

UK Sword Register No. 109

Type: Shinto katana

Nagasa: 69.6 cm **Moto-haba:** 2.8 cm **Saki-haba:** 2.0 cm

Sugata: Shinogi-zukuri with small chu-kissaki, iori-mune and shallow tori-zori.

Jihada: A well-forged ko-mokume-hada.

Hamon: Formed of both ko-nie and nioi the hamon is based on midare-gunome with kawakazuko-choji included in many places. The wild and irregular hamon frequently reaches the shinogi and there are numerous tobiyaki which makes the hamon appear as hitatsura. The boshi is unclear but appears to be in ko-maru with kaeri..

Nakago: A long ubu-nakago with two overlapping mekugi-ana. It tapers to a small ha-agari kuri-jiri and the yasurime-mei are sujikai ending in the kesho manner. Signed on the sashi-omote (katana-mei) CHOSHU JU FUJIWARA NOBUTARO.

The very shallow zori, combined with the tapering and small kissaki, immediately confirm the time of manufacture as the Kanbun era (1661-72) which was generally a particularly productive time for the making of swords throughout the country. However, I think it is rather rare, to see this type of hitatsura hamon at this time. The hamon is highly flamboyant being both wide and formed of many different shaped and sized gunome and choji in a very individualistic manner, but the hamon noticeably lacks hataraki overall.

The swordsmith Nobutaro, is recorded as working a little earlier than Kanbun in Hawley's who gives 1624 as his working date, but based on the present example, I think this is a little too early in the shinto period. Choshu (or Nagato) was a strategically important province at the Western extreme of Honshu. During the Edo period, the province was under the control of the Mori tozama daimyo family. During the koto period there were few swordsmiths in this province apart from Sa Yasuyoshi who moved there from Chikuzen. It is thought that the Mori clan patronised the Nio group from the neighbouring province of Suo and a number of these smiths moved into Choshu in the early shinto period. Many of these had the character "Kiyō" as the first in their name, such as Kiyoshige (see UK Sword Reg No.60 for a naginata by a Nio Kiyoshige)

In Yamanaka's notes, there is listed a group of smiths that he refers to as the "Choshu Nio" and he says "*whether these smith stem from the Nio school from Suo province is not clear. Probably so.*"

He further lists these smiths, as follows:

Jutaro (Keicho)	Hirotao (Kanei)	Masakiyo (Genroku)	Kiyonori (Genroku)	Kiyoshige (Genroku)	Kiyoshige (Genbun)
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Kiyozane (Kyoho)	Nagakiyo
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This list seems incomplete with at least two omissions, these being the present sword by Nobutaro and Shigetaro, recorded by Sato Kanzan sensei as also working in the Kanbun era.

This sword passed as genuine by the NTHK shinsa when it was held in London where they used the alternative reading of Nobutaro, which is Shintaro

Clive Sinclair
Bexley, UK
1st January 2011