukuni."

This blade is hardened in *hitatsura*, what is rare for Shikibu no Jō Nobukuni, and it is conceivable that he aimed with this interpretation at works by the Hasebe School which had been active in Kyōto earlier. Thus we have here a valuable reference for studies on not only the smith himself but on the Nobukuni School of this time in general, and the blade is apart from that of an excellent *deki*.