

UK Sword Register No.111

Type: Koto katana

Nagasa: 67.4 cm **Moto-haba:** 2.9 cm **Saki-haba:** 1.9cm

Sugata: A slender shinogi-zukuri with iori-mune a deep tori-zori. Chu-kissaki.

Jihada: A prominent and flowing itame hada with some masame.

Hamon: An irregular gunome-midare in nie and nioi, many ashi and yo, midare –komi boshi with short kaeri.

Horimono: So no Kurikara (highly simplified dragon winding around a straight sword) with tsume and above rendai (lotus flower) and below bonji. Gombashi-hi on the ura.

Nakago: Ubu with one mekugi-ana, higaki yasurime , kuri-jiri. Signed on the sashi-omote (katana-mei) with the two character signature KANEMUNE.

At first glance, this sword looks very much like Bizen workmanship and suggests a tachi rather than a katana. However, with higaki yasurime and masame in the jihada, Mino-den is indicated as the tradition and as it is signed on sashi-omote in the manner of katana, it cannot be tachi!

The horimono, which have been carefully preserved during the modern polishing process, are skilfully executed but are almost certainly ato-bori (added by somebody other than the original swordsmith) as Mino-Seki blades almost never have horimono.

The previous owner contacted Albert Yamanaka in 1962 and sent him an oshigata of the nakago. Yamanaka considered that it was by the shodai Kanemune and said that *Kanemune is a very rare bird*. Twenty years later, the same owner also sent an oshigata to Tanobe sensei of the NBTHK who thought it was by the nidai, active in the Churoku era (1457-60). Neither of the two experts saw the actual sword and were only able to comment on the oshigata.

The Oei period (1394-1428) was one of transition from tachi to katana and the Sanmitsu of Oei Bizen school were forerunners in this change. This was before the great dominance of Mino-den in the later part of the Muromachi period and this may be for this reason that this Mino blade by Kanemune looks so much like a Bizen tachi. Further, the lack of the saki-zori seen later in the Muromachi period, might indicate that this is transitional and from the Oei period, ie the shodai and not the nidai. The NBTHK gave the sword Hozon in March 2004 shinsa but did not indicate which generation and so the foregoing is only my personal reasoning and assessment.

The shodai Kanemune numbered Kanemoto and the nidai Kanemune amongst his pupils. Fujishiro only lists the nidai and states that he was the son of the shodai who founded the Seki Yoshimasa Ha. Fujishiro rates the nidai as Chu-saku and agrees that his working date is Churoku. The sword is accompanied by a good buke-zukuri koshirae.

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