

UK Sword Register No. 63

Type: Gendaito

Nagasa: 67.1 cm Moto-haba: 3.2 cm Saki-haba: 2.3 cm

Sugata: Shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, koshi-zori and chu-kissaki

Jihada: Condition prevents precise appraisal but appears muji-hada.

Hamon: Gunome-choji-midare in nioi-deki, midare-komi boshi ending in komaru with a short kaeri.

Nakago: Ubu with one mekugi-ana, kuri-jiri, o-sujikai yasurime with kesho finish. Signed on the haki-omote with the phrase JINCHU HOKOKU and MINAMOTO YOSHIMUNE SAKU and on the haki-ura the date is inscribed as KOKI NISEN ROKU HYAKU SANNEN JU GATSU (October 1942).

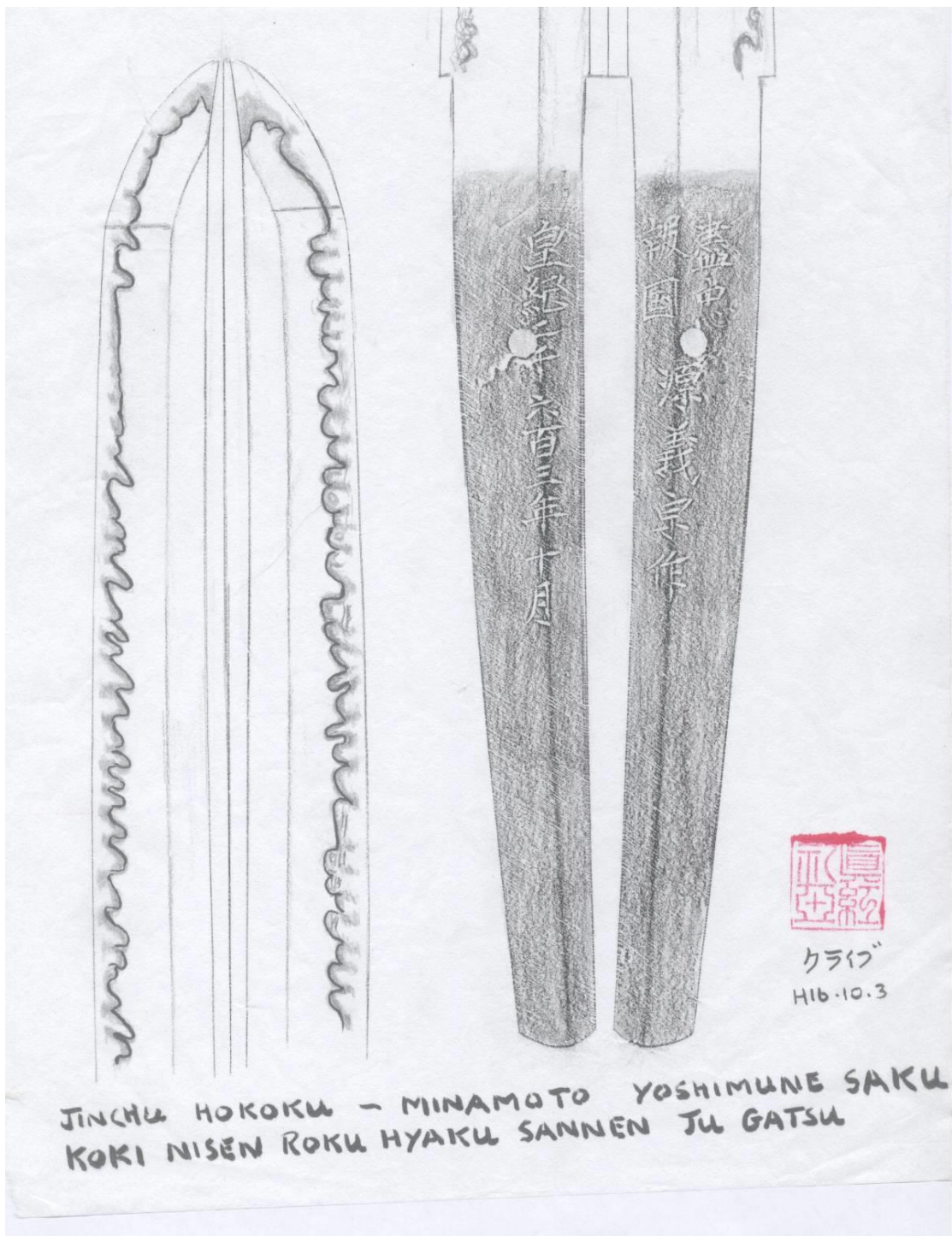
The flamboyant gunome-choji midare hamon in nioi and the koshi-zori indicate that this sword is made in a pure Bizen-den tradition, in spite of it being made in the early Showa period (1943). Within the hamon there are a number of hataraki, including kinsuji, sunagashi and many ashi. It may be that the swordsmith was trying to emulate the work of either Nagamitsu or Kagemitsu from the Osafune school in the Kamakura and Nambokucho period. However, although the hamon may have similarities, the jihada is very tight and difficult to see, resembling shinshinto more than koto.

The inscription on the haki-omote reading *Jinchu Hokoku*, is a patriotic phrase meaning “*make sacrifices for the country*” and by implication, the Emperor. Beneath this is the name of the swordsmith, Minamoto Yoshimune. On the haki-ura, the date is given another patriotic twist and means “2603 years from the founding of the Empire, 10th month”. Altogether it is evident that this sword captures the patriotic fervour of the swordsmiths and country at that time.

This swordsmith is Takahashi Yoshimune and he was born in Ehime prefecture. His younger brother, also a talented swordsmith, was Takahashi Sadatsugu who worked in Osaka with the Gassan school. (In 1955, Sadatsugu was the first swordsmith to be appointed as Ningen Kokuho or Living National Treasure). Yoshimune became a student of Yokoyama Sukesada in 1913 and according to Slough (*Modern Japanese Swordsmiths 1868-1945*) he became a student of Ehime Yoshitane in 1918. Later he was taught by Enju Kunitoshi and he also worked with his brother in Osaka where he may have been influenced by Gassan Sadakazu and Sadakatsu.

His speciality was the gunome-choji-midare in the Bizen style as seen in this sword and he is rated amongst the top makers of gendaito in the Showa period. Interestingly he seemed to have usually signed tachi-mei.

Clive Sinclair
Bexley, Oct '04



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クラヴ
H16-10.3

JINCHU HOKOKU - MINAMOTO YOSHIMUNE SAKU
KOKI NISEN ROKU HYAKU SANNEN JU GATSU

