

UK Sword Register No: 97

Type: Shinshinto yoroi-doshi

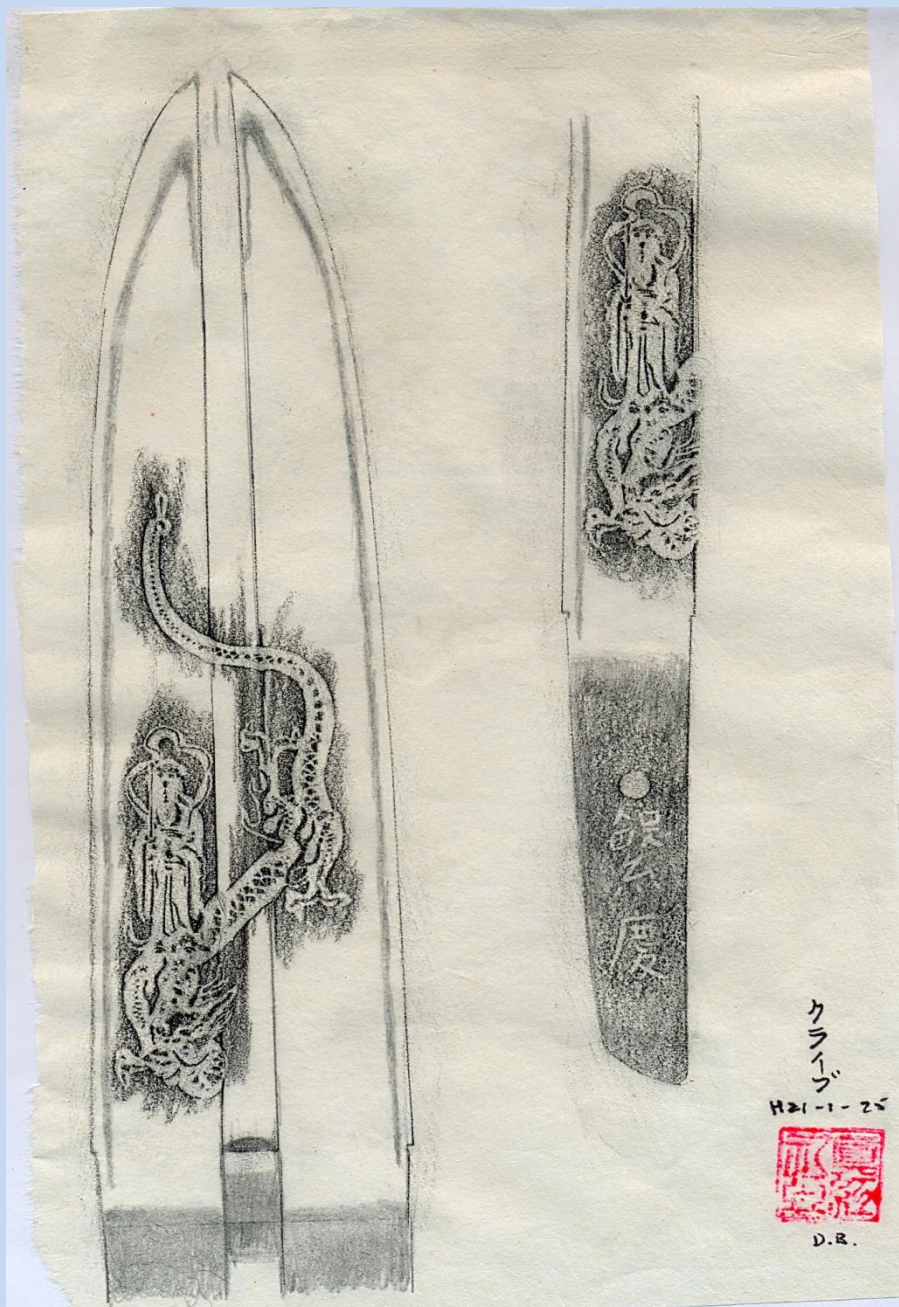
Nagasa: 23.9 cm **Moto-haba:** 2.7 cm **Saki-haba:** 2.0 cm

Sugata: Hira-zukuri tanto, mu-zori (possibly slightly uichi-zori), maru-mune and ornate horimono.

Jihada: Tight ko-mokume, almost muji-hada.

Hamon: Suguha in ko-nie, ko-maru boshi with kaeri.

Nakago: Ubu with one mekugi-ana, sharply ha-agari kuri-jiri, inscribed on the omote "HANKEI".



This tanto has a wide maru-mune and disproportionately thick kazane, hence the yoroi-doshi (armour piercer) description above. The inscription of "Hankei" on the nakago bears only passing resemblance to the mei of this famous shinto swordsmith, although the nakago-jiri is similar to Hankei's distinctive nakago. Further, the workmanship does not resemble the Soshu-den associated with Hankei, rather the tight jihada and the general proportions of the blade indicate that shinshinto is the earliest period of manufacture.

Of course, the outstanding and immediately noticeable feature of this blade, is the intricate and highly detailed, decorative horimono of the goddess Benten and a dragon. The figure of Benten, holding a vraja hilted sword. shows microscopic details of both features and clothing. The dragon also shows all its features and scale in great detail and it appears mainly, with Benten on the omote of the blade. However, unusually, the body of the dragon is carried onto the round mune and continued uninterrupted onto the ura of the blade and then, once again crosses the mune and ends with the dragon's tail back on the omote! I am afraid that the intricate detail of this carving is impossible to convey in oshigata form.

There are relatively few horimono-shi capable of this standard of work and I am tempted to consider it to be Taisho period, or even Showa period workmanship, maybe of the Gassan or Ikkansai school.

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