

UK Sword Register No. 78

Type: Shinshinto Naginata

Nagasa: 75.7 cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0 cm **Saki-haba:** 2.6 cm

- Sugata:** Shobu-zukuri, o-kissaki, wide mihaba with almost no tapering towards the kissaki, very shallow zori, slight saki-zori, iori-mune.
- Jihada:** Almost muji-hada but itame-gokoro, becoming masame in places, some ji-nie and occasional tobiyaki.
- Hamon:** Nioi-deki, saka or gyaku-gunome-choji midare, ashi-iri, some yo, some sunagaeshi. The boshi on the omote hints at Jizo-boshi whilst the ura is slightly midare-komi and ko-maru. Both have kaeri. Hamon ends in yakiotoshi about 2 cm from the ha-machi.
- Nakago:** Ubu with 2 mekugi-ana, mumei, suri-dashi yasurime, kiri-jiri.

This blade is immediately discernable as being of shinshinto period manufacture, as is indicated by the wide mihaba and heavy feel, as well as the jihada which is very tight. The jigane also looks rather bright and new. The bright nioi-deki hamon, which is basically a sloping gunome-choji, indicates that the style is that of Bizen province. In fact, apart from the Jizo style boshi on the ura (which is a Mino style of boshi) it resembles the workmanship of Kanemitsu of the Nambokucho period (14th century). Yamon Naokatsu, the swordsmith to whom this is attributed, specialised in the hybrid Bizen-Soshu style known as Soden, a style that is also closely associated with Kanemitsu.

The blade is of a strong, magnificent and powerful shape and the nakago, which is 74 cm in length, is almost as long as the blade itself (making it both a difficult polishing and oshigata job). Although classified as Naginata by the NBTHK, I have always thought of it more as a Nagamaki, as it seems to be more like a sword shape than a Naginata. The koshirae would also point towards a Nagamaki. However, the blade may resemble a style of Naginata from the Kamakura or Nambokucho period. I think it is likely that it is a piece designed for daimyo processions or something similar, rather than being made for practical use.

Yamon Naokatsu was the second generation to have this name in shinshinto times. His natural father, Jiro Taro Naokatsu was the adopted son of Naotane and so I guess that Yamon may be called the “adopted” grandson of this master of the Suishinshi school. In his earlier days, Yamon Naokatsu signed Naoyoshi and took on the name of Naokatsu when he became the head of the family on his father’s death in Bunkyo Ninen (1862). He worked in Edo and died on 31st March, Meiji Jushishinen (1884) at the age of 50. According to Nihon-to Koza, *“he was not too skilled a sword maker among members of the Taikai Naotane Mon. However he gives the impression that, as a tōkō, he was never affected by outside influences and fulfilled his duties to the very end”*.

Fujishiro rates Yamon Naokatsu as chu-josaku and the blade was given Hozon To-ken by the NBTHK at their January 2001 shinsa.

Clive Sinclair
Bexley, Sept 2006

Mumei, attributed to Yamon Naokatsu

無銘(弥門直勝)

