

## UK Sword Register No. 71

**Type:** Shinshinto katana

**Nagasa:** 76.2 cm      **Moto-Haba:** 3.2 cm      **Saki-haba:** 2.1 cm

**Sugata:** Hon-zukuri, shallow koshii-sori, iori-mune, extended chu-kissaki, futatsu-bi. There is a small kiri-komi on one of the hi.

**Ji-hada:** The jihada appears to be very tight in muji style but predominantly masame-hada, with some ko-itame mixed in.

**Hamon:** Hiro-suguha with a gentle notare in ko-nie. There are two gunome-like projections near the base on the omote. There are long sunagashi appearing almost to form nijuba in places. The boshi is rather unclear but appears to be a continuation of the hamon, and is almost ichimai (fully covering the kissaki area) and finishing in komaru with kaeri.

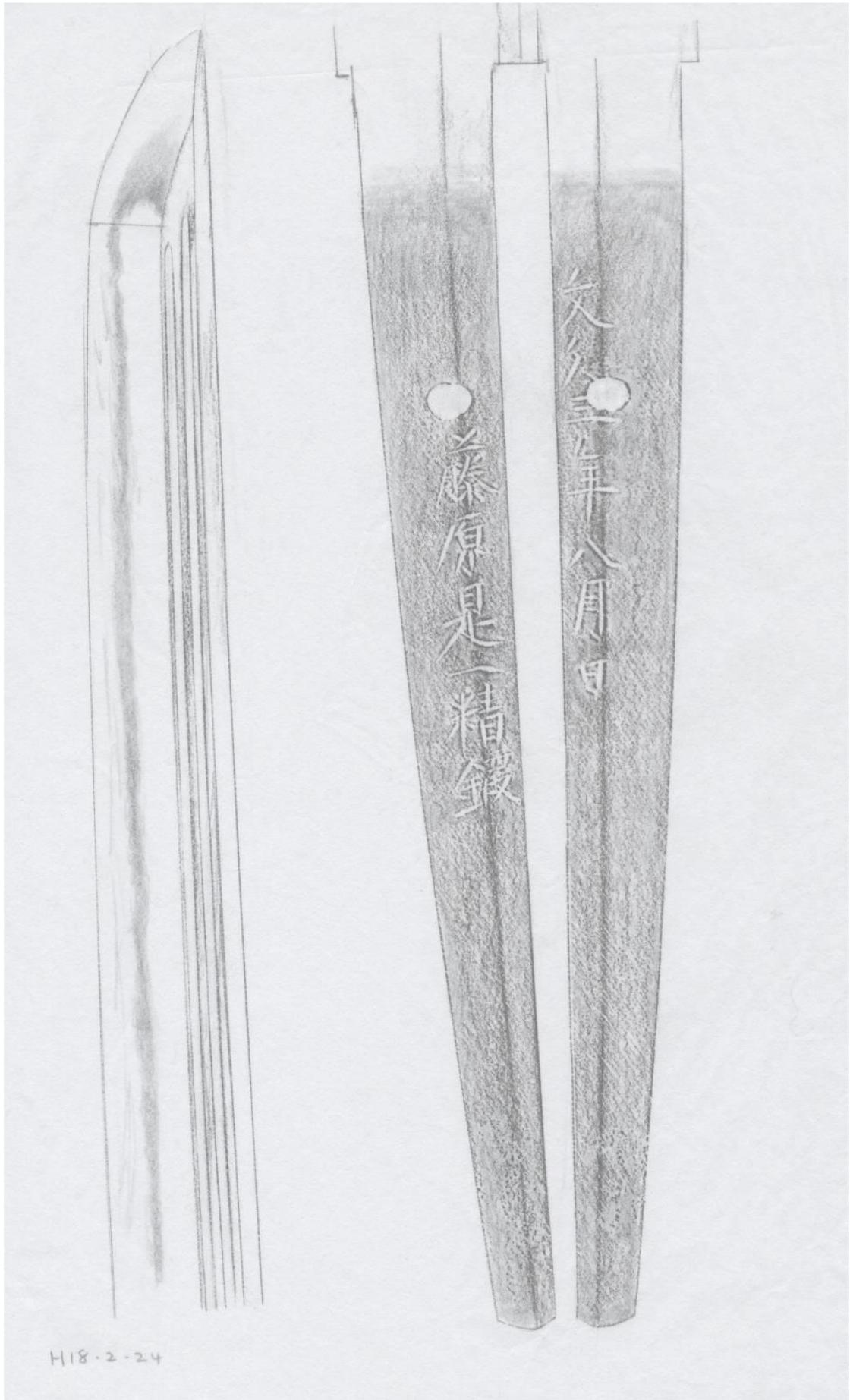
**Nakago:** Ubu with one mekugi-ana. O-sujikai yasuri in kesho finish. Ha-agari kuri-jiri, signed on the omote: FUJIWARA KOREKAZU SEITAN and dated on the ura: BUNKYU SANNEN HACHI GATSU JITSU (August 1862)

The length and heavy weight of this sword, together with the muji-style of jihada would indicate shinshinto as the time of production. The general shape of this sword gives one the feeling of it being a powerful and efficient piece and the hamon is very wide throughout and constructed of a fine and orderly ko-nie.

This swordsmith comes from the Kato Tsunahide mon who, based in Edo, were foremost in the production of Bizen-den in the late shinshinto period. He came from Yonezawa in Dewa province and his real name was Masataro. He was the seventh generation of the Ishido school as well as the nephew of Kato Tsunatoshi (the younger brother of Tsunahide). He also assumed the art name of Unju or Unjusai. It is not surprising that he entered the Kato Tsunahide mon as both Tsunahide and Ishido were schools which followed the Bizen tradition of swordmaking.

It would seem that Korekazu was recognised as a good swordsmith during his own life time as he had a number of customers of high social standing and in the KAEI BUKAN (Reference book of Kaei) he is referred to as a tosho who made swords for the Bakufu. There is a sword, which states on the nakago, that it was made in the Hama Goden, the official residence of a chief shogunate administrator. There is also a sword, illustrated with oshigata, in the Shinshinto Taikan and stored at the Ise Shrine, which is inscribed with the Tokugawa Aoi-mon. Also a sword with a shoji-me (owners name) was made for Toyama Saemonnojo, a famous bugyo (magistrate).

In his early days, Korekazu's work, displayed a nioi based choji hamon similar to that of his teacher but later this was improved and he produced a choji based on ko-nie. It seems that it is very rare to see a sword by this smith in suguha, such as this one under discussion, although the ko-nie hamon remains very good. However, there is a less than perfect polish (maybe Showa period or even original) that prevents full appreciation and appraisal of these details.



H18-2-24

Considering the Bizen-den background of Korekazu and his school, it seems most surprising to me that this sword has masame jihada in the Hosho Yamato style. Of course, it is known that other swordsmiths of this time produced work with this characteristic, such as Gassan Sadakazu for example, but it must be quite rare for Korekazu. I have seen this once before, as there is similar piece in a Dutch collection.

Although most standard references say that after the Hattori prohibition on wearing swords in 1876, no more swords are seen by Korekazu, in fact there is one in the collection of swords at the Boston Museum in the USA. This shobu-zukuri tanto was made for the collector, William Stugis Bigelow in 1883 and Korekazu's student Tsunahide assisted in the production.. Mr Ogawa, the cataloguer of the Boston Museum collection wrote in this entry "*One can imagine with what pleasure Korekazu accepted Dr. Bigelow's commission, probably the only blade the smith was to produce after the 1876 edict.*"

Towards the end of the Tokugawa period, Korekazu taught Aizu Nidai Motooki, Aizu Kanemoto and Mito Katsumura Norikatsu, also Unju Nobukatsu and Toshikazu are counted as being in his mon. Korekazu died on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1891 at the age of 75.

This sword is accompanied by a standard shin-gunto mounts and is said to have been obtained in Java at the end of the Pacific War.

Fujishiro rates Korekazu as JoJo saku.

Clive Sinclaire  
Bexley, Feb 2006