

UK Sword Register No.66

Type: Shinto Katana

Nagasa: 71.5 cm

Moto-haba: 3.0 cm

Saki-haba: 1.9 cm

Sugata: Shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, very shallow tori-zori (almost mu-zori) ko-kissaki, noticeable tapering towards the kissaki

Jihada: Appears to be a very tight itame-hada, almost muji-hada

Hamon: Wide and large patterned gunome-midare in nie with a wide nioiguchi, reaching the Shinogi in many places and ashi in nioi, long straight yakidashi at the base. Boshi in ko-maru with long kaeri.

Nakago: Ubu with 2 mekugi-ana, some machi-okuri, kiri yasurime, kuri-jiri, signed on the omote BISHU JU SADAHIRO SAKU.

The distinctive sugata of an almost straight blade tapering to a ko-kissaki is the so-called Kanbun-shinto sugata. This style became fashionable in the Kanbun period (1667-73) and was particularly associated with Edo shinto. It was developed to reflect the new style of kendo in which a straight shinai (bamboo sword) was employed. The sword under discussion was made at about this time or slightly later, by Sadahiro in Owari province and with the straight yakidashi reflects the Edo style of hamon.

At the end of the Muromachi period, a number of swordsmiths migrated from Mino province to Owari as part of the great dispersal of Mino talent across the country. This group became known as the Owari Seki school.

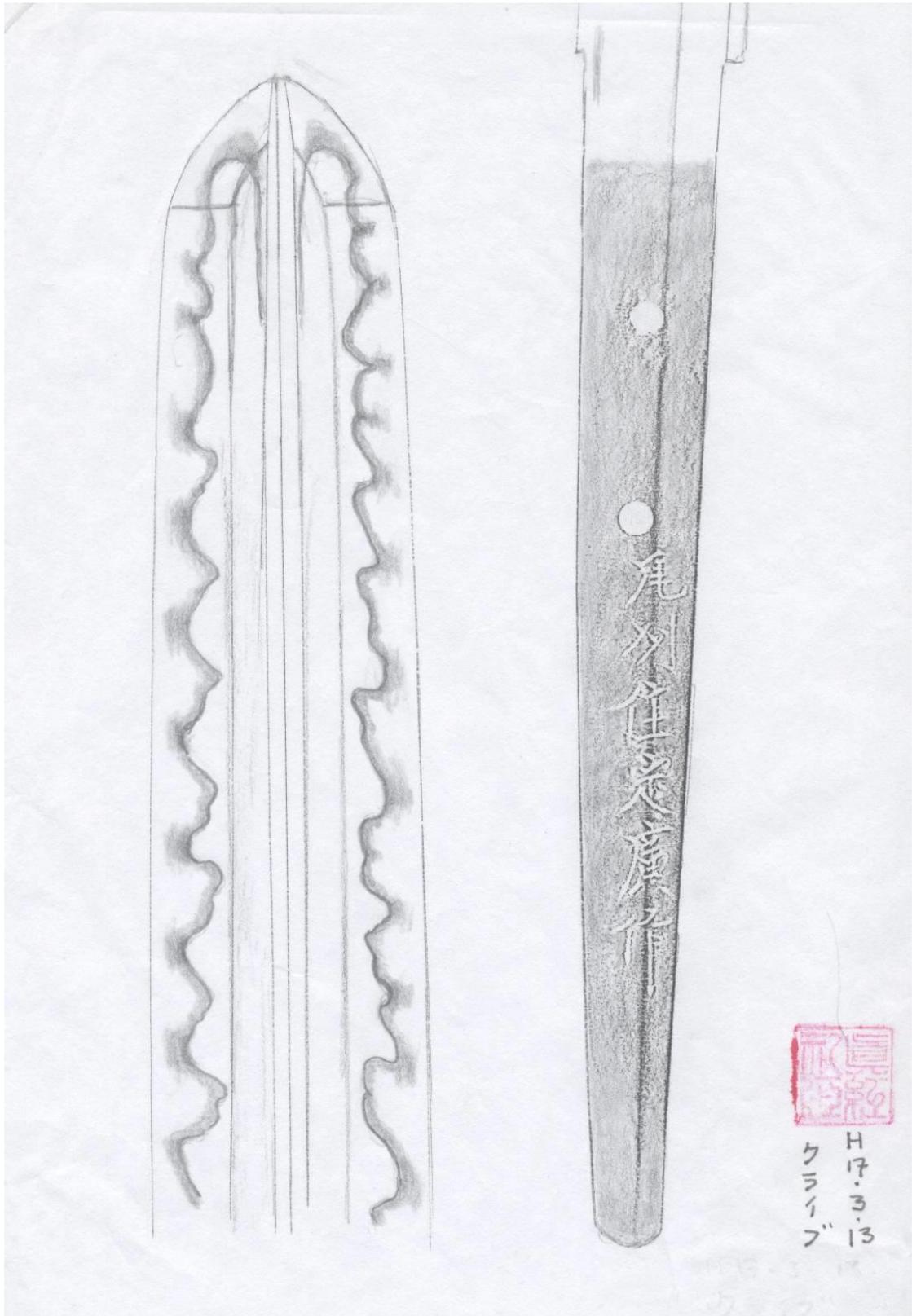
Famous for being the birthplace of Oda Nobunaga, Owari became the fief of Tokugawa Yoshinao in 1607. The capital of the province was the castle town of Nagoya which attracted many swordsmiths. Also in Owari, the ancient castle of Inuyama, originally built in 1435, was strengthened and commanded by Naruse Masanari and his descendants. It was at Inuyama that Sadahiro resided and produced swords.

There are three smiths named Sadahiro listed in Hawleys (SAD 375, 376, 377). It is unclear whether this represents two or three separate generations, but the latter two include Inuyama in their mei. As these two are given working dates of 1684 and 1688 respectively (i.e. post Kanbun) and SAD 375 is given with a pre-Kanbun date, it is thought that the Sadahiro discussed here is likely to be one of the former (i.e. Sad 376 or 377) if indeed these are not the same man.

There is some indication of Mino influence in this sword with some of the gunome being more togari-ba than rounded. The top mekugi-ana and machi-okuri would appear to have been done in order to accommodate the shin-gunto koshirae that accompany the blade. It is unfortunate that condition prevents more detailed appraisal of both hamon and jihada.

Clive Sinclair

Bexley, Kent, March 2005



Katana: BISHU JU SADAHIRO SAKU