

## UK Sword Register 69

**Type:** Gendaito

**Nagasa:** 63.3 cm      **Moto-haba:** 2.5 cm      **Saki-haba:** 1.8 cm

**Sugata:**      Hon-zukuri, shallow tori-zori, iori-mune, ko-kissaki

**Jihada:**      A tight ko-itame and ko-mokume, looser towards the machi area.

**Hamon:**      A wide but shallow and regular gunome-midare in ko-nie, the gunome formed by many ashi throughout. A larger single gunome on both sides in the mono-uchi. Many sunagashi especially on the edge of the hamon. The boshi with slight midare-komi, hakkikake and kaeri.

**Horimono:**      On the omote, kurikara in ukibori with bo-hi in the top half. On the ura a bohi with a gombashi in relief within the hi.

**Nakago:**      Ubu with one mekugi-ana, yoko-yasurime, kuri-jiri. Signed on the omote, centred on the Shinogi, IKKANSAI SHIGETOSHI with kakihan and on the ura dated MEIJI SANJUHACHI NEN ROKU GATSU IKKA (The first day in June, spring 1905) and also ROKUJUHACHI OKINA SAKU (made by an old man of 68)

This is a very slim and lightweight sword and is in the style of a tachi even though it is signed in the manner of a katana. The ko-nie hamon has shallow undulations with many gunome ashi. Many sunagashi brush the edge of the hamon especially. The isolated gunome in the mono-uchi looks rather strange and almost accidental, being far more pronounced than most of the rest of the hamon. To me, however, the jihada seems rather bland and uninteresting.

An outstanding feature of the sword is the spectacular horimono of a dragon and ken, set in a groove on the omote side of the sword. This is deeply and skilfully carved and is of the highest quality but unfortunately not particularly visible on the accompanying oshigata.

Ikkansai Shigetoshi, whose real name was Miyaguchi Hachiro, was one of those swordsmiths working in the difficult Meiji times after the Hattori prohibition on the wearing of swords. He was born in Tempo 9<sup>th</sup> year (1838) in Shizuoka of Suruga province and became a student of Hanabe Toshinori in Inaba province and he was adopted by his teacher. He later returned to Shizuoka and resumed the use of his original family name of Miyaguchi. Whilst in Inaba it is said that he used the name of Hisatoshi as his smith's name.

After he changed his name to Ikkansai Shigehiro, he learned horimono carving from a student of Ozaki Suketaka in Osaka. Finally he chose Shigetoshi as his smith's name. He lived in Kurma town, part of Shizuoka City after the Meiji Restoration. Shigetoshi died in 1906 at the age of 69 and so this present work represents one of his last works.

His workmanship is typically a jihada of dense ko-itame and the hamon is choji-midare in nioi-deki or gunome in ko-nie-deki like in the current example. Shigetoshi's

best pupil was the famous Kasama Shigetsugu and his grandson was the talented Miyaguchi Toshihiro (Yasuhiro of the Yasukuni shrine's Nihonto Tanrenjo).

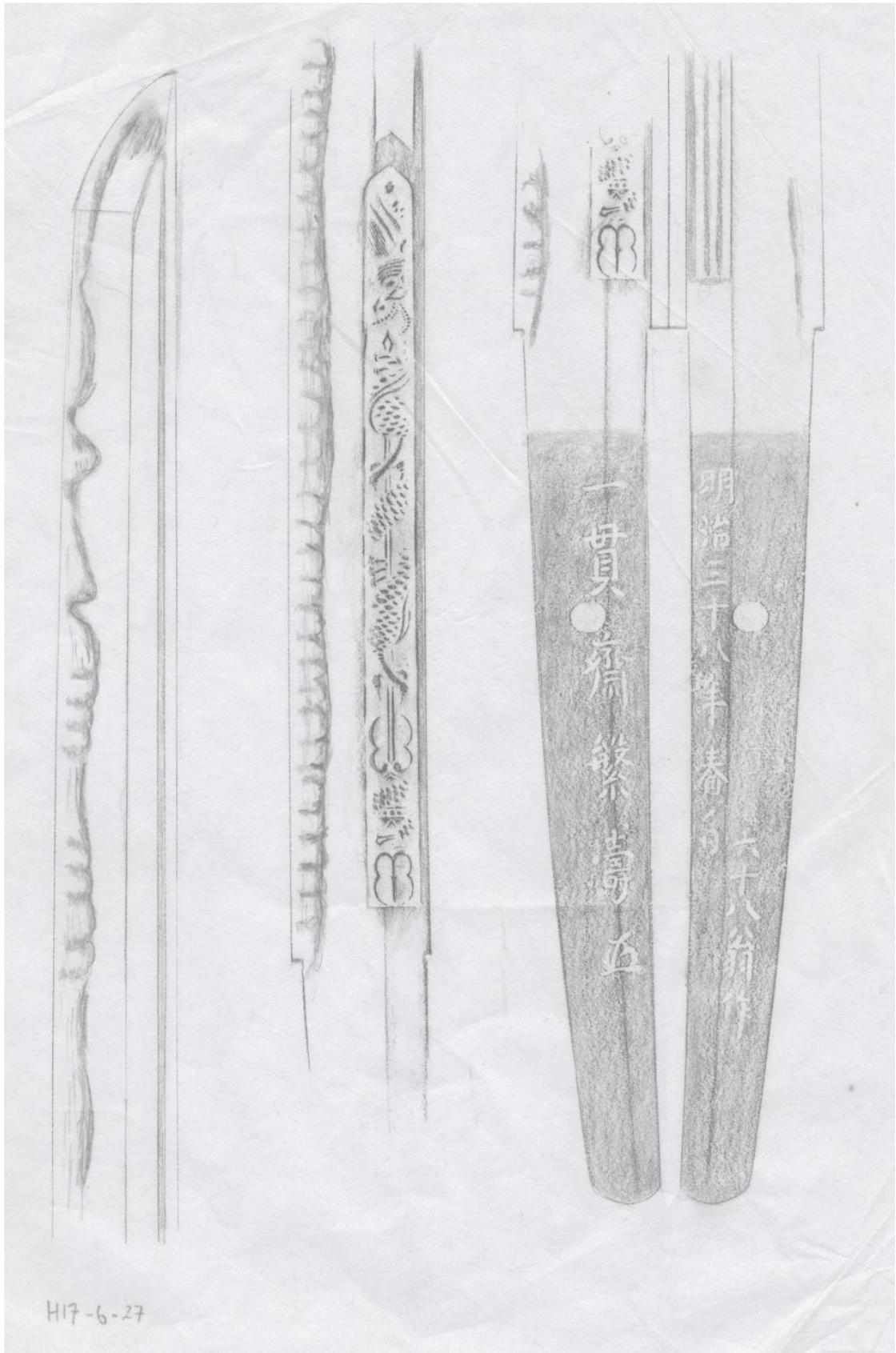
Shigetoshi's reputation is as an excellent horimono carver and it maybe that the dragon on this sword was his favourite subject as exactly the same design is illustrated in Shinshinto Taikan. Horimono carving was a skill common to a number of members of his school, right through to modern times. Indeed one may be forgiven for considering that the present blade is a "canvas" for the horimono and even if he was not the greatest of swordsmiths, he left a legacy of good horimono-shi.

On the ura of this sword's nakago, apart from the date, there is the inscription "Rokujuhachi Okina saku" – made by an old man of 68. A similar example is shown in Fujishiro's Nihon Shinto Jiten but was done two years earlier at the age of 66.

This sword was made for a high ranking official of the Meiji government or military as it was accompanied by a rare tachi koshirae that is identical to a gensui-to (Field Marshal's sword) except that it features kiri-mon rather than the kiku-mon of gensui-to. This accounts for its very light weight and slim tachi sugata, in other words, it was probably made to an exact specification for the koshirae.

The sword was given Hozon Token by the NBTHK.

Clive Sinclair  
Bexley  
June 2005



H17-6-27