

UK Sword Register No.128

Type: Sue Koto Tachi

Nagasa: 63.2 cm Moto-haba: 2.2 cm Saki-haba: 1.5 cm

- Sugata: A very narrow shinogi-zukuri blade with iori-mune and ko-kissaki. The zori is confined to the lower half of the blade whilst the top half, nearest to the kissaki, is mu-zori or straight.
- Jihada: Mostly mokume-hada with abundant ji-nie which form yubashiri in places, as well as irregular shaped patches of nie based tobiyaki. There is shirake throughout mainly around the shinogi but also extending into the shinogi-ji and occasional mune-yaki may also be seen. So much nie based activity almost appears to be a sort of “mild” hitatsura.
- Hamon: Nie-deki notare-midare with many short sunagashi brushing throughout. The boshi, which is somewhat indistinct, appears to be komaru with a short kaeri with hakikake.
- Nakago: Ubu, mumei with one mekugi-ana and ha-agari kuri-jiri. The indistinct yasurime appear to be sujikai.

At first glance, this elegant sword may be thought to be of very early manufacture and appears to be an ancient tachi, possibly even from the Nara or early Heian period. I say this as curvature in swords first made in Japan, rather than the straight swords imported from the Korean mainland, was confined to the lower part of the sword whilst the upper part remained straight. However, it has been attributed by the NBTHK to a sue-koto (16th century) swordsmith. A number of swordsmiths at this time are known to have made swords in imitation of ancient styles, mainly from the Kamakura period. This sword, however, appears too slim, light-weight and delicate for practical use and I speculate that it may have been made as a votive offering, possibly even accompanied by a tachi koshirae.

When examining both the hamon and the jihada, the abundance of nie will be noticed and such a preponderance of nie may be associated with Soshu-den, which is consistent with the NBTHK's attribution to Fuyuhiko. However as this sword is so atypical of the recorded Fuyuhiko examples available to me, I am unable to allocate it to a particular smith.

It is unfortunate that NBTHK, although attributing the sword to Fuyuhiko, gave no indication as to which of the many listed smiths of this name this sword might be. Below I have summarised the smiths named Fuyuhiko in several common references.

Koto Taikan by Imura

The Koto Taikan has four oshigata illustrations of Fuyuhiko but these are only of the nidai and bare little resemblance to the present sword.

Koto Jiten by Fujishiro

Fujishiro lists three smiths of this name working at the end of the koto period and states:-

1st) Fuyuhiko settled at Obama in Wakasa province. Known as Fuyuhiko Jakushu, worked in the Meio period (1492) in Wakasa and that he was said to have been the son of Soshu Hirotsugu. He may have moved to Jakushu and became founder of the Jakushu Fuyuhiko line. His works are rare.

2nd) Fuyuhiko (Tenmon - 1532 , Wakasa) sue koto. He may have been the son of Meio Fuyuhiko and is called Kueimonjo. He produced in Bitchu and also in Unshu. His works are a style of gunome choji kuzure.

3) Fuyuhiko Wakasa no Kami (Tensho 1573, Wakasa, Called Takahashi Gorozaemonjo, he is the Fuyuhiko of Keicho Tsuchinoe-Inu (1598) and he also produced in Geishu (modern day Hiroshima prefecture – CS)
Fujishiro rates all three of these as chu-saku.

Hawley's Japanese Swordsmiths

There are a total of 63 swordsmiths named Fuyuhiko listed, of which 23 are Koto and the remaining are both shinto and shinshinto. This includes 9 generations working in Aki. Others worked in various provinces including Izumo, Sagami, Wakasa and Bizen.

Nihon-to Koza (Koto)

This shows three smiths named Fuyuhiko resident in Wakasa province, as follows:

FUYUHIRO around KANSHO (1460 -1466) WAZAMOO

FUYUHIRO around CHOKYO (1487 -1489)

FUYUHIRO around TENMON (1532 – 1555)

It also states that some swords are in hitatsura, some are in notare-midare and abundant nie.

MUMEI (FUYUHIRO)

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