

UK Sword Register No. 95

Type: Wakizashi

Nagasa: 49.0 cm **Moto-haba:** 2.6 cm **Moto-haba:** 2.1 cm

Sugata: Suriage, shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, chu-kissaki with shin-no-kurikara (realistic dragon) horimono on the omote, so-no-kurikara (highly simplified dragon) horimono on the ura.

Jihada: A rather loose and “swirling” itame-hada, the jigane quite dark in colour.

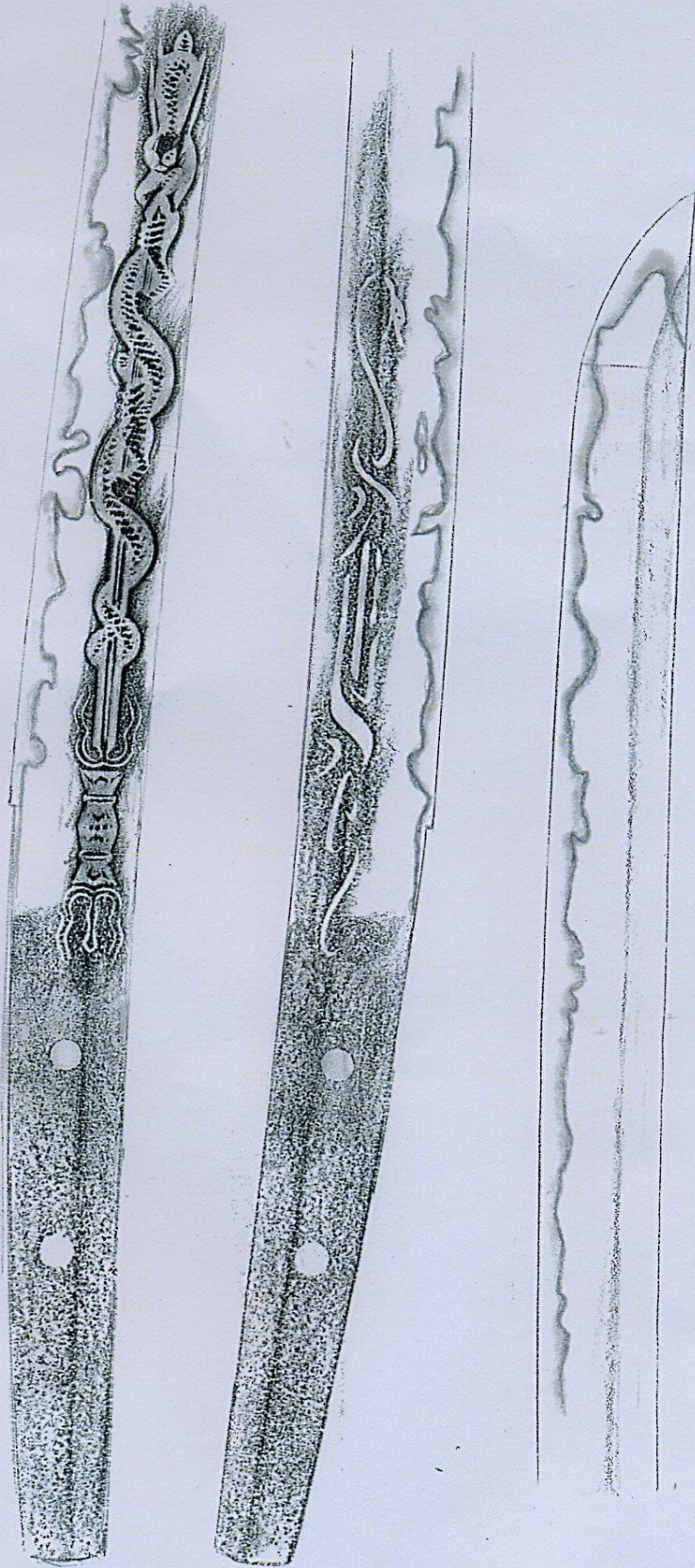
Hamon: An irregular notare-midare, predominantly in nioi with some nie. Isolated gunome and choji with occasional tobiyaki. Slightly notare boshi with ko-maru and short kaeri.

Nakago: O-suriage and machi-okuri, yasurime indistinct, 2 mekugi-ana, mumei, kuri-jiri.

魚銘(下原)

クライブ

H.21.1.1



Although suriage and mumei, this sword has been attributed to the Shitahara school by NBTHK shinsa. There are many details which point this blade to this school, including the unique jihada which has a circular swirling pattern and is known as uzumaki-hada. The dark jigane is also found in Shitahara blades and the bird like face of the dragon horimono, is unique to the school.

Founded around the Eisho (1504) and Kyoroku (1528) eras in the later Muromachi period, a swordsmith named Tajima (no) Kami Chikashige from the Yamamoto clan, is credited with the foundation of the Shitahara school in what is now the Hachioji district of Metropolitan Tokyo. It is thought that he was employed by Oishi Sadahisa, a high ranking retainer of the Yamaouchi Uesugi family. He later came under the patronage of Hojo Ujiteru who occupied Hachioji castle.

When Hideyoshi ejected the Hojo from the Kanto area in 1590, the group of swordsmiths were relocated to Shitahara and when Tokugawa Ieyasu occupied Edo castle, they became direct retainers of the Tokugawa family and were permanently established there. They made blades for the battles of Sekigahara which took place in 1600 and the Osaka castle battles of 1614.

During the Edo period, there were 10 branches of the Yamamoto clan and it has been estimated that there were approximately 165 swordsmiths from this extended family and some 5,000 blades extant in Japan today. Consequently, there are many Shitahara blades from the shinto period, often with picturesque hamon such as sanbon-sugi, sudare-ba and Fujiyama. They were also skilled carvers of horimono, as may be seen in this example, but very few swords were made from 1780 onwards.

Both Chikashige and another named Chikahiro, studied swordmaking under Tsuguhiro, a Soshu smith from Kamakura and later under the shodai Masatoshi of Odawara. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is said that the Shitahara school was influenced by the Soshu school of Kamakura, the Sengo school of Ise (ubu nakago are often tanagobara-gata, similar to those of Muramasa) and both the Shimada and Odawara Soshu schools. Such Soshu-den influences may be seen in the present example by the comparatively large jihada as well as the occasional tobiyaki. However, the predominantly nioi based hamon shows only later affiliations and cast doubt over the claim of direct descent from Masamune, sometimes claimed for this school.

The current sword gives the impression of being a koto blade when the nagasa, jihada and nakago are considered. This may indicate, that although only attributed to the school, that the smith of

this blade was Chikashige or more probably, his son Terushige. Other smiths of the school include Yasushige, Hiroshige and Musashi Taro Yasukuni, but the school did not produce any outstanding smiths.

Finally, as a footnote to the above, a number of samurai felt that the blades of Shitahara were inauspicious, as the 2 characters for Shita and Hara (see oshigata) may also be interpreted as *shimo-hara* or “lower stomach”, implying seppuku. This resulted in a significant number of swords having the offending characters removed from their nakago, as may have been the case in this present sword.

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Further reading:
Bushido magazine. A series of articles by Seri
Shitahara Oshigata Exhibition catalogue by Karita Naoji