

UK Sword Register No.94

Type: Wakizashi

Nagasa: 33.1 cm **Moto-haba:** 3.1 cm **Saki-haba:** 2.9 cm

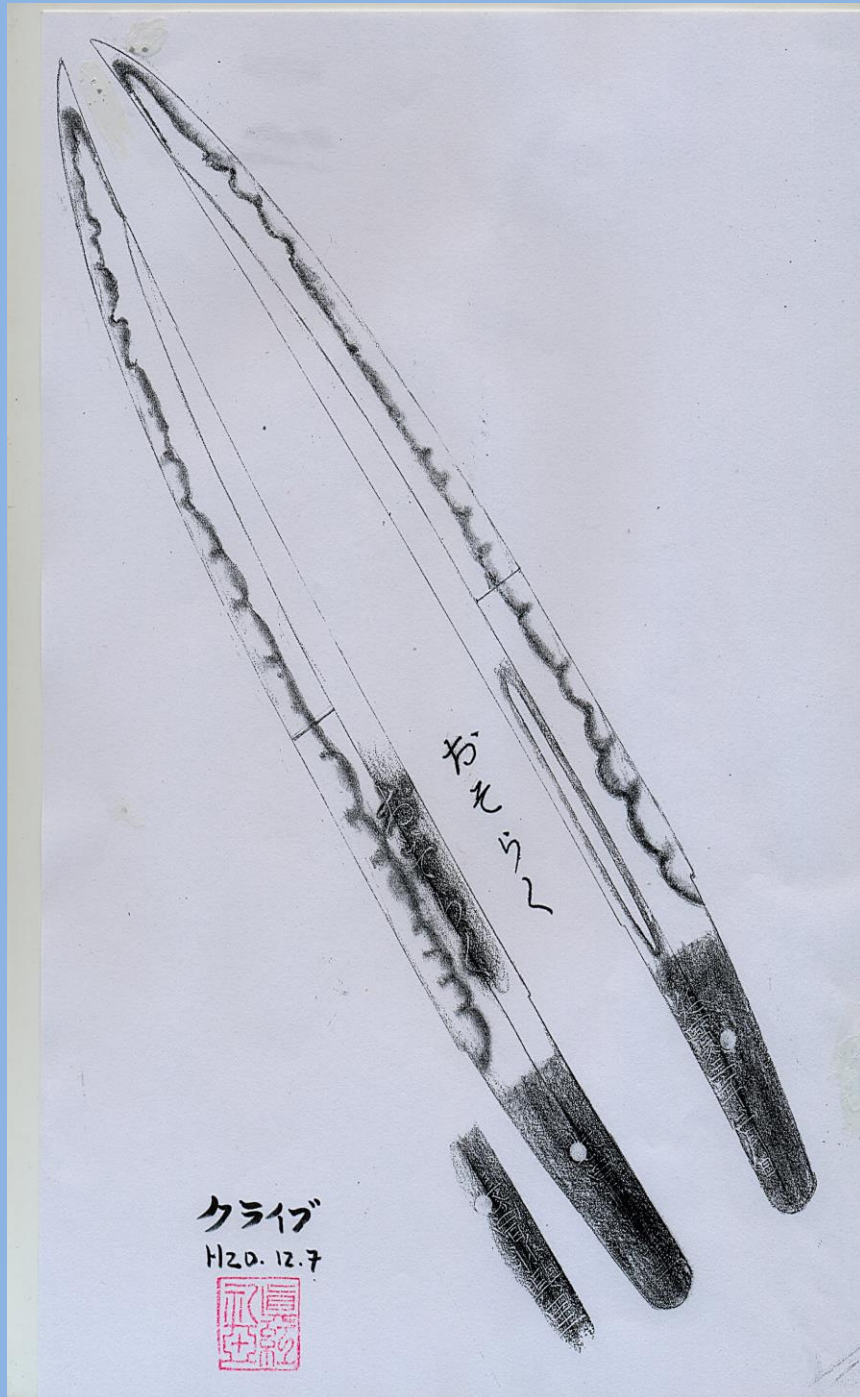
Sugata: Osoraku-tsukuri wakizashi with characteristically long kissaki, wide mihaba, shallow tori-zori with iori-mune and relatively thin kasane.

Jihada: Ko-mokume hada with some ji-nie.

Hamon: Pronounced nie-deki gunome midare, the gunome becoming smaller in the kissaki. The boshi is slightly midare-komi with ko-maru and a long kaeri.

Horimono: On the ura a koshi-hi and on the omote a four character hiragana hori reading “Osoraku”.

Nakago: Ubu with one mekugi-ana, kuri-jiri and sujikai yasurime. Inscribed on the omote “NAGASONE OKISATO” and dated on the ura “ENPO SANNEN NIGATSU JITSU”.



Of course, immediately noticeable is the strange sugata with the very large kissaki that seems disproportionate to the overall Nagasa, but which also gives a very sharp impression. In fact, out of the total Nagasa of 33.1 cm. the kissaki accounts for 22 cm. This sugata is quite rare and was originally invented in the sue-koto period by Shimada Sukemune, who made it for the Sengoku general, Katagiri Katsumoto. The sword had an enigmatic horimono comprising of the characters O-SO-RA-KU (translated as “perhaps”) carved on the blade and so the sugata became known as Osoraku-tsukuri. The present sword also has this horimono, beautifully cut in the hiragana script. One wonders whether Sukemune was inspired by the uncertainty and impermanence of life at this time of constant warfare, when he carved the original horimono.

This unusual wakizashi bears a variation of a doubtful Kotetsu mei. Kotetsu is arguably the finest of all shinto swordsmiths from Edo. The blade is well forged and has an attractive and tight ko-mokume-hada with some ji-nie. It has the appearance of a large tanto rather than a wakizashi and only tanto and wakizashi are known to be made in this sugata .

The hamon displays many quite coarse, large and dark nie, particularly in the motohaba area at the start of the hamon, where the gunome are largest and the long ashi are most visible. The midare-komi boshi, the tight jihada, low iori-mune and bright appearance of the jigane, lead me to think that this is later workmanship than that of Okisato (Kotetsu) and that this is probably reasonably good shinshinto work. In fact, an example of this sugata is illustrated in the Shinshinto edition of Nihon-to Koza . This shows a blade made by Kiyondo, who it states, made many of them. I think that the gunome hamon of the present sword closely resembles the hamon associated with the later workmanship of the Kiyomaro group and Kiyondo in particular.

Clive Sinclair

Bexley

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NB: I was surprised at the difficulty that I found in drawing this oshigata. The initial outline took at least 6 attempts and the nakago rubbing on each side is very poor. The hamon within the kissaki was difficult to see clearly and so to draw. I am also disappointed in the horimono rubbing and I actually cut myself (only small nicks) three times whilst making the oshigata! Finally, please excuse the unusual angle of the drawing, but without a further reduction in size it could not be scanned on my scanner.