UNIQUE JAPAN
ユニーク ジャパン

Japanese Sword Catalogue 40

updated: Jan 1/2025

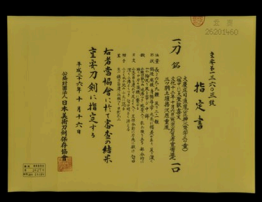
ALL SOLD

(COVER PHOTO)

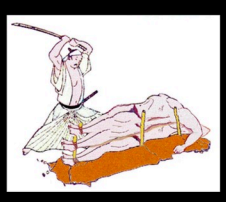
ITEM# UJKA403

A Taikei Naotane Katana
Shinshintô Period (October 6, 1815)

3-body cutting test by Sawahara Shigetane
60th NBTHK Jûyo Tôken







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Antique Japanese Swords For Sale (volume 40)

Released: November 9, 2023 to VIP Clients only
updated: January 1, 2025

The following pages contain descriptions and images of genuine antique Japanese swords sold to clients.

Each sword can be legally owned and exported outside of Japan. All swords have certification papers (origami) such as from NBTHK and/or the NTHK-NPO.

Descriptions and availability are subject to change without notice.

Please enquire for additional images and information on swords of interest to service@uniquejapan.com.

We look forward to assisting you. We have service offices in Tokyo and near London, England.



Pablo Kuntz
Founder, unique japan

Unique Japan, Fine Art Dealer
Antiques license issued by Meguro City
Tokyo, Japan (No.303291102398)

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Hi everyone! All good? Well, it's a landmark edition here with Catalogue 40. Feels amazing to have made it this far. Of course I have you to thank for all for your incredible support and encouragement over the years. These catalogues have turned into a pure love affair with Japanese swords, digging deep into each piece so we may present them properly - in the light they deserve. And it's definitely a team production. I wish to thank my assistants *Ayumu Ogusu* and *Yuki Ando* plus our photographer extraordinaire (and longtime friend), *Eric Bossick* for their work and dedication.

We kick off the catalogue with a delightful ***Sue-Hôshô*** katana. As many of you will know by now, I am a fan of *masame-hada*, I just love the purity of the straight grain. Well, this katana has just that. Conservatively, this sword is from the early 1400s, but its old *Tokubetsu Kichô* certificate and *Kanzan sayagaki* state it to be made a century earlier. The *Kizami-saya* koshirae is completely first class, a fine display piece for any home or office. We next flash forward to 1915 to encounter a remarkable katana by the great ***Gassan Sadakazu***. This *Sôshû Masamune utsushi* masterpiece is simply incredible. A sword like this rarely comes available folks, this opportunity won't last long. The following katana is by ***Nidai Tadakuni*** that I'm fond of due to its gentle wavy *notare* hamon. You don't see *notare* very often on *Hizen* swords making this is rather collectible. It has a meaningful koshirae too. Fellow Hizen swordsmith ***Nidai Tadahiro*** is the next featured katana that has vintage *sayagaki* by *Hon'ami Kôhaki* and housed in a brilliant *Higo* koshirae.

The prestigious ***Yoshioka-Ichimonji*** school is the maker of our fifth katana in the catalogue. In this weighty sword you'll enjoy a narrow *suguha-chôji* at the base of the blade which then blossoms beautifully about halfway up into a wide *ô-chôjii-midare*. It's a bit like having two swords in one. Visible *mokume- hada* in all sizes can be appreciated along with *midare-utsuri* and *mune-yaki*, where the top spine of the blade looks to be on fire. Good potential custom koshirae project. The centrepiece of Catalogue 40 is a katana by *shinshintô* grandmaster ***Taikei Naotane***. This museum-worthy *jûyô tôken* blade has performed an ultra-rare 3-body cutting test whereby a swordsmith (in this case Naotane's master student *Shigetane*) did the *tameshigiri*. This appears to be the ONLY jûyô token cutting test piece in existence that can make this claim. Everything about this *samurai*-commissioned sword is collectible and it makes me so proud to offer this katana. Next up is a wonderful katana attributed to ***Naminohira Yasuyuki*** by the late *Hon'ami Kôson* who was an immense figure in Japan's sword world. Its distinctive *ayasugi-hada* and bright *suguha/ko-gunome* hamon is a joy to study under the light. For those looking for a sword from the *Yamashiro Rai* school, consider this ***Rai Kunizane*** katana. Kunizane flourished around the *Shôwa* era (1312~1317) and into the *Nambokuchô* period. The blade features a *torii-zori* shape with full-length *bo-hi* (grooves), and a substantial *kissaki*, giving the sword a rather statuesque appearance.

The next exquisite collectible is the splendid *sunnobi-tanto* by *shodai* ***Owari Masatsune*** that is exactly *one-shaku* in length. It is a prime example of his work early on into his career before his son – *Nidai Masatsune* - died quite unexpectedly in 1609. The sword is accompanied by a rare and beautiful Edo-period *toppei koshirae* that pays homage to the ruling *Tokugawa shogunate* of the Edo period. ***Nidai Kanemichi*** of the notable *Mishina* family is our tenth sword and its hamon is quite rightly a 'ten' in eye-catchiness! A marvelous snow-capped *gunome-midare hamon* uniquely bunches of groups of two and three. Awesome cloud dragons guard the *koshirae* both on the *fuchi-kashira* and menuki and the *saya* displays a gorgeous lacquer work called *Tsugaru-nuri* originating from wintery *Aomori*. Our third and last Hizen blade is an absolutely splendid katana by ***Shodai Masahiro***. This sword is currently in the US and features a magnificent *gunome-choji-midare* hamon over a tightly forged *konuka-hada* that captures Masahiro's brilliance. Its *shirasaya* comes with *sayagaki* by *Kunzan-sensei* and a striking koshirae with black *maki-e* depictions of dragonflies within a garden theme. Another *shodai* smith follows by the name of ***Darani Katsukuni***. This magnificently sharp katana has a brilliant *sambonsugi* hamon cascading the length of the blade like a pulsing heartbeat. Its elegant Edo period koshirae features imperial chrysanthemums, surging waves and adorable monkeys compliments such an alluring collectible from the heart of the *shintô* era.

Right around the corner are two more swords that you must know about! First is a tremendous katana by ***Tsuda Sukenao,*** student (and son-in-law) of grandmaster *Sukehiro*. This *toran-ba* blade is dated to August 1690 when *Sukenao* was 53 years old, which is significant as he passed away at the age of 55, making this one of the last swords he ever made. And finally, we wrap up the catalogue with a *tokubetsu jûyô tôken naginata naoshi* katana by ***Osafune Yoshikage***. Described in its NBTHK *Tokubetsu Jûyô Tôken* certificate as having a gallant *naginata-naoshi* shape with *kinsuji, sunagashi,* and other *hataraki* and an outstanding masterwork among all blades known by the smith. Wow.

Thank you as always for your passion for life. We look forward to serving you.

Warm regards,



Pablo Kuntz
November 2023



Meet Barney our new puppy!

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

Index of Japanese Swords

ITEM#	SWORDSMITH & TYPE	CM	CERTIFICATE	ERA / PERIOD	PRICE
ujka174	A SUE-HÔSHÔ KATANA	69.6	NBTHK Hozon	Kanshô (1460~1466)	SOLD
ujka364	A SADAKAZU KATANA	69.6	Gassan Sadatoshi	Taishô (January 1915)	N/A
ujka422	A TADAKUNI KATANA	69.7	Tokubetsu Hozon	Tenna (1681~1684)	SOLD
ujka421	A TADAHIRO KATANA	69.7	Tokubetsu Hozon	Keian (1648~1652)	SOLD
ujka416	YOSHIOKA-ICHIMONJI KA	72.5	Tokubetsu Hozon	Nambokuchô (~1333)	SOLD
ujka403	A NAOTANE KATANA	69.9	NBTHK Jûyô Tôken	Bunka (October 1815)	SOLD
ujka423	A YASUYUKI KATANA	66.8	Tokubetsu Hozon	Nambokuchô (~1346)	SOLD
ujka415	A RAI KUNIZANE KATANA	69.4	Tokubetsu Hozon	Kamakura (1312~1317)	SOLD
ujwa260	MASATSUNE SUNNOBI TANTÔ	30.3	Tokubetsu Hozon	Keichô (1591~1607)	SOLD
ujka428	A KANEMICHI KATANA	71.4	Tokubetsu Hozon	Genroku (1688~1704)	SOLD
ujka424	A KATSUKUNI KATANA	70.2	Tokubetsu Hozon	Kanbun (1661~1673)	SOLD
ujka427	A SUKENAO KATANA	71.5	Tokubetsu Hozon	Genroku (Aug 1690)	SOLD

ALL PRICES ARE IN US DOLLARS

To access current and previous catalogues, please visit:
http://new.uniquejapan.com/currently-available-swords-at-unique-japan

To online visitors around the world…

Welcome! We completely respect the fact it takes a huge leap of personal faith in us to commit to a particular sword(s) given the reliance on photos and descriptions for such a highly valued item.

It is our promise to address all your questions to the best of our ability. It's important to us that you feel completely confident that the sword you choose (and chooses YOU) is destined for your family to cherish and preserve.

Please take reassurance that all swords from Unique Japan are guaranteed authentic and come with a **3-day worry free inspection period** upon arrival to your home.

We acquire swords on a regular basis and can source swords for collectors seeking a specific smith and/or school. Please inquire about our latest arrivals that may not be listed in the catalogue.

Also, be sure let us know if you are travelling to Tokyo as we can book a private meeting together at our studio in Meguro.

Domo arigato,
Pablo

21st Tokubetsu Jûyô Tôken Certificate



Recently sold!

ujka398
A Kenchô (Kanenaga) Katana
Nambokuchô period, Jôji era (1362~1368)

Student of *Chôgi*
Ranked: *jô-saku* and *ô-wazamono*



Sôden-Bizen masterpiece

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ITEM# UJKA174

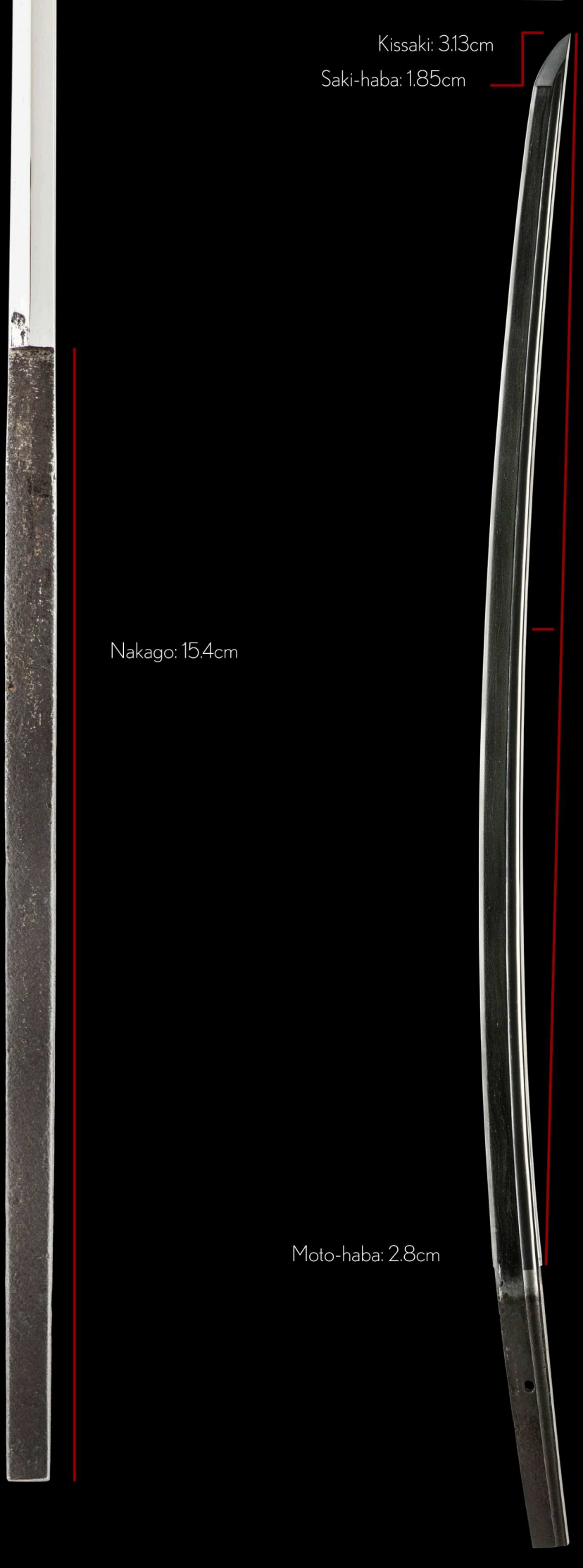
A SUE-HÔSHÔ KATANA

UNSIGNED, EARLY MUROMACHI PERIOD (KANSHÔ ERA: 1460~1466)

Swordsmith:	***Sue-Hôshô school***
Measurements:	**Length:** 69.6cm (*o-suriage*) **Curvature:** 1.7cm **Moto-haba:** 2.8cm
Jihada:	*Undulating masame-hada (straight grain) with fine channels of chikei*
Hamon:	*Bright beaming hoso-suguha*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Kichô** *(Especially Precious sword judged as Hôshô)*
Certificate #3-6:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** *(for the tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Dr. Satô Kanzan (**authenticated as *Hôshô Sadaie* circa 1317-1319)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo kizami koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, description

SOLD

The *Hôshô* school holds a special place amongst the five major schools of the Yamato tradition. For it is within this school that they forged exclusively in the pure straight-grain forging pattern known as *masame-hada*. Its NBTHK *Hozon* certificate attributes this beautiful sword to the *Sue-Hôshô* school, however, this sword's former *Tokubetsu Kichô* certificate judged it at least a century earlier to *Hôshô* and its old *sayagaki* by *Kanzan-sensei* authenticated the sword to *Hôshô Sadaie* who worked in the early 1300s during the Kamakura period. From the beaming *suguha hamon* over its undulating *masame-hada* to its lovely Edo-period *kizami saya* with celebratory-themed chrysanthemum fittings from the renowned *Yoshioka school*, this is a delightful and collectible piece of Japanese sword history that will uplift spirits each time it is handled.


Saki-kasane: 4.5mm
Moto-kasane: 6.3mm
Omosa: 550g
Nakago: 15.4cm
Kissaki: 3.13cm
Saki-haba: 1.85cm
Nagasa: 69.6cm
Sori: 1.70cm
Moto-haba: 2.8cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

According to *Kokan Nagayam*a, author of the Connoisseurs Book of Japanese Swords:

The development of the swordsmiths trade in the old capital of Japan, *Yamato*, was closely linked to the areas proximity to the capital at *Nara*. Furthermore, swordsmiths prosperity depended on their relationship with the temples with which they were affiliated.

The five major *Yamato* schools the *Senjuin*, *Tegai*, *Taima*, *Hôshô* and *Shikkake* were groups of swordsmiths who supplied the temples, and the Yamato tradition thus became known over a wide area through the nationwide organizations of these temples.

The *Hôshô* school began in the middle to late Kamakura period (circa 1280) and holds a special place amongst the five major schools of the Yamato tradition. For it is within this school that they forged exclusively in the pure straight-grain forging pattern known as *masame-hada*.

Notable swordsmiths of the Hôshô school include *Sadamune*, *Sadayoshi* & *Sadatsugu*. Swords attributed to the *Sue-Hôshô school* are those blades made in the early *Muromachi period*, circa 1400s.

The NBTHK Hozon certificate attributes this special sword to the Sue-Hôshô school, however, this sword's former green *Tokubetsu Kichô* certificate judged it at least a century earlier to *Hôshô* and its old *sayagaki* by *Kanzan-sensei* authenticated the sword to *Hôshô Sadaie* who worked in the early 1300s during the *Kamakur*a period.

This inspiring Japanese sword from one of the oldest and cherished schools encapsulates all that is admirable about *nihontô*.

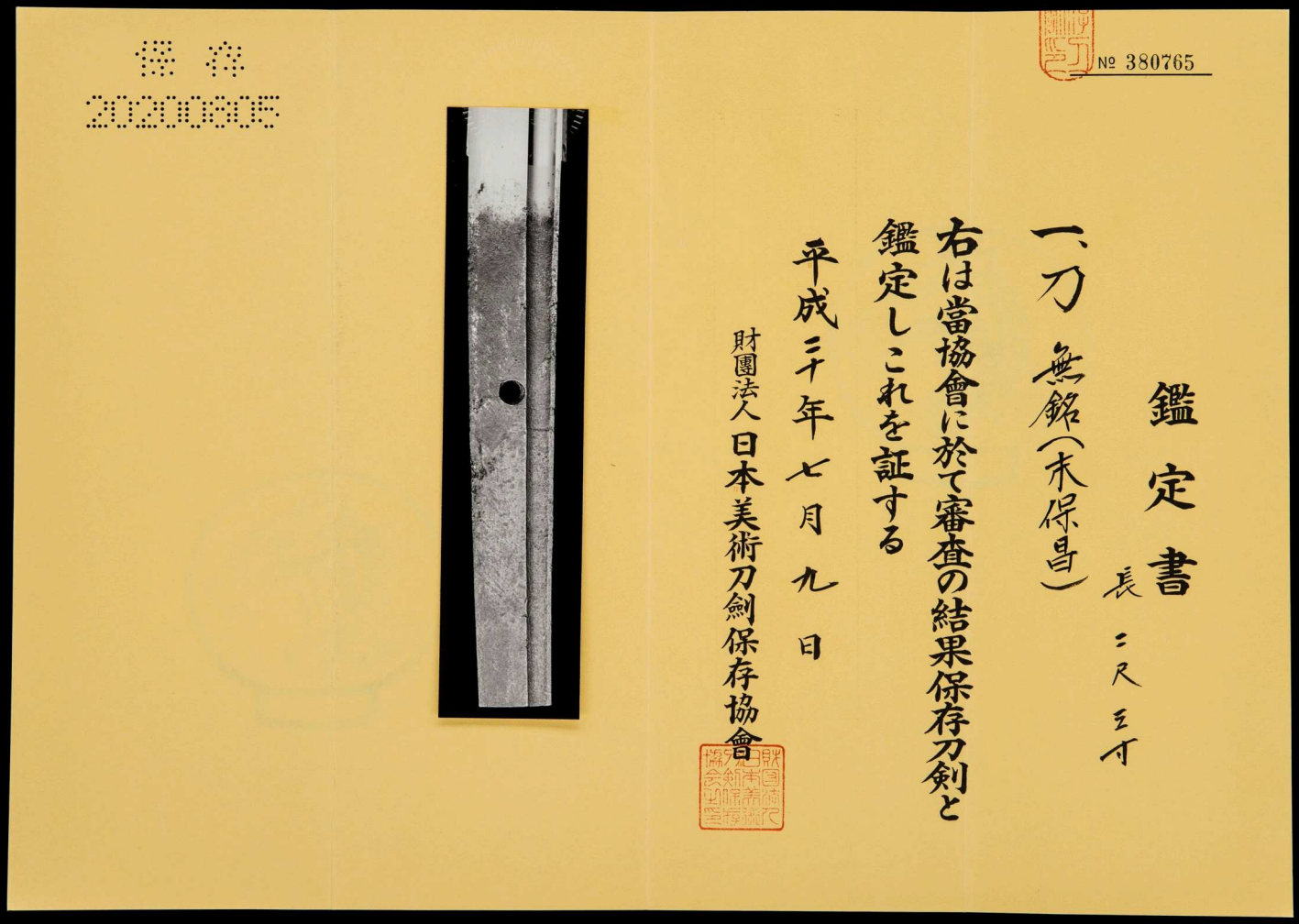




O-suriage nakago
kiri-nakago-jiri

(straight cut at base of tang)

Deep rich brown patina with
one crisp ***mekugi-ana*** (hole)



NBTHK Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

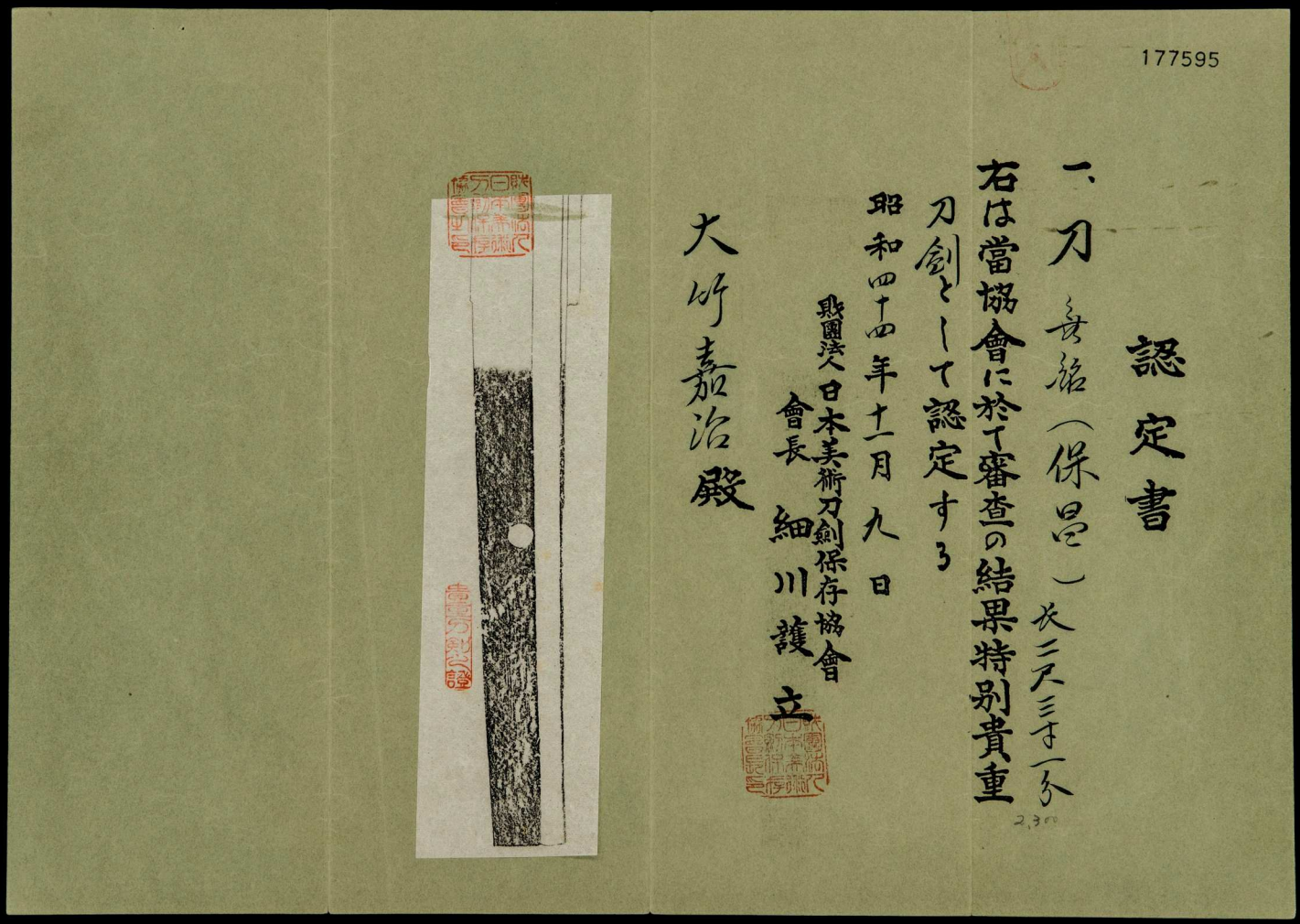
Issued in the 20th year of Heisei (2008), July 9th

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Sue-Hôshô [school]

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun (69.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)


177595

認定書

一、刀　無銘（保昌）　次二尺三寸一分

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別貴重刀剣として認定する

昭和四十四年十一月九日

財團法人日本美術刀劍保存協會
會長　細川護立

大竹嘉治殿

NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho
Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Precious*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 44th year of Showa (1969), November 9th

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Hôshô [school]

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu (69.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



Hôshô Sadaie worked during
Bunpô era (1317~1319)
Late Kamakura period

保昌（貞家）
Hôshô (Sadaie)
Hôshô (Sadaie)

無銘
Mumei
Unsigned

刃長貳尺参寸一分有之
Hachô 2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu kore ari
Blade length 69.6cm

昭和庚戌年初春吉日
寒山誌（花押）
Shôwa kanoe-inudoshi shoshun kichijitsu
Kanzan shirusu + kaô

Authenticated by Kanzan (Dr. Satô Kanzan)
On a lucky day in early spring of Shôwa
Year of the Dog (1970) + monogram







Before the capital was transferred to ***Kyôto*** in ***Yamashiro*** province, ***Yamato*** province was the centre of Japanese culture. This was known as the ***Nara*** period, from 710-794AD.

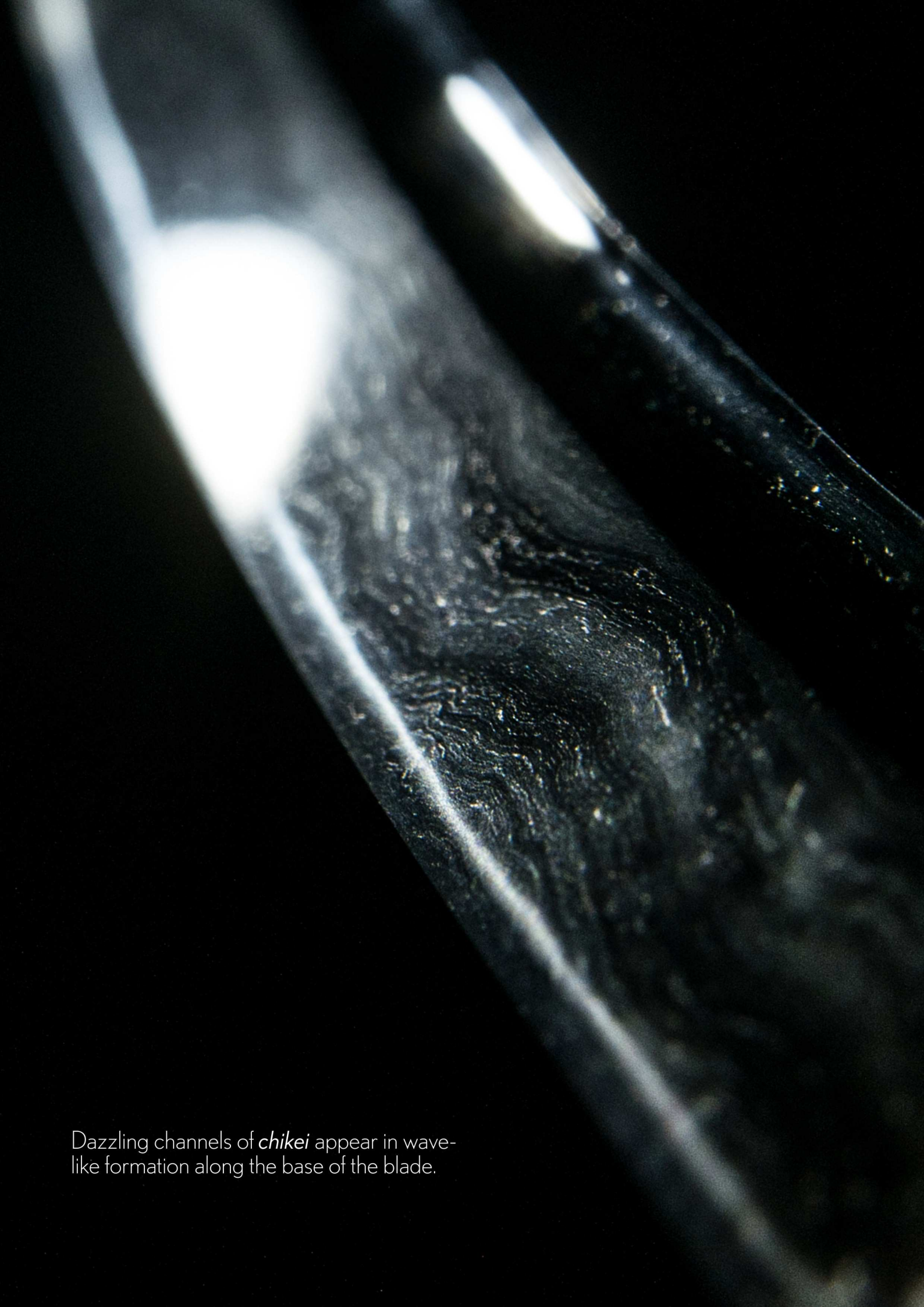
The mural on the left is of a group of women in continental jackets and long skirts from this time.

It is said that ***Amakuni*** who lived in Yamato during the Nara period was the earliest Japanese swordsmith.

Masame-hada
(straight grain)


the
beauty
of
masame-hada


The *jihada* beams like a comet in the night sky.
hoso-suguha hamon



Dazzling channels of ***chikei*** appear in wave-like formation along the base of the blade.

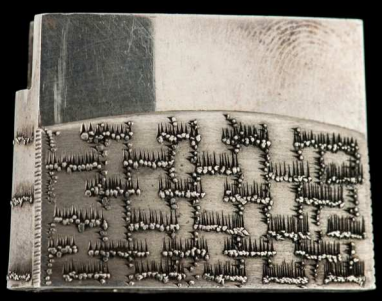
Kotô period brilliance.




Crisp and clean,
and no caffeine.



Shirasaya with *sayagaki*
(protective scabbard)

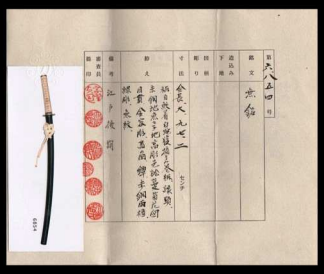


silver ***habaki*** with
weave-like file marks

Kizami-saya kuro-roiro-nuri
uchigatana-koshirae
（刻み鞘黒呂色塗打刀拵え）

Uchigatana-koshirae
with ribbed saya
lacquered in glossy black

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)

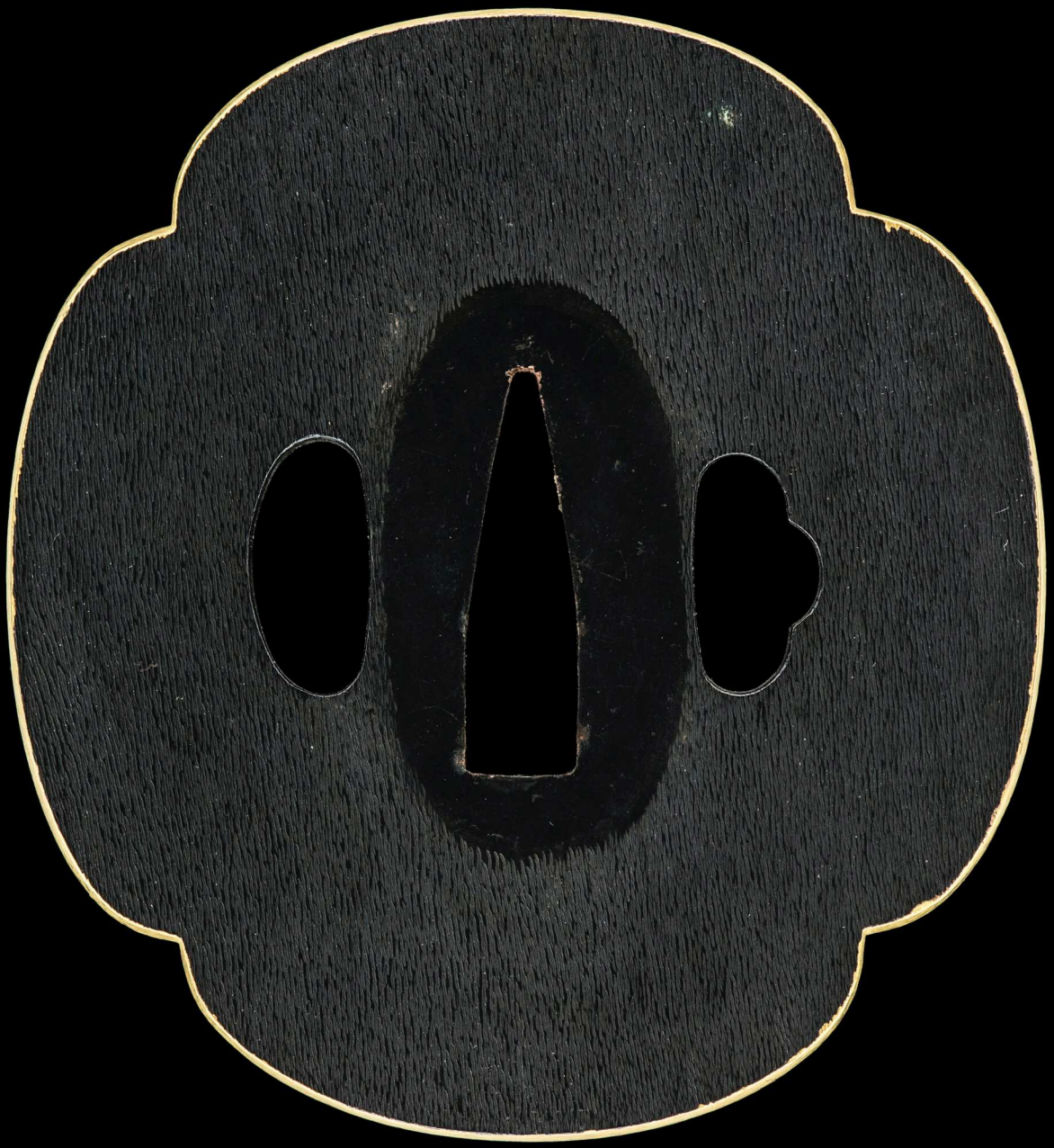


NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



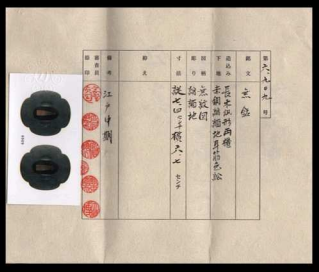
Each individual ring of this ***kizami-saya*** is ***hand-carved***. Carpenters in Japan are held in high esteem and this is just one example of their impressive level of craftsmanship.

And clearly the decision to build a ribbed kizami-saya was inspired by the straight grain of the steel's *masame-hada.*

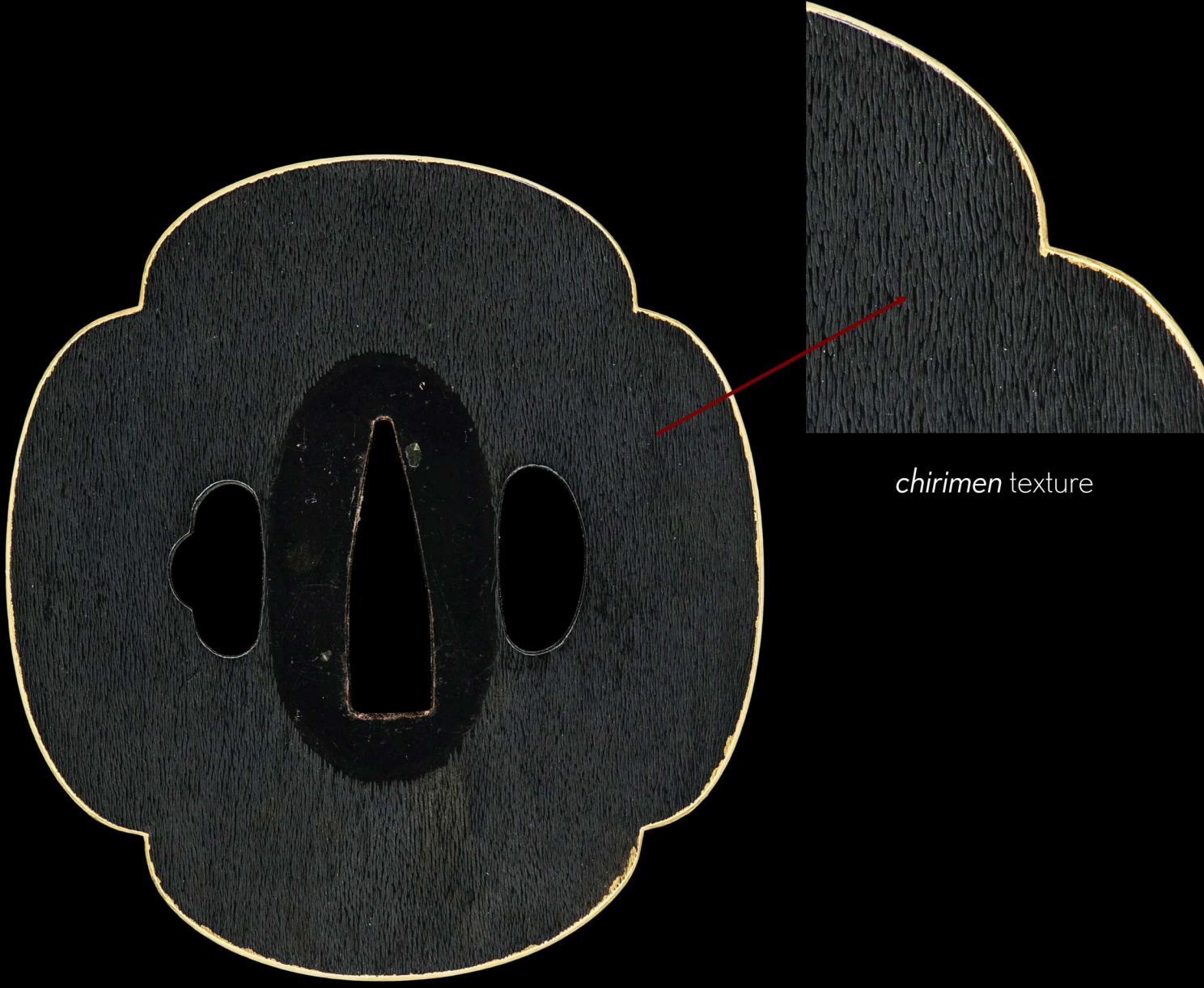


A formal *shakudô tsuba* with *chirimen-hada*
with gold accents on the rim.

Attributed to *Yoshioka Inaba no Suke* (*Edo*).



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



chirimen texture

Chirimen cloth is a traditional Japanese fabric with a slightly uneven surface that is woven with twisted yarns called 'Yori'. It has been used for Kimono due to its durability and wrinkle resistance. By weaving with twisted yarns, the whole cloth shrinks and becomes uneven. This unevenness leads to good quality dyeing. When it is dyed, the light reflects diffusely on the uneven surface, creating a beautiful rich color.

jmaison.sg



Beautifully wrapped white silk ***tsuka*** (hilt) that whispers class.





A skilfully carved pair of loving birds in gold that serve as ***menuki***.
Come fly with me.





Fuchi-kashira
also attributed to
Inaba no Suke Yoshioka
(mid-Edo period 1700s)

Fine ***nanako*** ground with gorgeous depictions of chrysanthemums and ***karakusa*** vines. There is an uplifting celebratory nature to this koshirae.



Koshirae bag

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA364 CURRENTLY OFF MARKET

A GASSAN SADAKAZU KATANA

SIGNED & DATED BY IMPERIAL ARTISAN GASSAN SADAKAZU AGED 80 IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE 4TH YEAR OF TAISHÔ ERA (JANUARY 1915)

Swordsmith: ***Gassan Sadakazu*** *(月山貞一)*
Commissioned by: ***Rokurô Ishihara*** (石原六郎)
Measurements: **Length:** 69.6cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 1.6cm **Moto-haba:** 2.6cm
Jihada: *Ko-itame with ji-nie, abundant chikei*
Hamon: *Exuberant gunome-midare with plentiful kinsuji, ashi, sunagashi in nie-deki*
Horimono: *Kurikara kenmaki-ryu & sankozuka*
Fujishiro rank: **Jôjô-saku** (a highly superior smith)
Authentication: **Sayagaki by Gassan Sadatoshi** (*great grandson*)

Please inquire

Gassan Sadakazu (1836-1918) was the finest swordsmith of the *Meiji era*. Adopted by *Gassan Sadayoshi*, his illustrious career saw him become a master of all major sword-making traditions; *Bizen*, *Soshû*, *Yamashiro* and *Yamato den*. Sadakazu became an Imperial Court Artisan in 1906. This katana is dated to January 1915 when Sadakazu was an impressive 80-years-old, making it one of the last swords crafted by the maestro and particularly valuable as a reference piece. It was commissioned by ***Ishihara Rokurô*** - a prominent businessman in Tokushima province on the island of *Shikoku*. In this sword, Sadakazu emulates the masterful skills of grandmaster sword smith *Gorô Masamune* with exquisite *horimono* (engraving) of *taki-fudô* and a *suken*. As the sword is forged at the highest level of the Sôshû tradition, the *hataraki* is simply awe-inspiring. Boundless swirls of dark *chikei* is especially impressive weaving the fabric of the well forged *itame-hada*. The *gunome-midare hamon* features plentiful *kinsuji* and brushed *sunagashi*. This katana was donated to *Jôrokuji* - the most famous *zen* temple in *Tokushima* – and amongst all the vitality of this katana rests a calm, inner confidence that resonates through the blade. Sadakazu's great grandson, *Sadatoshi*, current head of the Gassan family, authenticated this katana in *sayagaki* as being ***shôshin yûsaku nari*** – a genuine masterpiece by the hand of Sadakazu.

Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 5.9mm

Nakago: 16.7cm

Omosa: 560g



Kissaki: 2.94cm

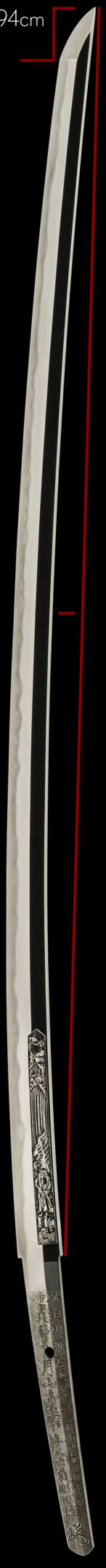
Saki-haba: 1.74cm

Nagasa: 69.6cm

Sori: 1.6cm

Moto-haba: 2.60cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



Gassan Sadakazu (1836-1918) had an illustrious career with many of his most exceptional swords crafted in the *Soshû tradition*.

Sadakazu was able to emulate all the power of the great *Masamune* and *Norishige*.

This remarkable katana that is dated to *January 1915* was crafted when Sadakazu was 80-years-old.

It was one of the last swords this sword-smithing genius ever made.



Gassan Sadakazu





Title: *Teishitsu-gigei'in* (Imperial Household Artisan)
Family name: *Gassan*
Swordsmith: *Sadakazu* (first generation)
Horimono (engraving): by *Sadakazu* himself (*hori dôsaku*)
Age: 80 (*hachijû sai*)

Respectfully forged in the tradition of *Soshû Kamakura Gorô Masamune Den*.

(Tei) 帝
(shitsu) 室
(gi) 技
(gei) 藝
(in) 員

(Ga) 月
(ssan) 山
(Sada) 貞
(kazu) 一
(gyô) 行
(nen) 年
(hachi) 八
(jû) 十
(sai) 歳
(hori) 彫
(dô) 同
(saku) 作

以 (motte)
相 (Sô)
州 (shû)
鎌 (Kama)
倉 (kura)
五 (Go)
郎 (rô)
正 (Masa)
宗 (mune)
傳 (den)
謹 (tsutsushinde)
精 (sei)
錬 (ren)
之 (kore)



Portrait of Gorô Masamune

Maestro *Gassan Sadakazu* succeeded in creating an ***utsushimono*** (a respectful tribute) of Japan's most iconic swordsmith - ***Gorô Masamune*** - from the late Kamakura period.

Masamune pioneered the highly influential ***Soshû tradition*** of Japanese sword-making.

Taishô yonen ichigatsu kichijitsu
Kishin Jôroku-ji jûyon-sei Ishihara Rokurô
Crafted on a lucky day in January 1915.

Commission by ***Ishihara Rokurô***, the 14th chief of the Ishihara clan, and donated to the ***Jôrokuji zen*** temple)



(Ki) 寄
(shin) 進
(Jô) 丈
(roku) 六
(ji) 寺
(jû) 十
(yon) 四
(sei) 世
(Ishi) 石
(hara) 原
(roku) 六
(rô) 郎

大 (Tai)
正 (shô)
四 (yo)
年 (mem)
一 (ichi)
月 (gatsu)
吉 (kichi)
日 (jitsu)

This katana was privately commissioned in 1915 by *Mr. Rokuro Ishihara* (1873-1932), one of the most successful businessmen as well as one of the biggest philanthropists of his generation in *Tokushima Prefecture* on the island of *Shikoku*.

Mr. Ishihara was the *14th chief* of the *Ishihara* clan - one of the largest landed gentry families among the non-samurai class during the Edo period. Its origins trace back to the *Iio Daimyô Clan* from the 11th century.

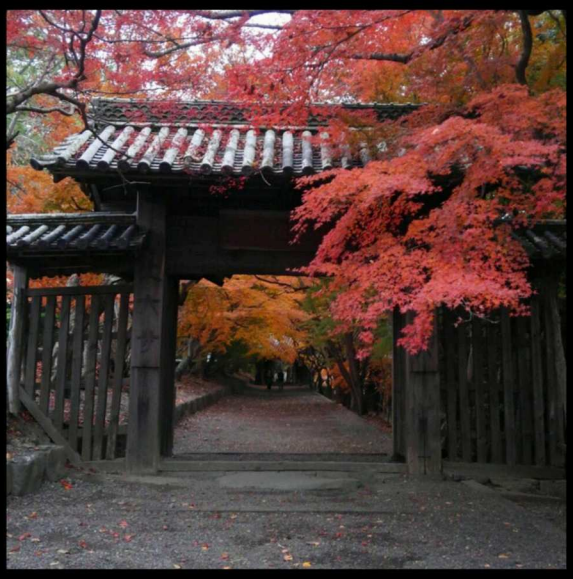


Emperor Taisho (1879~1926)

This sword was crafted in commemoration of the enthronement of *Emperor Taishô* (the father of *Emperor Hirohito* and the great grandfather of the current *Emperor Naruhito*) and donated to *Jôrokuji Temple* in prayer for "happiness, prosperity, and peace."

Emperor Taishô, born August 31, 1879 was the 123rd Emperor of Japan, according to the traditional order of succession. He reigned as the Emperor of the Empire of Japan from 30 July 1912 until his death on 25 December 1926.

The Emperor's personal name was *Yoshihito* According to Japanese custom, during the reign the Emperor is called "the Emperor". After death, he is known by a posthumous name, which is the name of the era coinciding with his reign. Having ruled during the Taishô period, he is known as the '*Emperor Taishô*'.



Jôrokuji Temple in autumn

Jôrokuji Temple is the oldest temple in *Tokushima*, originally founded in 650AD, and regarded as the most prestigious Zen temple in the region.

Throughout the Edo period, the temple was under the protection of the *Hachisuka Daimyô family* (ruler of the *Awa* province). A significant number of high ranking samurai of the *Hachisuka Feudal Fiefdom* (*Tokushima* Han) are buried in the temple graveyard.

The temple was engulfed by war and remnants of the war still remain inside the temple. It is now a famous place for viewing seasonal foliage.



正真優作也
Shôshin yûsaku nari

Authentic masterpiece

帝室技藝員月山貞一
行年八十歳彫同作花押
Teishitsu-gigeiin Gassan Sadakazu gyônen hachijû-sai hori-dôsaku kaô

Crafted by the Imperial Household Artisan *Gassan Sadakazu* at the age of 80.

All *horimono* (engraving work) was created by *Gassan Sadakazu* along with his stylized Gassan signature.

大正==年一月吉日
Taishô yonen ichigatsu kichijitsu

Signed on a lucky day of January 1915



以相州鎌倉五郎正宗傳謹精錬之
Sôshû Kamakura Gorô Masamune den o motte tsutsushinde kore o seiren-su

Respectfully forged in the tradition of *Soshû Kamakura Gorô Masamune Den*

刃長貳尺三寸有之
Hachô ni-shaku san-sun kore ari

Blade length 69.6cm

平成寿年六月吉日
曾孫貞利誌「花押」
Heisei junen rokugatsu kichijitsu
Sôson Sadatoshi kore o shirusu + kaô

Appraised by the great grandson *Gassan Sadatoshi* on a lucky day in June 1998 + stylised Gassan signature.





There is a group of five Buddhist deities known as the *Vidyârâja* (Wisdom Kings), or *Myô-ô* (Light Kings) in Japanese.

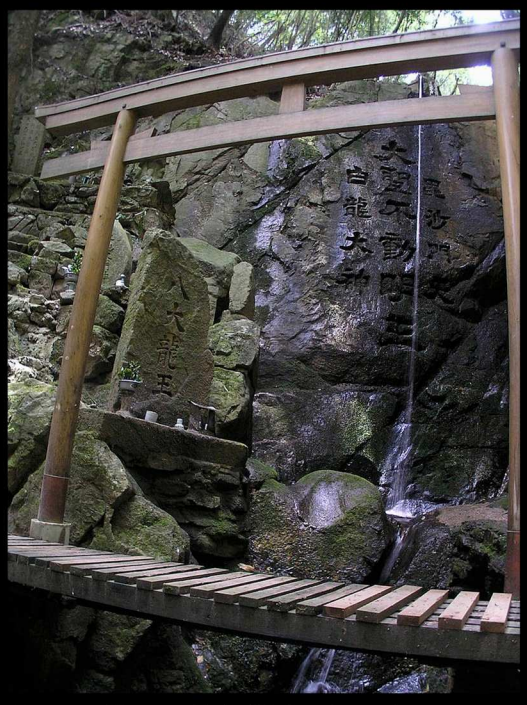
Of those five, *Fudô* - also known as *Acala* (immovable) is the most powerful.

Fudô channels wrath into compassion, having pledged to serve all beings in their pursuit of truth. *Fudô Myô-ô*'s unyielding spirit makes him a common horimono theme.

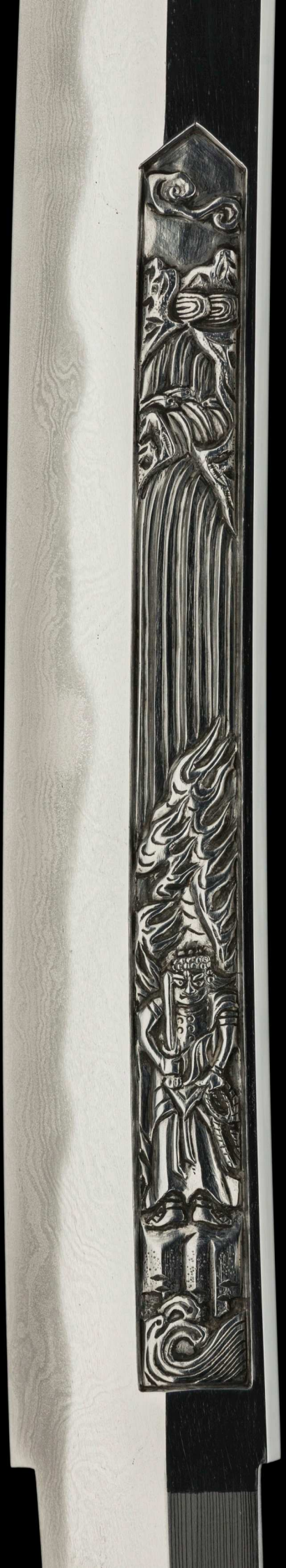
Taki (waterfalls), as depicted in the background, are sacred locations or sanctuaries where monks practice chants in order to purify their spirits in a process known as *takigyo*.

This horimono is thus referred to as *Taki-Fudô.*

Master engraver Sadakazu has depicted *Taki-Fudô* on several of his master works.



Ryujuin Shugen Falls (Kobe, Japan)



Fudô Myô-ô has blueish skin, a furious visage, crooked brow, and lopsided fangs. In his left hand he holds a ***kensaku*** (lariat) of five mystical colours, used to bring wanderers back to the true path or bind their regressive emotions.

Wreathed in ***kaen*** (flames) he burns away material desires.

In his right hand, he holds the ***sankoken*** (trident ***vajra*** sword). If the kensaku should fail to restrain men's harmful passions, Fudô can cut their earthly attachments using this sword. Thus the ken is a means by which Fudô pierces through delusions and subdues evil.

For this reason, this sword is also called the ***chiken*** - sword of wisdom.



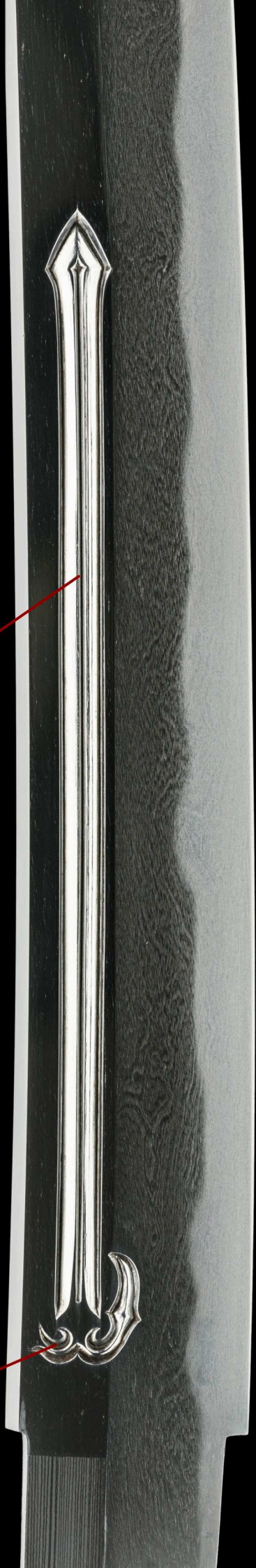
Source: *Ken & Related Horimono*
Terminology & religious significance
by Gabriel L. Lebec



The lifelike detail of *Fudô-Myô-ô* is both captivating and awe-inspiring as *Sadakazu* was 80 years old when he created it entirely by hand.



sanko-tsuka
(trident *vajra* hilt)



On the reverse side is the guardian ***suken*** (sword) with ***tsume*** (claw of a dragon).

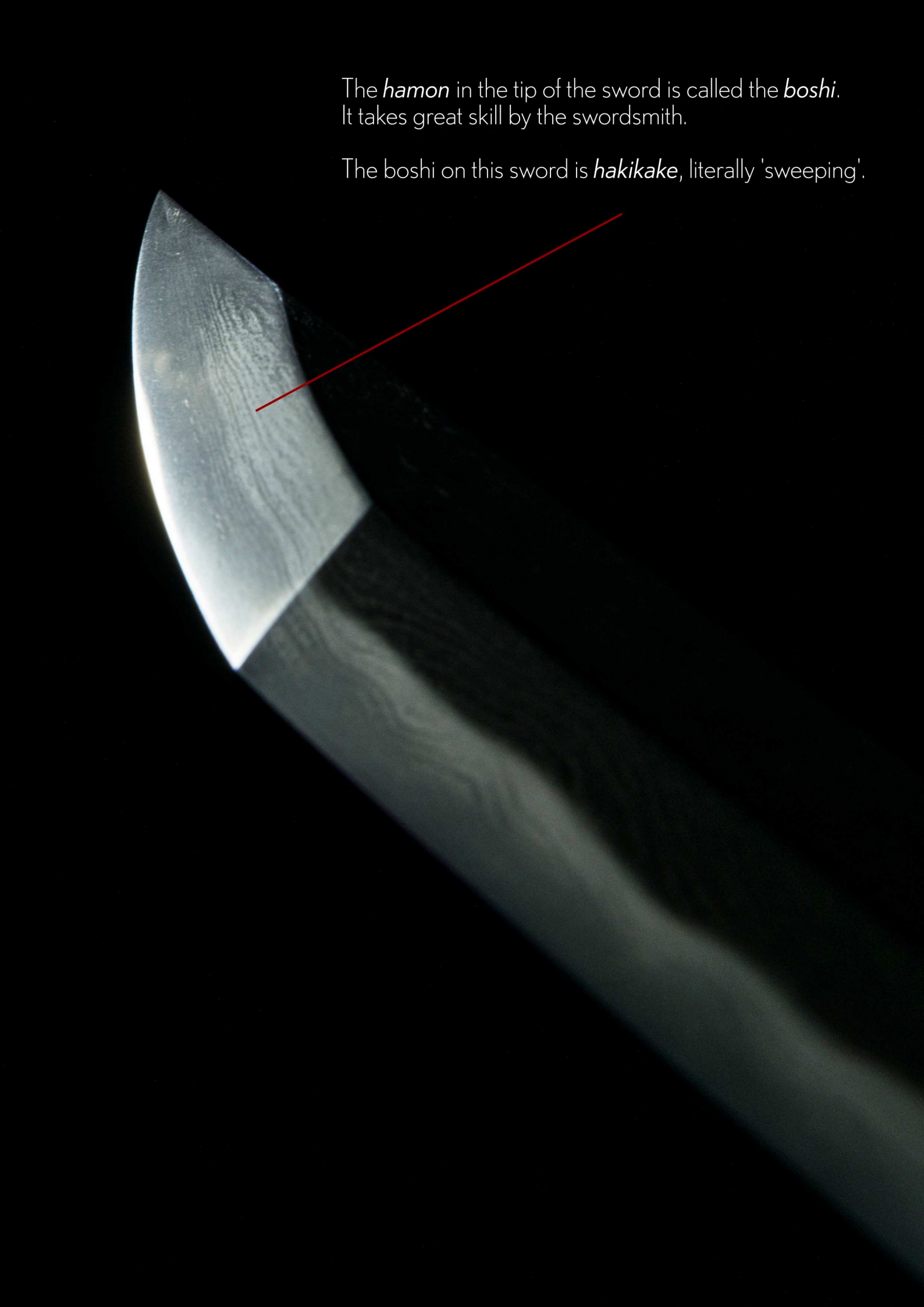
This ***horimono*** serves to reinforce the power of ***Fudô-Myô-ô***.

tsume (claw)


The exacting lines of *suken*
run through the *shinogi-ji*.

The *hamon* in the tip of the sword is called the *boshi*.
It takes great skill by the swordsmith.

The boshi on this sword is *hakikake*, literally 'sweeping'.

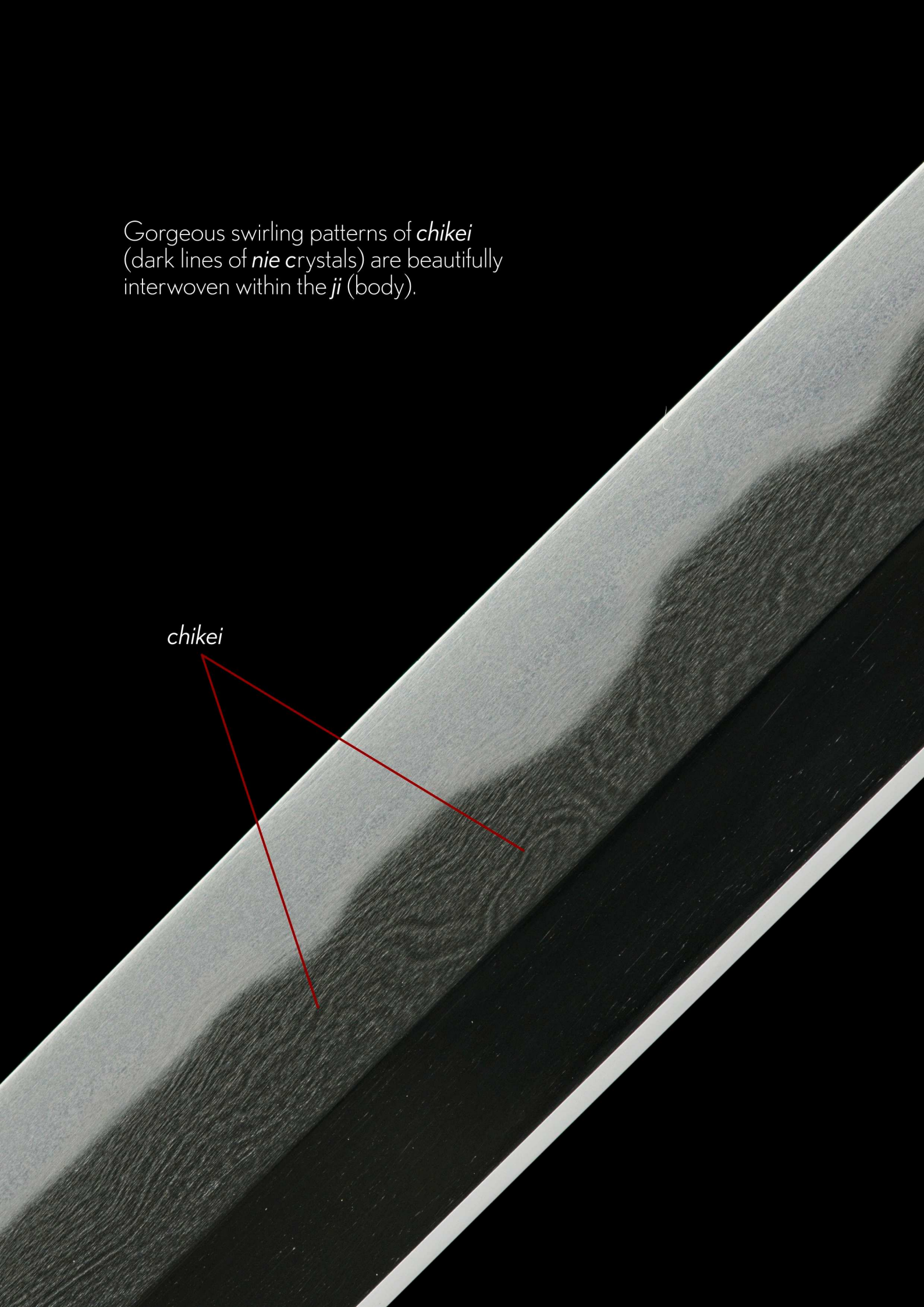


The ***chikei*** flows magnificently from the ***ji*** into the ***yakiba*** (hardened edge) turning into ***kinsuji*** (dark golden lines).

A sword-smithing masterclass.

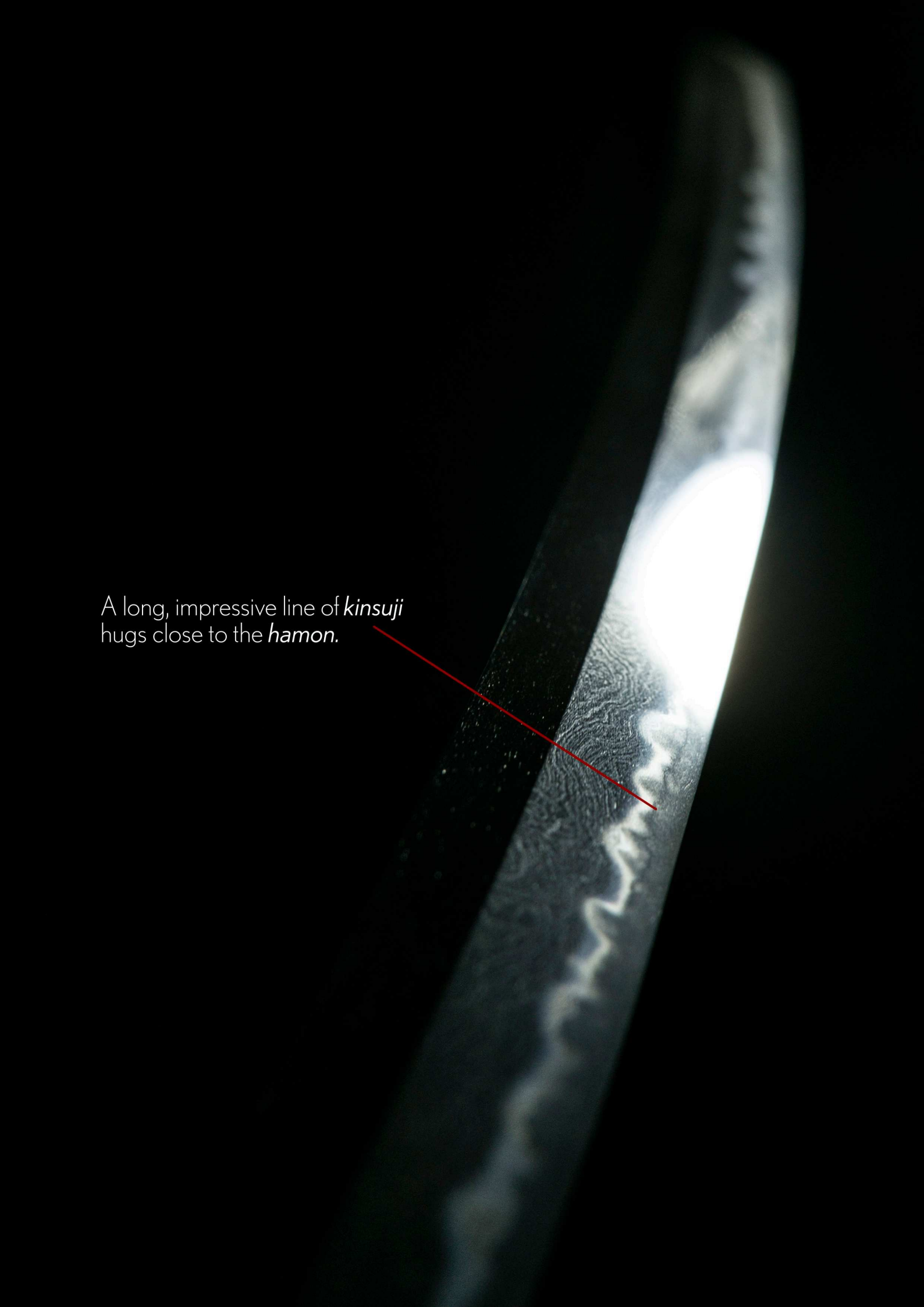


Gorgeous swirling patterns of ***chikei*** (dark lines of ***nie c***rystals) are beautifully interwoven within the ***ji*** (body).





A spectacular *gunome-midare hamon* pulses brightly under the light.


A long, impressive line of *kinsuji*
hugs close to the *hamon.*



Fiery Soshû-den



brushed ***sunagashi*** up close.

horimono harmony





Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold ***habaki*** with
horizontal file marks

NOTE

A Study of the Works of Gassan Sadakazu in The Metropolitan Museum of Art

BENJAMIN VINCENT

Clawson Mills Fellow, Department of Arms and Armor, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

GASSAN SADAKAZU (1837–1919), the most brilliant Japanese swordsmith of the Meiji era, came from a nonswordmaking family named Tsukamoto, whose home was in Omi province. At a very early age, the young Tsukamoto was adopted by Gassan Sadayoshi, a fairly well-known swordsmith residing in Osaka, and given at first the name Yagoro and later Sadakazu.[1] Yagoro proved to be a very precocious student with an amazing talent for making swords and began producing them at the age of fourteen.[2] Undoubtedly he deserves to be called a genius; even the unusually staid *Nihonto Koza* enthuses that Sadakazu was "born into this world for the purpose of making swords."[3] Great ability at carving decorative designs paralleled Gassan's expertness with forging techniques, and a close study of the blades of earlier masters enabled him to produce excellent works in the Yamato, Yamashiro, Bizen, and Soshu styles, a feat unequaled by any other artist. Additionally, the Osaka marvel perfected the technique of forging rippling ayasugi jihada[4] and executed calligraphies and paintings of high merit.

Sadakazu's swordmaking career seems to have fallen into an unusual cycle. The blades he made during his earliest years were often signed by his foster father. Then, around the beginning of the Meiji era, Sadakazu began forging swords in the Yamato and Yamashiro styles. During his middle years, however, counterfeiting the costly works of prominent swordsmiths occupied his energies for reasons that are not completely understood.[5] As Sadakazu himself became increasingly well known, lesser smiths made forgeries of his work in turn, and in later years he inscribed his name on blades made by his son, Sadakatsu.

In the collection of the Metropolitan Museum's Arms and Armor Department, there are six blades that bear the noted Gassan inscription, five of which are authentic. A fine early one is a tanto in the style of the first-generation Tadayoshi (Figures 1–3). Of katakiriba shape, it is 10.6 inches long and 1.2 inches wide, with horimono of a descending dragon grasping a ken on the omote and a bobi with tsurebi on the ura. In keeping with the Tadayoshi tradition, the hamon is a nie deki suguha with a touch of notare in places and the boshi is komaru with the kaeri yoru, while the jihada is a somewhat flat Hizen-style itame. On the omote the signature reads, "Naniwa Gassan Sadakazu, hori mono do saku," which indicates that Gassan Sadakazu of Osaka, for which *Naniwa* is an ancient name, made the blade and also executed the carvings.[6] Near the tip of

1. *Sadakazu* can also be read *Teiichi*.
2. Mitsuo Shibata, *Shin-shinto Nyumon* (Tokyo, 1969) p. 156.
3. Kunzan Homma and Kanzan Sato, eds., *Shinpan Nihonto Koza*, V (Tokyo, 1967) p. 321.
4. For many of the technical terms used to describe Japanese swords, no equivalents exist in English. In order to make this note on Gassan Sadakazu more intelligible, a glossary has been included at the end.
5. Sho Kawaguchi, *Shinto Koto Taikan*, II (Tokyo, 1930) p. 158.
6. Intricate carvings were often done by specialists rather than by the makers of the blades themselves.

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ITEM# UJKA422

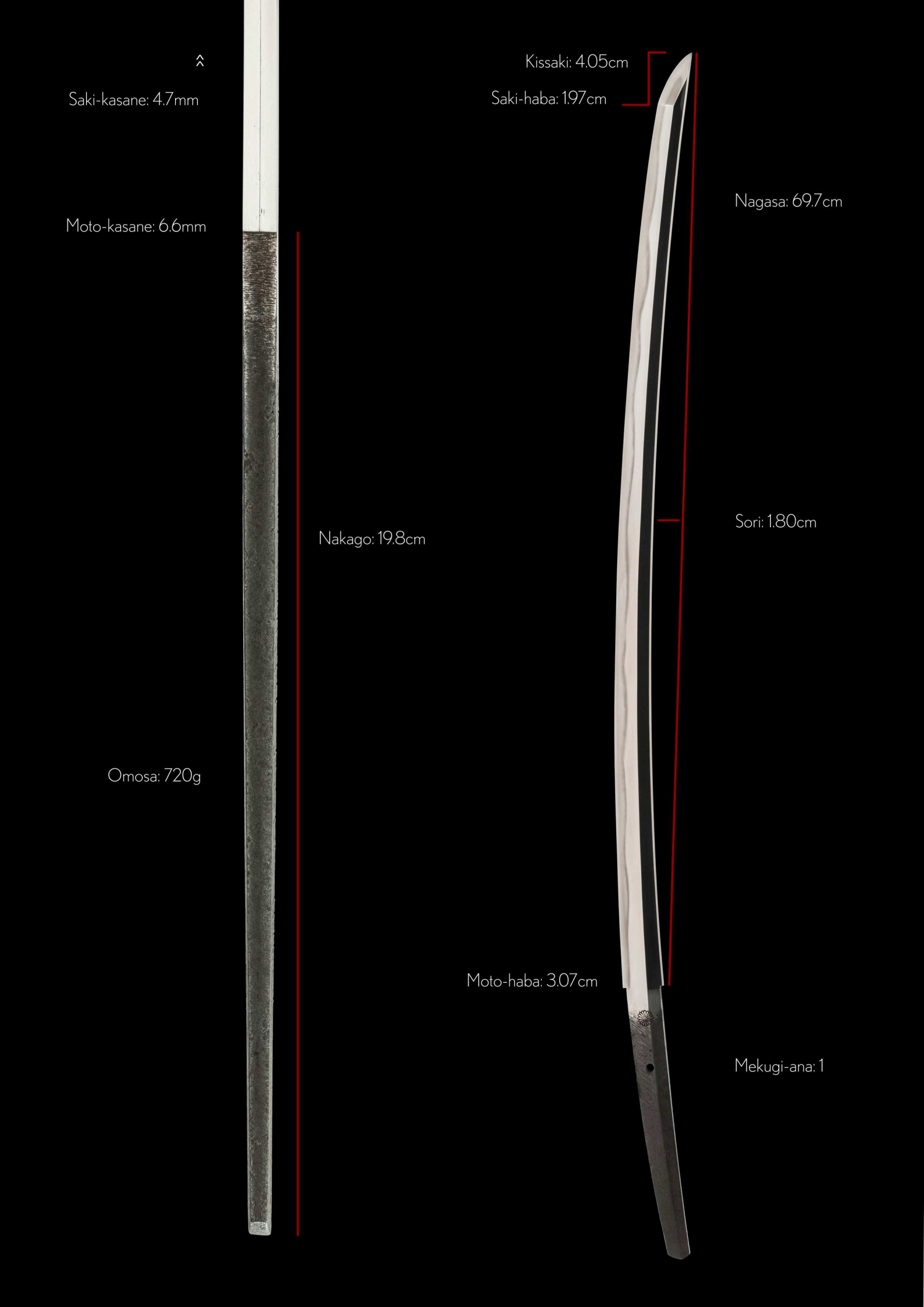
A NIDAI TADAKUNI KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (TENNA ERA: 1681~1684)

Swordsmith:	***Hizen-jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni*** *(2nd generation)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 69.7cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 3.07cm
Jihada:	*Ko-mokume-hada leading to konuka-hada*
Hamon:	*Bright notare-ba in nie-deki*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*sword, koshirae, tsuba, fk, certified as Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Chûjô-saku** (*ranked as an above average swordsmith*)
Sharpness:	**Wazamono** (*maker of good sharp swords*)
Included:	Shirasaya, koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD

Born *Hashimoto Danzaemon*, *nidai Tadakuni* apprenticed under his father *shodai Tadakuni*, who had studied under grandmaster *shodai Tadayoshi*. This curvy katana is a rare treat as it features a bright *notare* hamon that fills the blade with elegance and grace. The majority of *Hizen-to* carry a hamon that is either *suguha* or *gunome* with *chôji* variations making this sword particularly collectible. On the *ura* side of the *nakago* is a crisp 16-petal *kiku*-mon (chrysanthemum) with permission granted from the *Imperial* family by way of the *Mishina* group of *Kyôto*. Its classy koshirae has an 'arrowhead' *tsuba* and a fabulous *kiri*-mon decorated *fuchi-kashira* attributed to the *Yoshioka* school. The *menuki* was inspired by the deep and meaningful *Noh* play *Takasago*.


Saki-kasane: 4.7mm
Moto-kasane: 6.6mm
Nakago: 19.8cm
Omosa: 720g
Kissaki: 4.05cm
Saki-haba: 1.97cm
Nagasa: 69.7cm
Sori: 1.80cm
Moto-haba: 3.07cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

This very handsome katana was crafted by *nidai* (second generation) *Tadakuni* of *Hizen* province. Born *Hashimoto Danzaemon,* Tadakuni apprenticed under his father *shodai Tadakun*i, who had studied under grandmaster swordsmith *shodai Tadayoshi*.

He first signed with the name *Harukuni* but stepped up to Tadakuni after his father had retired. He later received the honorary title *Kazusa no Daijô* in 1655 and during the *Tenna* era (1681~1684) the title *Harima no Kami*, which this sword is signed as.

This Nidai Tadakuni katana is a rare treat as it features a gorgeous, bright *notare hamon* that fills the blade with elegance and grace. The majority of Hizen-to carry a hamon that is either *suguha* or *gunome* with *chôji* variations, making this sword rather collectible for this reason alone.

On the *ura* (reverse) side of the *nakago* is a crisp 16-petal *kiku-mon* (chrysanthemum) with permission granted granted from the Imperial family by way of the *Mishima* family of *Kyôto*.

A lovely koshirae that features a polished 'arrowhead' *tsuba* from the *Itô* school and a fabulous *kiri-mon* decorated *fuchi-kashira* attributed to the prized *Yoshioka* school. The *menuki* was inspired by the great *Noh* play called *Takasago* that speaks of the power of love and longevity.

Tadakuni is ranked *chûjô-saku* (above average smith) and also *wazamono* for the sharpness of his swords.



Location: *Hizen province*
Title: *Harima no Kami* (Lord of Harima province)
Clan: *Fujiwara*
Swordsmith: *Tadakuni* (second generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)



(Hi) 肥

(zen) 前

(jû) 住

(Hari) 播

(ma, no) 磨

(Kami) 守

(Fuji) 藤

(wara) 原

(Tada) 忠

(kuni) 國

Shodai (first generation) Tadakuni signed with one chisel stroke in the top right section of the radical "*Hi*" of *Hizen* province. Nidai (second generation), however, signed with ***two*** chisel strokes. This is a subtle, yet significant key to identifying the proper generational work.

By the way, third generation did not sign with ***three*** strokes, he reverted back to one.



2nd generation

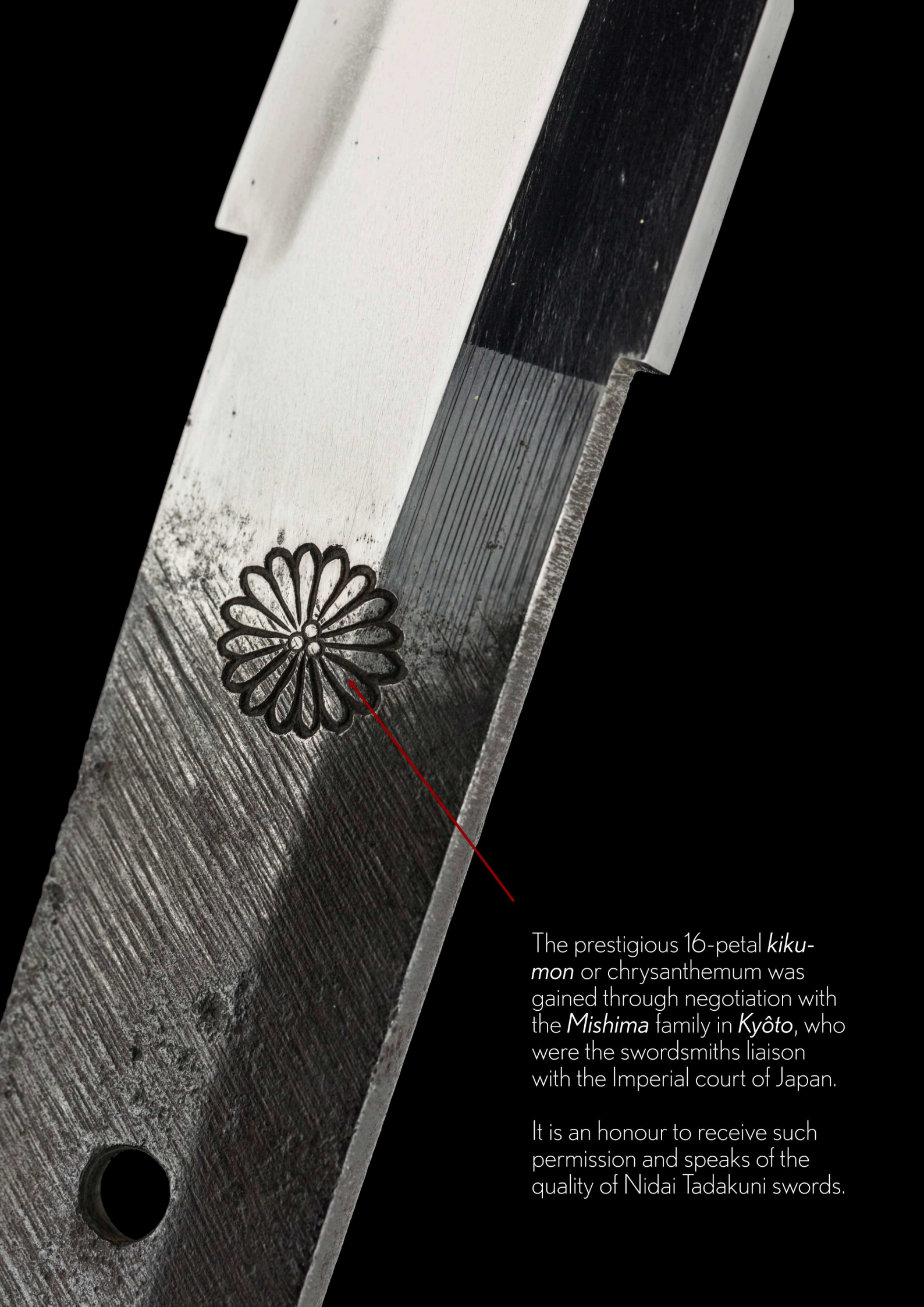


1st generation



(*kikumon*, chrysanthemum)

(*ura*, reverse)



The prestigious 16-petal ***kiku-mon*** or chrysanthemum was gained through negotiation with the *Mishima* family in *Kyôto*, who were the swordsmiths liaison with the Imperial court of Japan.

It is an honour to receive such permission and speaks of the quality of Nidai Tadakuni swords.



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 4th year of Reiwa (2022), December 14th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Hizen no Kuni Harima Daijô Fujiwara Tadakuni (nidai)
Kikumon

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun (69.7cm)

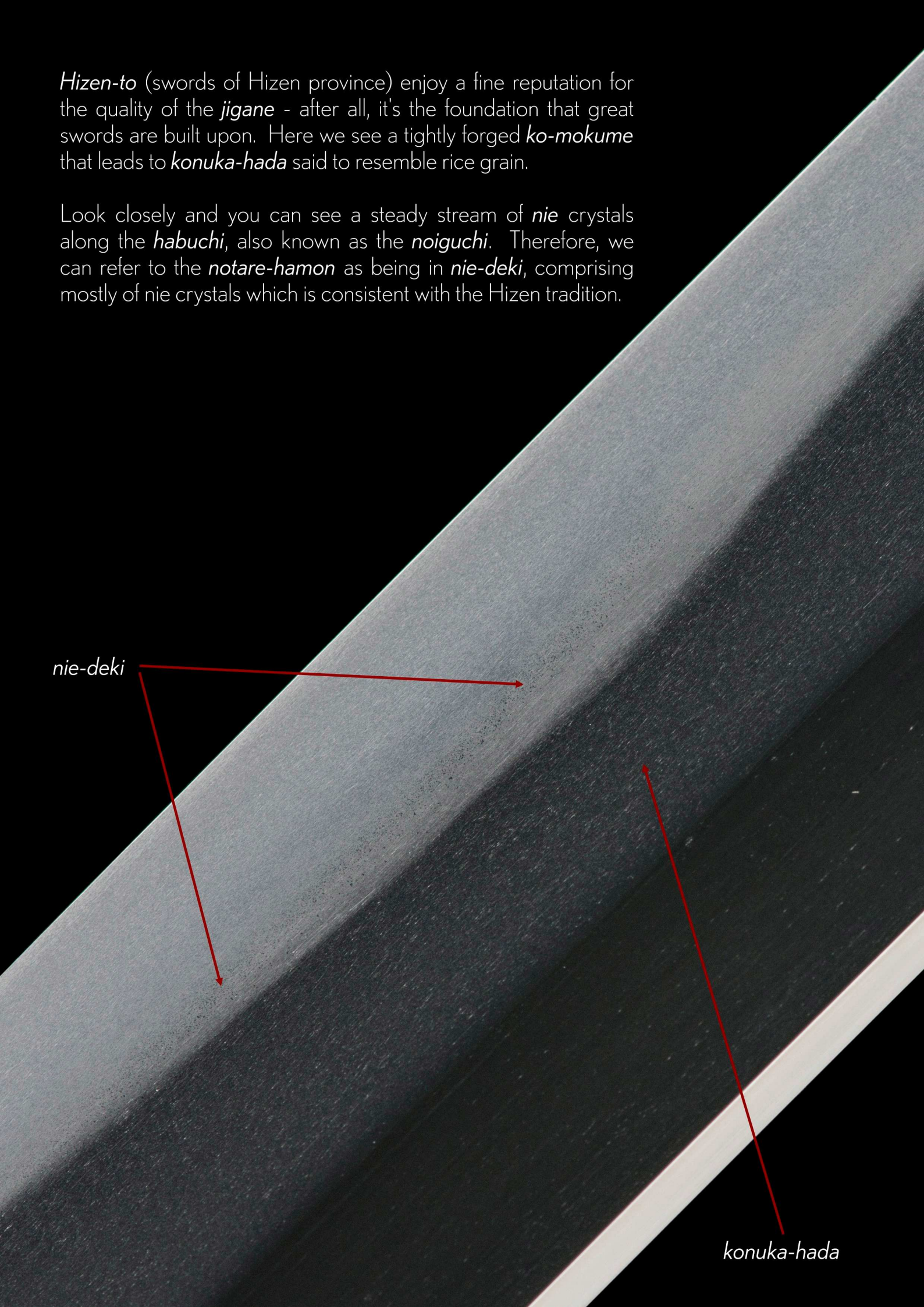
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





Hizen-to (swords of Hizen province) enjoy a fine reputation for the quality of the *jigane* - after all, it's the foundation that great swords are built upon. Here we see a tightly forged *ko-mokume* that leads to *konuka-hada* said to resemble rice grain.

Look closely and you can see a steady stream of *nie* crystals along the *habuchi*, also known as the *noiguchi*. Therefore, we can refer to the *notare-hamon* as being in *nie-deki*, comprising mostly of nie crystals which is consistent with the Hizen tradition.



There is nothing quite like the gentle flow of a ***notare hamon***. This is textbook example of ***notare-ba*** with a rather thick ***noiguichi*** (crystals that make up the hamon). Gorgeous.





Bright, clear and consistent.
The mark of a well-made sword.

A ***notare*** hamon is rarely seen amongst swords from ***Hizen*** province making this piece rather collectible.

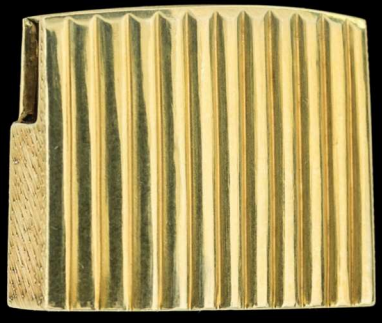

A
NOTARE
RUNS
THROUGH
IT





Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

Bamboo strips

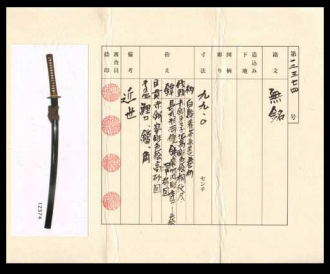


gold-wrapped ***habaki***
with vertical channels

Kuro-roiro-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
（黒呂色塗鞘打刀拵）

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black

Crafted during the
Modern period



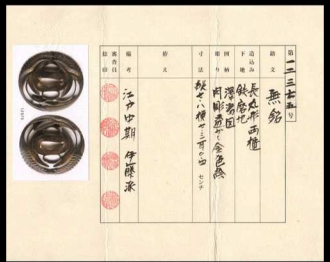
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



This handsome polished ***tsuba*** certified from the Mid-Edo period (1700s) has been attributed to ***Masafusa***, a resident of ***Bushû*** province who worked within the ***Itô schoo***l. Its unique design is that of ***omodaka*** (three leaf arrowhead) , which is a perennial plant growing naturally in paddy fields, ponds and swamps. The name ***omodaka*** comes from its visible veins on the surface of the leaves - ***omo*** meaning "surface" and "***daka***" meaning "heightened".

Omodaka began to be used as patterns around the ***Heian*** period (794-1185) as artists graphically portrayed its pointed leaves and elegant flowers. The flower was cherished among the samurai families during the ***Kamakura*** period (1185~1333) and was designed on armour and other battle gears.

Its pointed leaves reminded the samurais of spears, making the pattern popular as a symbol of good luck and bringing victory.



NTHK Kanteisho Certificate

(reverse)



omodaka plant





This kamon was the family crest of the Fukushima clan during Sengoku Jidai.

Source: Takeda-art



Kiri-mon, the paulownia flower has been seen on samurai art for centuries. Today it is the crest of the office of prime minister and also serves as the emblem of the cabinet and the government.





Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Yoshioka school
(1700~1780)

Kiri-mon (paulownia design)
overlaid on ***shakudo-nanako***





The *menuki* depict the beloved *Noh* play called *Takasago* that speaks of the virtues of a loving and long-married couple.





Below is a testimonial from the client
who acquired this sword.

Pablo,

First of all, allow me to express my thanks and appreciation to you and your staff for the very obvious care and attention to detail apparent in just the meticulous packing, wrapping and boxing of the sword. It is quite obvious to anyone who pays the slightest attention to these things that your team is profoundly professional, detail oriented, diligent and attentive in their care and handling of these works of art. Many many thanks to your collective efforts.

As for the Tadakuni, it is even more exquisite up close than in the photographs. It is truly a beautiful piece. I am captivated by these swords. I can't help it. The melding of weapons, art, history and culture is an irresistible combination. These swords are the essence of the warrior ethic (honor, courage, commitment) in one article.

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to acquire this piece. Look forward to future catalogs.

V/R,

Dave

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA421

A NIDAI TADAHIRO KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KEIAN ERA: 1648~1652)

Swordsmith:	***Hizen no Kuni jû Ômi Daijô Fujiwara Tadahiro*** *(nidai, 2nd generation)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 71.2cm **Curvature:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba**: 3.25cm **Weight:** 780g
Jihada:	*Tight, finely forged konuka-hada with ji-nie*
Hamon:	*Bright white chû-suguha in nie-deki*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-5:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (*koshirae, tsuba, fk, basshin designated as Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jôjo-saku** (*ranked as a highly superior swordsmith*)
Authentication:	**Antique sayagaki by Hon'ami Kôhaki** (*June 1944*)
Included:	Shirasaya, Higo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, booklet, description

SOLD

Born *Hashimoto Heishirô* in *Saga*, *Hizen* province in 1614, renowned swordsmith *nidai* (second generation) Tadahiro began working with his father, maestro *shodai* (first generation) Tadayoshi at the tender age of 10. Guided by his father and other great smiths such as shodai *Masahiro* and *Yoshinobu*, Tadahiro took over leadership of the school at the age of 19 when his father died in 1632. Nidai Tadahiro died at the age of 81 in 1693. His works span an incredible 60 years. This finely forged *konuka-hada* katana with a brilliant *suguha hamon* so bright white that it looks like fallen snow encompasses all the qualities that make this Hizen master so well respected. And what better than a set of top-class *Higo koshirae* to bring it all together. This is *Kyûshû* history.



Saki-kasane: 4.9mm

Moto-kasane: 7.0mm

Nakago: 20.9cm

Omosa: 780g



Kissaki: 2.90cm

Saki-haba: 2.20cm

Nagasa: 71.2cm

Sori: 1.30cm

Moto-haba: 3.25cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

Born *Hashimoto Heishirô* in *Saga*, *Hizen* province in 1614, renowned swordsmith *nidai* (second generation) Tadahiro began working with his father, maestro *shodai* (first generation) Tadayoshi at the tender age of 10.

Guided by his father and other great smiths such as shodai *Masahiro* and *Yoshinobu*, Tadahiro took over leadership of the school at the age of 19 when his father died in 1632.

Tadahiro then changed his name from *Hashimoto Heishiro* to *Hashimoto Shinsaemon*. Curiously, it is understood that his new name appears on a family document pledging to the shogunate that the Hashimoto family would not sell swords for export to foreign countries.

As head of the Tadayoshi school, second generation Tadahiro always signed his name Tadahiro and never Tadayoshi. In July of 1641, only 9 years after taking over the Tadayoshi School, he was given the honorific title of *Omi Daijô*. He was only 28.

Nidai Tadahiro died at the age of 81 in the sixth year of Genroku era or 1693. His works span an incredible 60 years. The sheer quantity and quality of his work makes him one of the most prized artisans, legendary among Hizen smiths. He is ranked *jôjô-saku*, a highly superior smith.

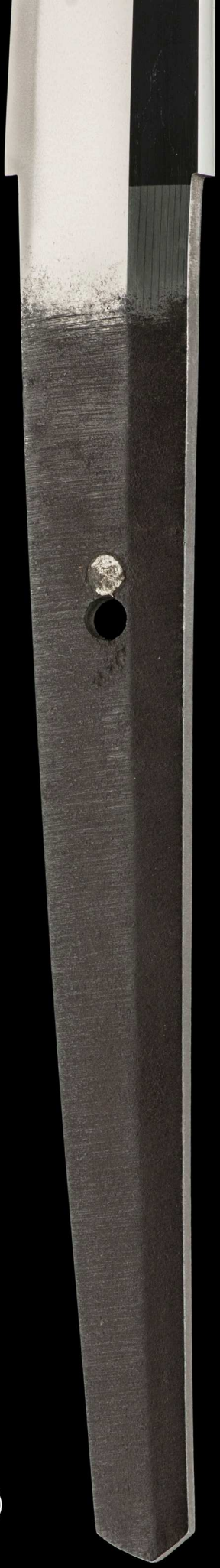


Location: *Hizen province*
Title: *Ômi Daijô* (Lord of Ômi province)
Family name: *Fujiwara*
Swordsmith: *Tadahiro* (second generation)

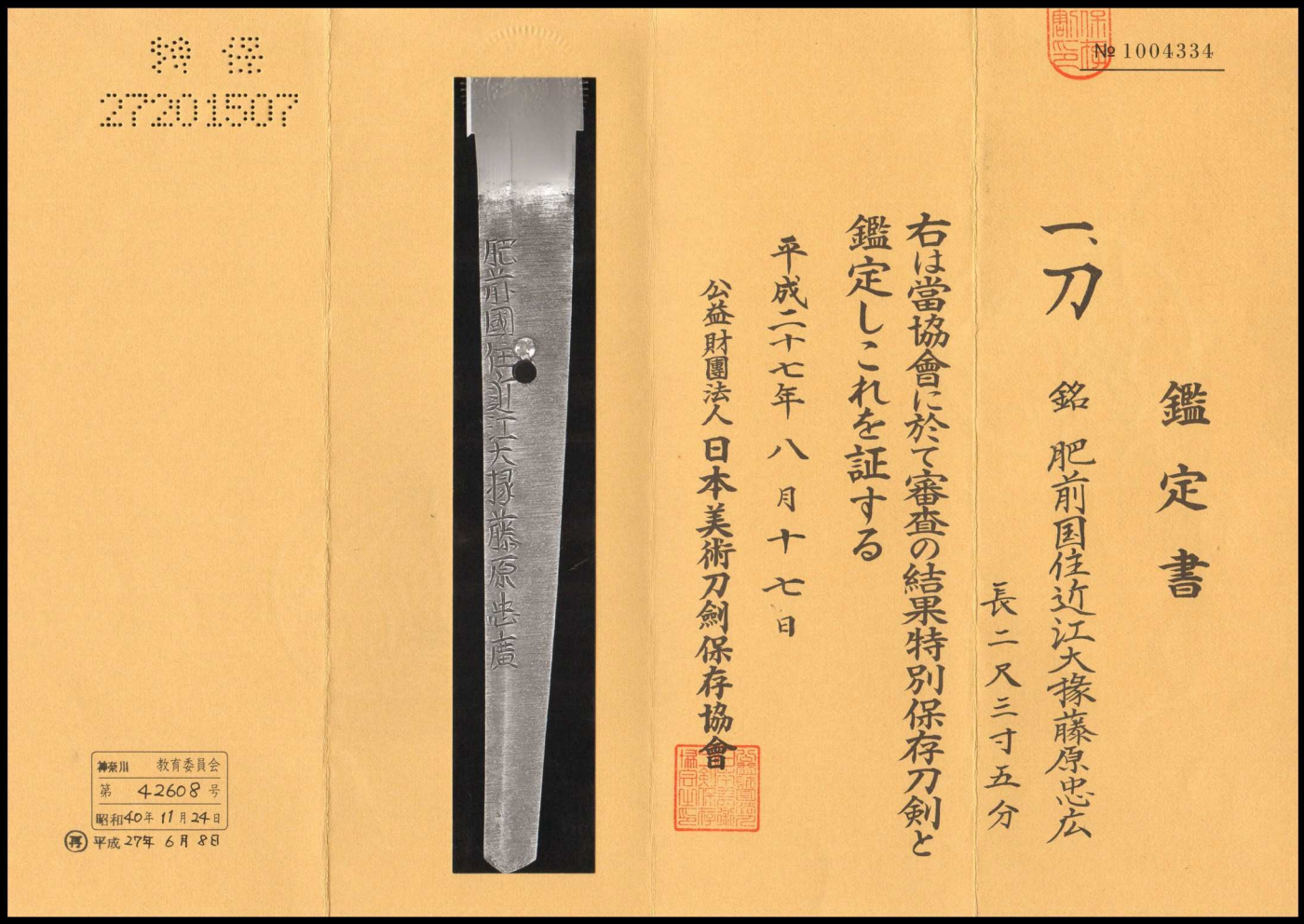
ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

(Hi) 肥
(zen, no) 前
(Kuni) 國
(jû) 住
(Ô) 近
(mi) 江
(Dai) 大
(jô) 掾
(Fuji) 藤
(wara) 原
(Tada) 忠
(hiro) 廣





(*ura*, reverse)



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 27th year of Heisei (2015), August 17th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Hizen no Kuni jû Ômi Daijô Fujiwara Tadahiro

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 5-bu (71.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



近江大掾忠廣
Ômi Daijô Tadahiro
Ômi Daijô Tadahiro

在銘也
Zaimei nari
Signed

長サ弐尺参寸四分余有之
Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun 4-bu amari kore ari
Blade length ~71.2 cm

代金子百五捨枚
Daikinsu hyakugojû-mai
Value 150 mai

昭和捨九年六月中浣
Shôwa jûkyûnen rokugatsu chûkan
Middle of the sixth month of Shôwa 19 (1944)

東京本阿弥光博（花押）
Tokyo Hon'ami Kôhaki + kaô
Written by Hon'ami Kôhaku,
a resident of Tokyo + monogram





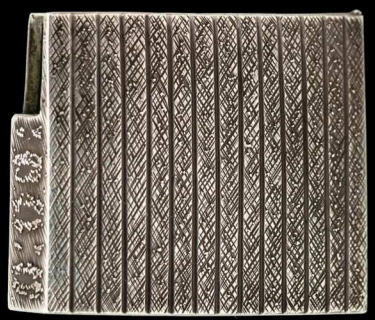


Wonderful ***konuka-hada***, finely forged.
A snow white hamon beams above.


A precise *sugu-ha hamon*.
The mark of a master.



Shirasaya with *sayagaki*
(protective scabbard)



silver *habaki* with
criss-cross file marks



Cha-roiro-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
（茶呂色塗鞘打刀拵え）

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy brown

Crafted during the
Middle Edo period
(1700~1780)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity





Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Suwa Ikuhira from *Higo province*
(1700s)

Paulownia design





Attributed to the late generation of Nishigaki Kanshirô

Mid Edo period

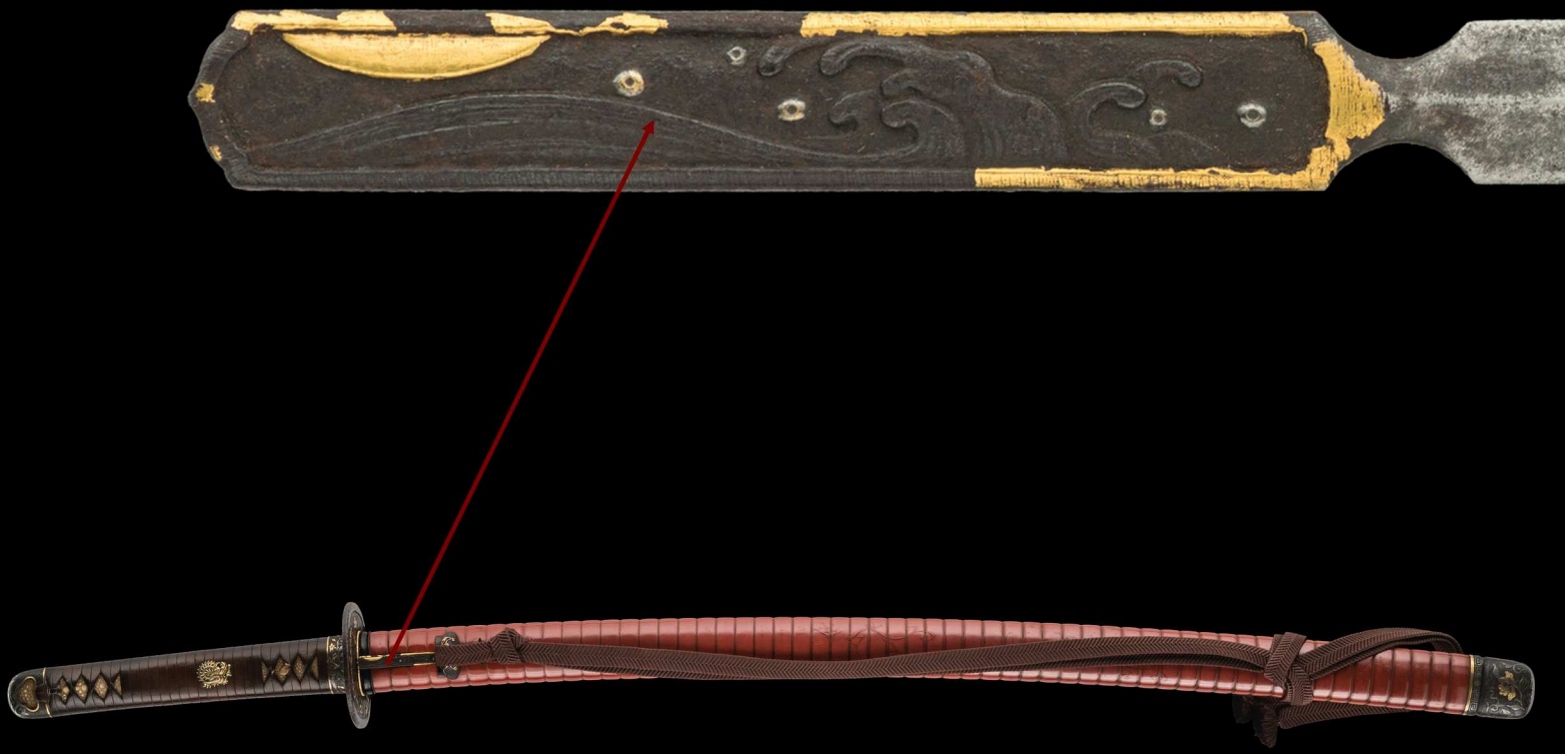
Diamond pattern with cherry blossoms motif



Bashin

Lit. "horse needle." Was worn – if at all – instead of a ***kozuka*** or ***kôgai*** on the saya; the bashin was originally designed to ease a horses' blood congestion after a very long ride by ***bloodletting***; later the bashin had more an ornamental character and were mostly worn to a ***Higo-koshirae***.

The term bashin can also be read as ***umabari***.





Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) featured curled dragons.







Koshirae bag

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA416

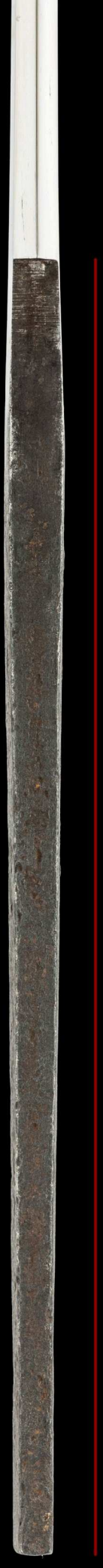
A YOSHIOKA-ICHIMONJI KATANA

UNSIGNED, NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (CIRCA 1333~1360)

Swordsmith: ***Yoshioka Ichimonji school***
Measurements: **Length:** 72.3cm (*o-suriage*) **Curvature:** 1.1cm **Moto-haba:** 2.89cm
Jihada: *Mokume-hada and ko-mokume with midare-utsuri*
Hamon: *Bright chôji-midare mixed with suguha-chôji in nioi-deki*
Certificate: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Included: Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, description

SOLD – ***custom koshirae now in process.***

The illustrious *Ichimonji* school was founded during the *Kamakura* period and was active into the warring *Nambokuchô jidai* (1333-1392). The school takes its name from the practice of their smiths inscribing their *nakago* with the horizontal character "*ichi*" - (meaning number one) and sometimes followed by their name. Given the length and curvature of the sword and its fairly long *chû-kissaki*, this katana can be comfortably dated to the early to mid-1300s. The joy of owning a Japanese sword of this pedigree is to sit down quietly under the right light and let the 'hamon magic' transport you away 700 years to the Bizen promised land. In this weighty sword you'll enjoy a narrow *suguha-chôji* at the base of the blade which then blossoms beautifully about halfway up into a wide *ô-chôji-midare*. Visible *mokume-hada* in all sizes can be appreciated along with *midare-utsuri* and *mune-yaki*, where the top spine of the blade looks to be on fire. This is an ideal sword to consider building a striking custom koshirae for and Unique Japan will guide you throughout the process. Of course, enjoying the sword in shirasaya only is perfectly fine too!



Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 6.7mm

Nakago: 18.7cm

Omosa: 745g

Kissaki: 3.12cm

Saki-haba: 1.73cm

Nagasa: 72.3cm

Sori: 1.10cm

Moto-haba: 2.89cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

The illustrious ***Ichimonji school*** was founded during the ***Kamakura*** period (1185-1333) and was active into the ***Nambokuchô*** period (1333-1392). The school takes its name from the practice of their smiths inscribing their swords' tangs (nakago) with the horizontal character "***ichi***" (meaning number one) and sometimes followed by their name.

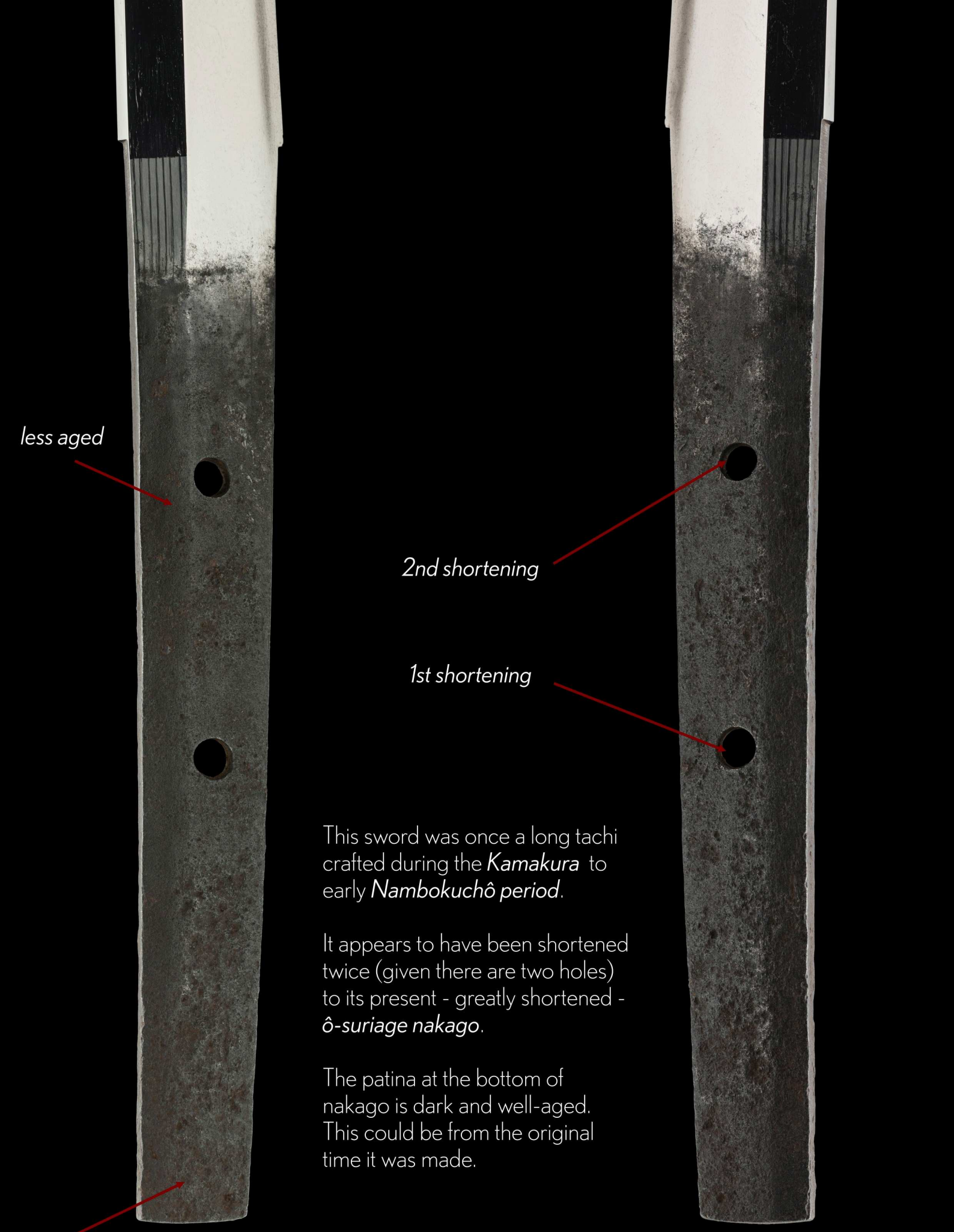
Major schools within the Ichimonji umbrella, include ***Ko-Ichimonji***, the flamboyant ***Fukuoka Ichimonji*** group, ***Yoshioka Ichimonji***, ***Iwato Ichimonji*** and ***Katayama Ichimonji***. This katana has been attributed to the ***Yoshioka Ichimonji*** school.

The founder of the Yoshioka Ichimonji school was ***Sukeyoshi,*** said to the grandson of ***Sukemune*** who lived in the town of Fukuoka. As the name suggests, smiths of this school lives in the village of ***Yoshioka*** in Bizen province.

Given the modest curvature of this sword and a fairly long ***chû-kissaki***, we can comfortably date the piece to the mid-1300s, during the Nambokuchô period. It is a spirited sword starting off with a ***suguha-chôji*** (a more straight hamon) at the base of the blade and then blossoms about halfway up into a wide ***ô-chôji-midare.*** Visible ***mokume-hada*** in all sizes can be appreciated along with ***midare-utsuri*** and powerful ***mune-yaki***, where the top spine of the blade looks to be on fire. There is plenty of classic Bizen sword study to enjoy and history for your mind to escape to.

The sword is in shirasaya-only making it a potential candidate for a custom koshirae. The sword recently achieved NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon and has not been submitted for NBTHK***jûyô*** certification.

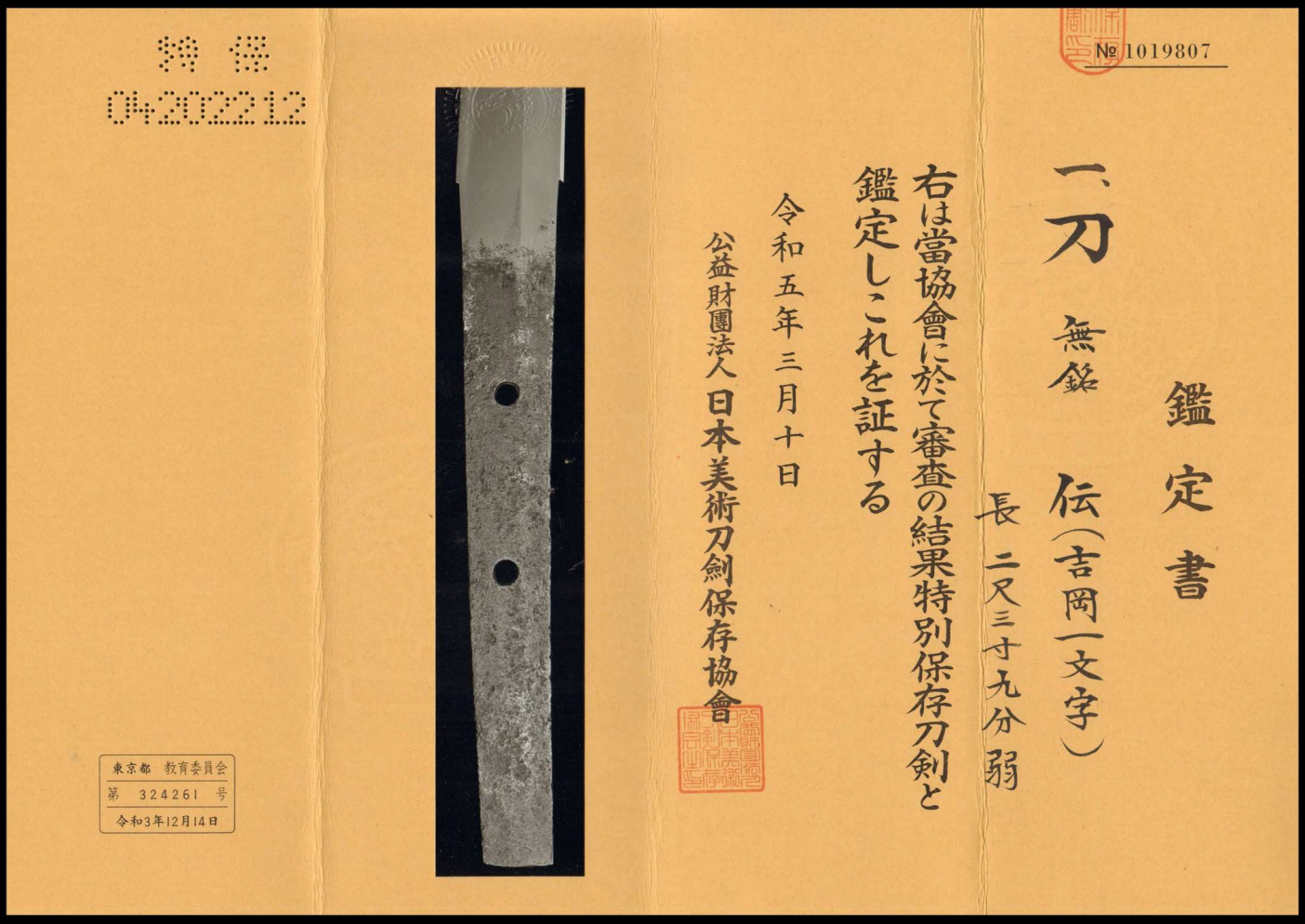




This sword was once a long tachi crafted during the *Kamakura* to early *Nambokuchô period*.

It appears to have been shortened twice (given there are two holes) to its present - greatly shortened - *ô-suriage nakago*.

The patina at the bottom of nakago is dark and well-aged. This could be from the original time it was made.



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), March 10th

One, Katana

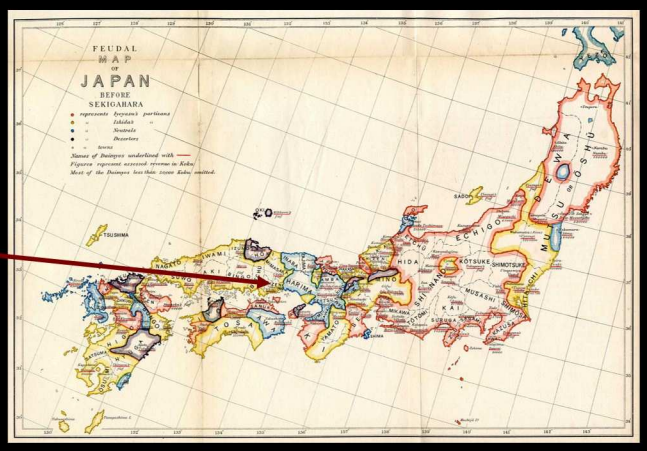
Mumei (unsigned)
Yoshioka Ichimonji

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 9-bu jaku (72.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Highlighting the locations of notable Bizen tradition schools that began from circa 1000AD during the *Heian* period and flourished during the *Kamakura* to *Nambokuchô* periods (1185~1392) during the *kotô* era.





Yoshioka Ichimonji (1287~1360)

Osafune school (1230~1596)

Yoshii river

Hatakeda school (1232~1275)

Katayama Ichimonji (1212~1220)

Fukuoka Ichimonji (1184~1293)

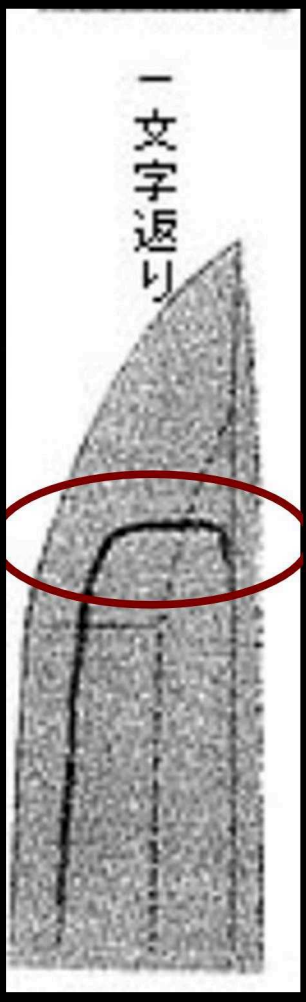
The *Takahashi*, *Asahi* and the *Yoshii* rivers played an instrumental role in developing sword making in the Bizen and Bitchû provinces





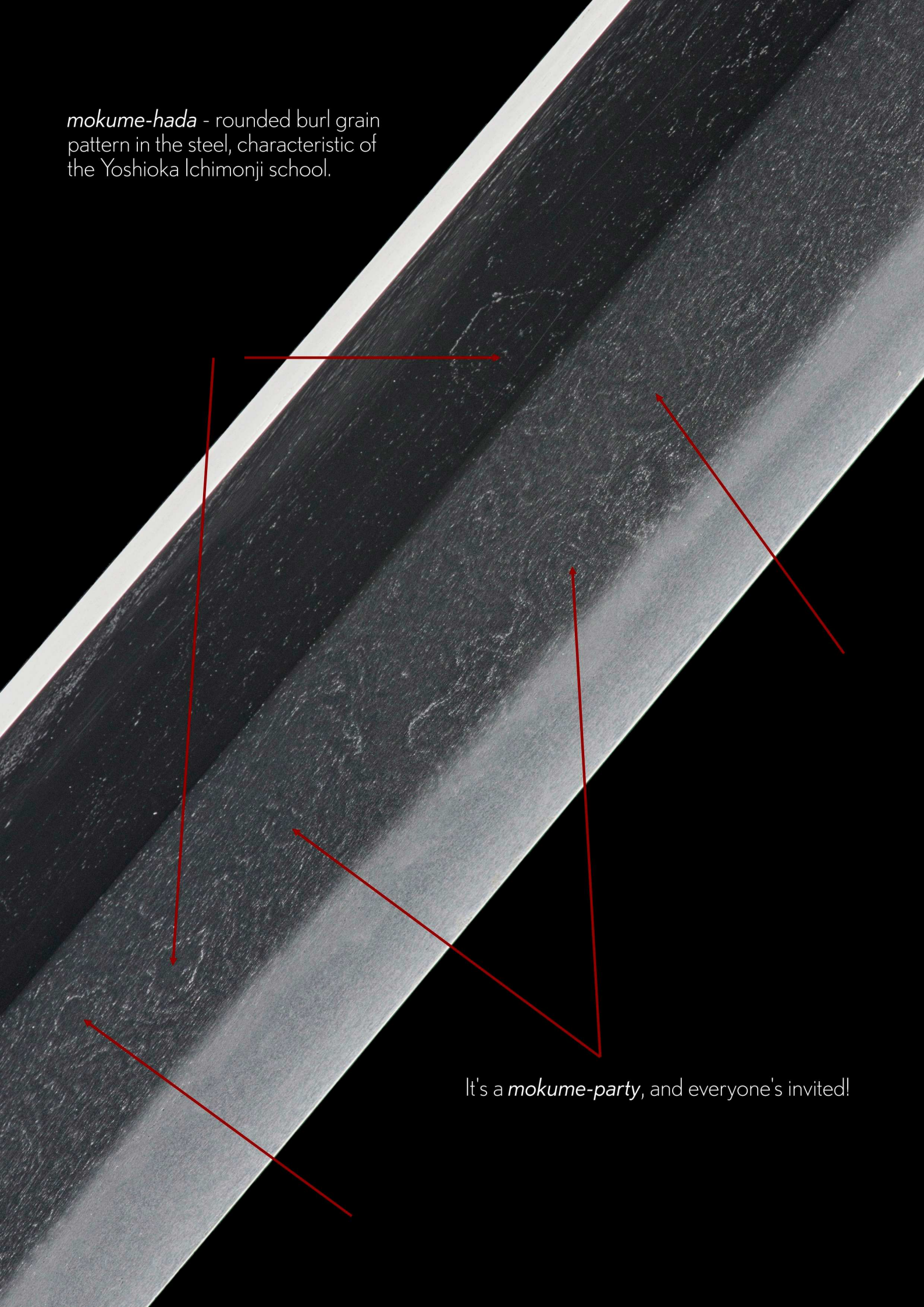
Ichimonji-kaeri features a horizontal line on the ***bôshi*** turn back to the ***mune*** (spine).

This is consistent with the ***Ichi kanji*** "一" that is synonymous with the school.





A rich ***mokume-hada*** backdrop to a fiery ***chôji-midare*** hamon.



mokume-hada - rounded burl grain pattern in the steel, characteristic of the Yoshioka Ichimonji school.

It's a ***mokume-party***, and everyone's invited!


The *mune* (spine) has been tempered, which is known as *muneyaki*.
muneyaki


A *Bizen* feast your eyes...
midare utsuri (reflection)
nioi-deki - super fine martensite
particles that resemble the milky way.


wide yakiba (hardening area)
o-chôji (large clove blossoms)
suguha-chôji (straight clove blossoms)



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold-wrapped ***habaki*** with
horizontal file marks



Koshirae bag



Recently Completed Custom Koshirae

ujwa250
A Suishinshi Masahide Wakizashi
Rare body-cutting test performed by Masahide himself
February 1800
NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon

Rising phoenix theme with twisting *kizami* saya



service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA403

A NAOTANE '3-BODY CUTTING TEST' KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, SHINSHINTÔ PERIOD (BUNKA ERA: OCTOBER 6, 1815)

Swordsmith:	***Taikei Shôji Naotane*** (*shodai*, first generation)
Measurements:	**Length:** 69.9cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 2.1cm **Motohaba:** 2.9cm
Jihada:	*Densely forged ko-itame with ji-nie, fine chikei, and midare-utsuri*
Hamon:	*Ko-nie-laden gunome with a wide, bright, and clear nioiguchi mixed with many ashi*
Certificate:	**60th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken** *(designated as Profound and Important)*
Certificate #2:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (*a koshirae designated as Authentic)*
Fujishiro:	**Saijô-saku** (*grandmaster swordsmith, highest rank*)
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei** (*Tanobe Michihiro*)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo-period koshirae, stand, kit, booklet, printed description

SOLD

Taikei Naotane was born *Shôji Minobe Naotane* in *Yamagata* city, *Dewa* province, in 1778. His family was of samurai class for he carried the family name Shôji at a time when the vast populace did not have a surname. It was not until 1870 that everyone in Japan was required to have a surname. As a young man, Naotane left the northern country for *Edo* (Tokyo) and became an apprentice of the hugely influential *saijô-saku* (grandmaster swordsmith) *Suishinshi Masahide*. A keen and talented student, Naotane quickly learned the methods taught by his master and selected *Taikei* as his crafting name. Like Suishinshi, Lord *Akimoto* of *Tatebayashi retained* and

employed him in *Kozuke* province.

In 1821, Naotane received the honorary title of *Chikuzen Daijô*, and again in 1848, the title of *Minosuke*. Naotane eventually took over leadership of the school when Masahide and his son both died in 1825. Like his sensei Masahide, Naotane favoured the reintroduction of old methods of sword-making over modern practicality. He was successful in all traditions, especially his ability to craft in the *Sôshû* and *Bizen* disciplines.



Unique Japan is very proud to introduce a remarkable katana by ***Taikei Shôji Naotane*** that has been awarded 60th *NBTHK Jûyô Tôken* certification. It is dated to October 6th, 1815.

This blade performed a *tameshigiri* (cutting test) ***severing three human bodies in one stroke***. This feat alone is rare and impressive. However, what makes this katana extra special is that the test was completed by Naotane's master student, *Sawara Shigetane* – a swordsmith - not by a professional sword tester. And that it was commissioned by a *Hatamoto*-ranked samurai.

To give further perspective, of the circa 12,000 *jûyô tôken* certified swords, there are only about **130 swords** with a *tameshigiri* cutting test. And of those 15 are anonymous, that is, they only record the cut that was performed and/or the number of bodies the blade cut through. Eight were carried out by non-professional sword testers, e.g., certain *samurai* retainers who were testing swords for their fiefs.

According the *Markus Sesko*, author of **TAMESHIGIRI – The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing –** who personally researched this sword:

*"NAO60 [Taikei Naotane of the 60th jûyô session] appears to be the **only Jûyô blade** that bears a cutting test that is explicitly mentioned as having carried out by a swordsmith, in the very case, by Naotane's master student Shigetane (重胤). All others, i.e., the vast majority of cutting tests seen on blades ranked jûyô or higher, are go back to professional testers like the **Yamano** (山野) or **Yamada** (山田) families. This makes NAO60 an **utmost rarity**, not only being the only work of Naotane with a cutting test among the ranks of jûyô, as indicated, but also seen against the entire bulk of blades with cutting tests of said ranks."*

Mr. Sesko further elaborates on an interesting link to another commissioned *jûyô daishô*:

Apart from Shigetane's cutting test, NAO60 is further inscribed with the reference that it was made for a certain ***Kakei Takahiro*** (筧孝寛). One of the three *daishô* by Naotane that passed *jûyô* in *jûyô shinsa* 17, which will henceforth be referred to as NAO17, was made for the very same person.



The *Kansei Chôshû Shokafu* (寛政重脩諸家譜), the *Daimyô* and *Hatamoto* register of the *Bakufu*, lists 15 branches of the *Kakei* (筧) family serving as *Hatamoto*. Takahiro is listed therein as having born the first name *Yûkichi* (勇吉) and as having his first encounter with the *Shôgun* on the ninth day of the second month Kansei nine (February 9, 1797) at the then age of eleven years. This calculates his year of birth as *Tenmei* eight (天明, 1787). Accordingly he was 29 years old when he received NAO60.

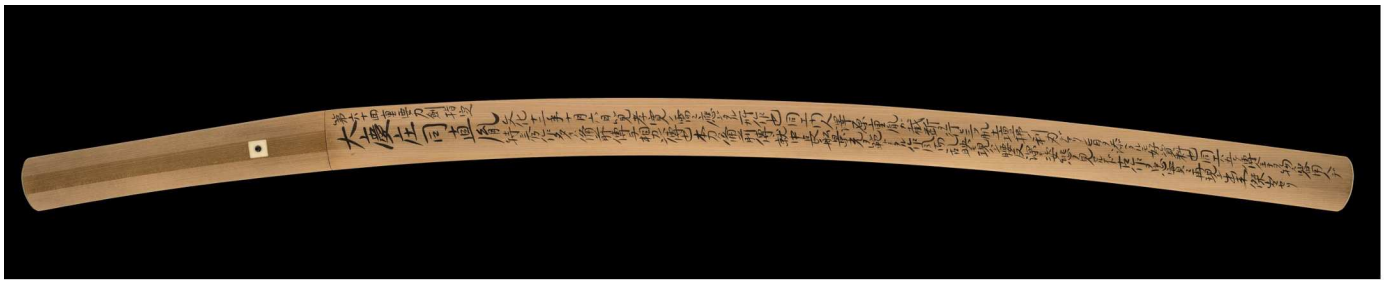
Also striking is the similarity between NAO60 and NAO17 in terms of the reference to the deity *Kangiten*, both written out and in the form of Sanskrit characters, and to the deities *Dainichi Nyorai* and *Nikkô Bosatsu* in the form of Sanskrit characters only.

This suggests that Kakei Takahiro was a devout Buddhist, particularly worshipping *Kangiten*, who is known as an extremely efficacious god who grants whatever is asked of him without fail, including impossible wishes.

NA017 - *oshigata* of both tangs of the *Daishô* that passed in *jûyô* 17.

What's captivating about this katana is that it has a genuine *kotô* period feel to it. This truly is a master-class achievement in recreating sword-making techniques of the early 1300s known as the *fukkotô* movement that was started by his master Masahide, a trend that tried to revive the old forging styles of the *kotô* era. This museum-grade katana marks an opportunity to collect of his great and most notable works that will bring immense pride and curative responsibility.

As Tanobe-sensei writes on his *sayagaki*, "*this blade follows the Bizen tradition, in concrete terms the style of Osafune Kagemitsu, and with the presence of midare-utsuri and the shape with deep koshizori, the blade, which is of an excellent deki, is a very faithful recreation of a kotô-era work.*"



Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei



Edo-period uchigatana koshirae with kamon maki-e

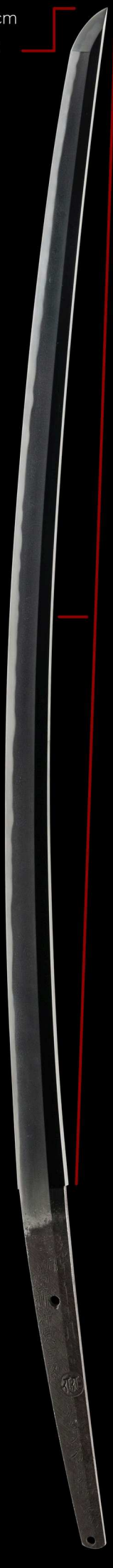


Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 7.0mm

Nakago: 21.4cm

Omosa: 685g



Kissaki: 2.57cm

Saki-haba: 1.83cm

Nagasa: 69.9cm

Sori: 2.10cm

Moto-haba: 2.97cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

Shoji Minobe Naotane was born in *Yamagata* city, *Dewa* province, in 1778. His family was surely of samurai class for he carried the family name *Shôji* at a time when the vast populace did not have a surname. It was, in fact, not until 1870 that everyone in Japan was required to have a surname.

As a young man, Naotane left the northern country for *Edo* (Tokyo) and becoming an apprentice of *Suishinshi Masahide*. He quickly mastered the methods taught and selected *Taikei* as his crafting name. Like Suishinshi, Lord *Akimoto* of *Tatebayashi* retained and employed him in *Kozuke* province.

In 1821, Naotane received the title of *Chikuzen Daijo*, and again in 1848, the title of *Minosuke*. Naotane became so skilful that he became the most important smith in the school taking over leadership when Masahide and his son both died in 1825.

Taikei Naotane was ranked as *saijo-saku*, a grandmaster swordsmith. His talents are said to have surpassed his master's achievements. Like his teacher Masahide, Naotane favoured the reintroduction of old methods of sword-making over modern practicality. He was successful in all traditions, especially the *Bizen* and *Sôshû* disciplines.

Naotane was very active, producing blades for about 55 years from 1800 to 1856. He died on February 22nd, the 5th year day of Ansei, 1858, at the age of 79.

This remarkable katana was crafted for *Kakei Takahiro* and dated on October 6th, 1815. Its elegant shape resembles that of a *torii* (archway to a shinto shrine). It was forged in the *Bizen Kagemitsu* tradition, with a lovely *midare-utsuri* and a densely-folded *ko-itame hada*. The hamon is a bright, wavy *gunome* with long *ashi* that extend to the cutting edge.

An impressive 3-body cutting test was performed with this blade by one of Naotane's most notable students, *Sawara Shigetane*. The nakago also features brilliant carvings of prominent *bonji* characters. A striking set of koshirae from the late Edo period further compliments this masterwork from one Japan's most accomplished swordsmiths of the 19th century.





Bunka jûninen jûgatsu muika + bonji, Kakei Takahiro no motome ni ôjite kore o tsukuru, mitsu-dô dotan-barai Sawahara Shigetane

Dated on the sixth day of the tenth month in the twelfth year of *Bunka* era (October 6, 1815) plus *bonji* on the request of client *Kakei Takahiro --- [Naotane's master student] Sawahara Shigetane* performed a cutting test with this sword, severing through three bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below.

(Mi) 三
(tsu) ツ
(dô) 胴
(do) 土
(tan) 壇
(barai) 拂
(Sawa) 澤
(hara) 原
(Shige) 重
(tane) 胤

文 (Bun)
化 (ka)
十 (jû)
二 (ni)
年 (nen)

十 (jû)

月 (gatsu)

六 (mui)
日 (ka)

 *Kangiten* (Nandikesvara)

應 (ôjite)

筧 (Kakei)

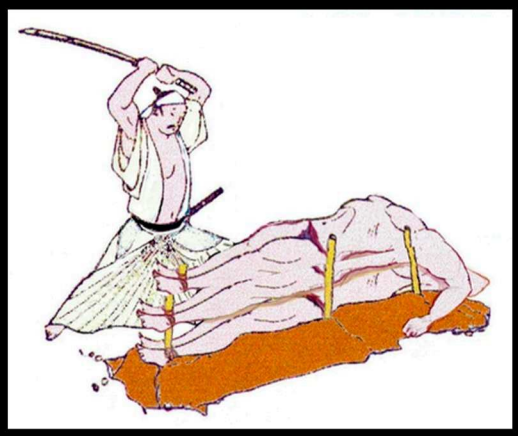
孝 (Taka)

寛 (hiro, no)

需 (motome, ni)

造 (tsukuru)

之 (kore)



According the *Markus Sesko*, author of TAMESHIGIRI The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing:

[This is the] only Jûyô blade that bears a cutting test that is explicitly mentioned as having carried out by a swordsmith, in the very case, by Naotane's master student Shigetane (重胤). All others, i.e., the vast majority of cutting tests seen on blades ranked jûyô or higher, go back to professional testers like the Yamano or Yamada families.

This makes [this katana] an utmost rarity, not only being the only work of Naotane with a cutting test among the ranks of jûyô, as indicated, but also seen against the entire bulk of blades with cutting tests of said ranks."





Kangiten

Kakei Takahiro who commissioned this katana to Naotane was clearly a devout ***Buddhist***, In particular for the fact he worshipped ***Kangiten*** who is known as an extremely efficacious god who grants whatever is asked of him without fail, including impossible wishes.

Daishô Kangiten - Taikei Shôji Naotane + kaô + three bonji

Nandikesvara - Taikei Shôji Naotane + monogram + three bonji describing Suryaprabha, Vairocana and Deva King

Location: *Musashi Province*
Title: *Taikei*
Family name: *Shôji*
Swordsmith: *Naotane* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
kessho-yasurime (decorative file marks)

(Dai) 大
(shô) 聖
(Kan) 歡
(gi) 喜
(ten) 天
(Tai) 大
(kei) 慶
(Shô) 庄
(ji) 司
(Nao) 直
(tane) 胤
(kaô) 花押

(Suryaprabha) *Nikkô Bosatsu*

(Vairocana) *Dainichi Nyorai*

(Deva King) *Kongô Rikishi*





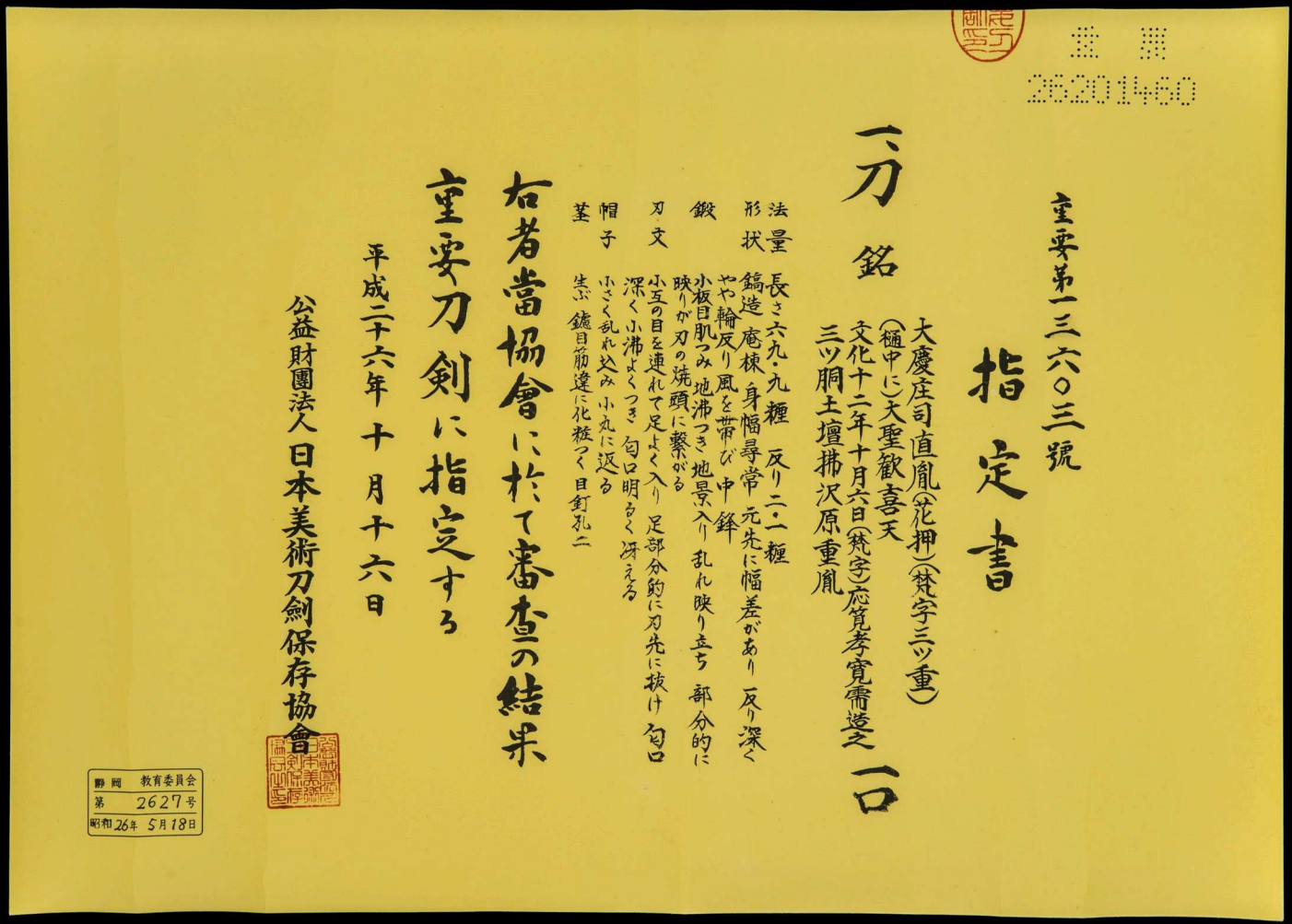
Niô guardians

(Deva King)
Kongô Rikishi



Niô or ***Kongoô Rikishi*** are two wrath-filled and muscular guardians of the Buddha standing today as Deva statues at the entrance of many Buddhist temples.

They are ***dharmapala*** manifestations of the bodhisattva ***Vajrapani***, the oldest and most powerful of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon.


重要第一三六〇三號

指定書

一刀 銘

大慶庄司直胤(花押)(梵字三ツ重)
(樋中に)天聖歡喜天
文化十二年十月六日(梵字)心筭孝寛需造之
三ツ胴土壇拂沢原重胤

法量 長さ六九・九糎 反り二・一糎
形状 鎬造 庵棟 身幅尋常 元先に幅差があり 反り深く
やや輪反り風を帯び 中鋒
鍛 小板目肌つみ 地沸つき 地景入り 乱れ映り立ち 部分的に
映りが刃の焼頭に繋がる
刃文 小互の目を連れて足よく入り 足部分的に刃先に抜け 匂口
深く小沸よくつき 匂口明るく冴える
帽子 小さく乱れ込み 小丸に返る
茎 生ぶ 鑢目筋違に化粧つく 目釘孔二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
重要刀剣に指定する

平成二十六年 十 月十六日

公益財團法人 日本美術刀劍保存協會

靜岡 教育委員会
第 2627 号
昭和26年 5月18日

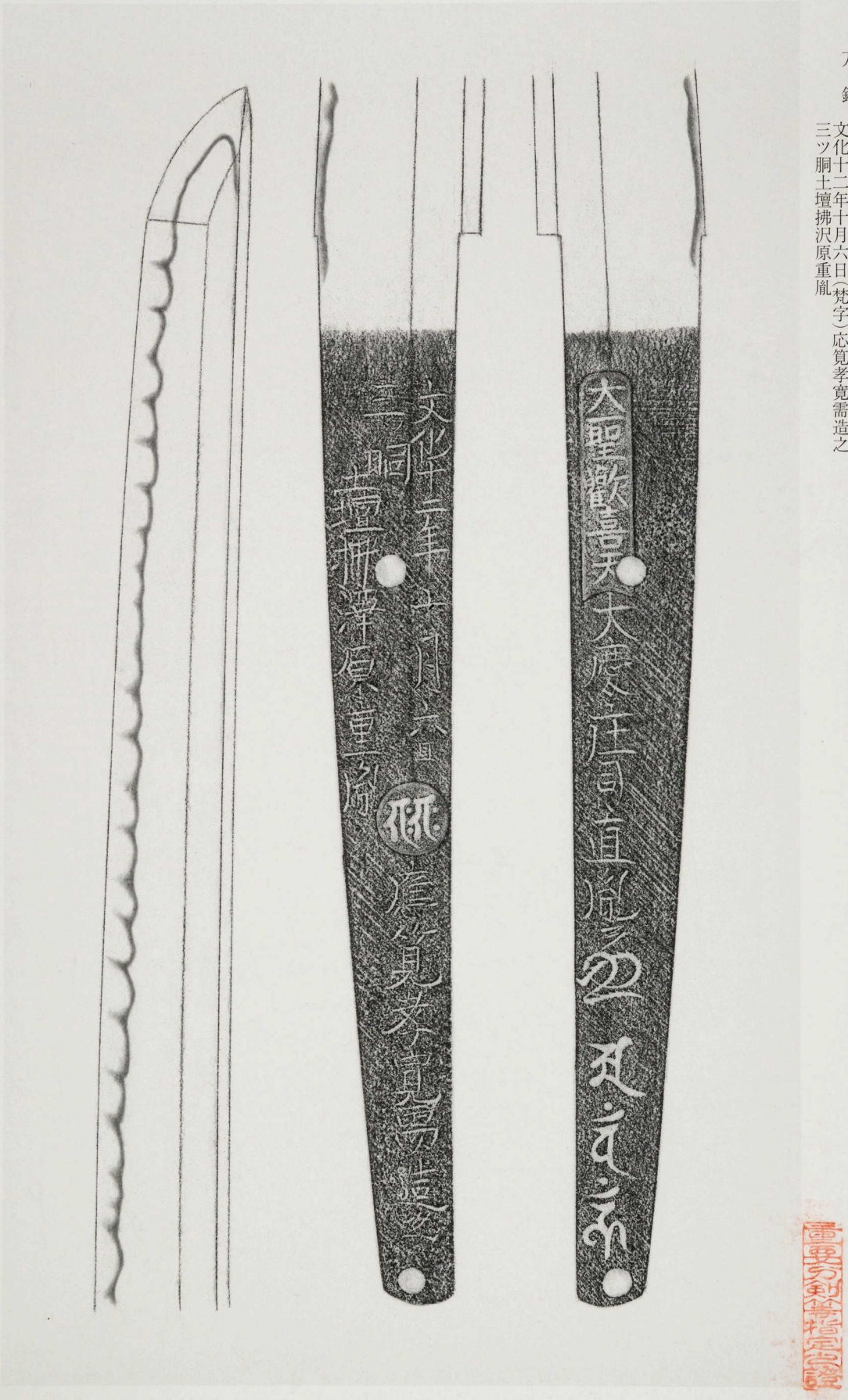
Jûyô Certificate No. 13603
Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation
Katana, mei: Taikei Shôji Naotane (大慶庄司直胤)

Measurements
nagasa 69.9 cm, sori 2.1 cm

Description
Keijo: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, normal *mihaba*, noticeable taper, deep *sori* that tends to *torii-zori*, *chû-kissaki*
Kitae: densely forged *ko-itame* that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, and *midare-utsuri*, which partially connects with the *yakigashira* of the hamon
Hamon: *ko-nie* laden and connected *gunome* with a wide, bright, and clear *nioiguchi* that is mixed with ample *ashi*, which almost reach the cutting edge in places
Bôshi: slight *midare-komi* with a *ko-maru kaeri*
Nakago: *ubu sujikai-yasurime* with *kesshô*, two *mekugi-ana*

According to the result of the shinsa committee of our society we judged this work as authentic and rate it as *jûyô-tôken*.

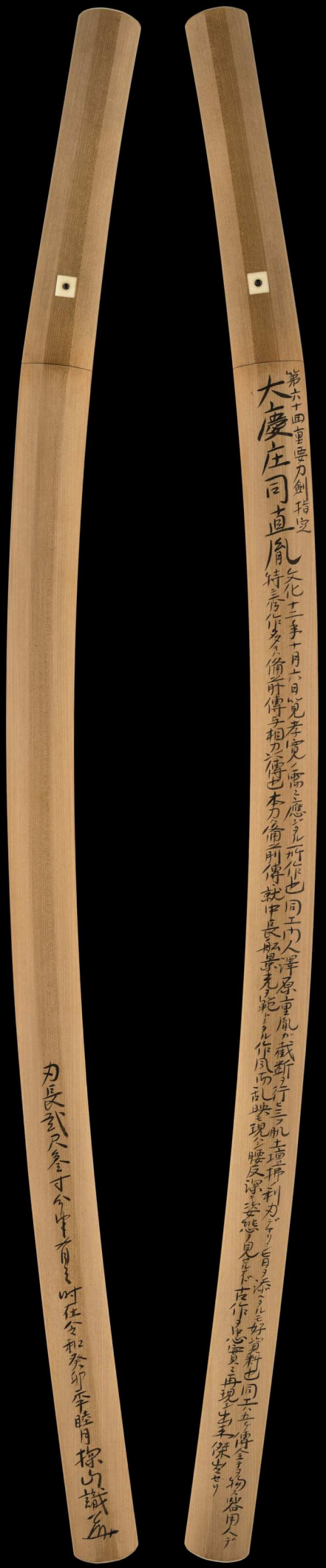
October 16, 2014
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK



刀銘

大慶庄司直胤（花押）（梵字三ツ重）
（櫃中に）大聖歓喜天
文化十二年十月六日（梵字）応覧孝寛需造之
三ツ胴土壇拂沢原重胤

The Juyo Token white paper



第六十回重要刀劍指定
Dai rokujû-kai Jûyô-Tôken shitei
Jûyô-Tôken at 60th Jûyô Shinsa

大慶庄司直胤
Taikei Shôji Naotane
Taikei Shôji Naotane

文化十二年十月六日筧孝寛ノ需ニ應ジタル所作也同工門人澤原重胤ガ截断ヲ行ヒ三ッ肌土壇拂ノ利刃デアリシ旨ヲ沿ヘタルモ好資料也同工ハ五ヶ傳全テヲ物ス器用人デ特ニ秀作多キハ備前傳与相刕傳也本刀ハ備前傳・就中長船景光ヲ範トミタル作風而乱映モ現ハシ腰反深キ姿態ヲ見セルナド古作ヲ忠實ニ再現シ出来傑出セリ

Bunka jûninen jûgatsu muika Kakei Takahiro no motome ni ôjitetaru shosa nari. Dôkô monjin Sawahara Shigetane ga setsudan o okonai mittsu-dô dotan-barai no rijin de ari shi mune o soetaru mo yoi shiryô nari. Dôkô wa Gokaden subete o mono-su kiyôjin de toku ni shûsaku ôki wa Bizen-den yo Sôshû-den nari. Hontô wa Bizen-den, nakanzuku Osafune Kagemitsu o han-to shitaru sakufû shikamo midare-utsuri mo arawashi koshizori fukaki shitai o miseru nado kosaku o chûjitsu ni saigen-shi deki kesshutsu-seri.

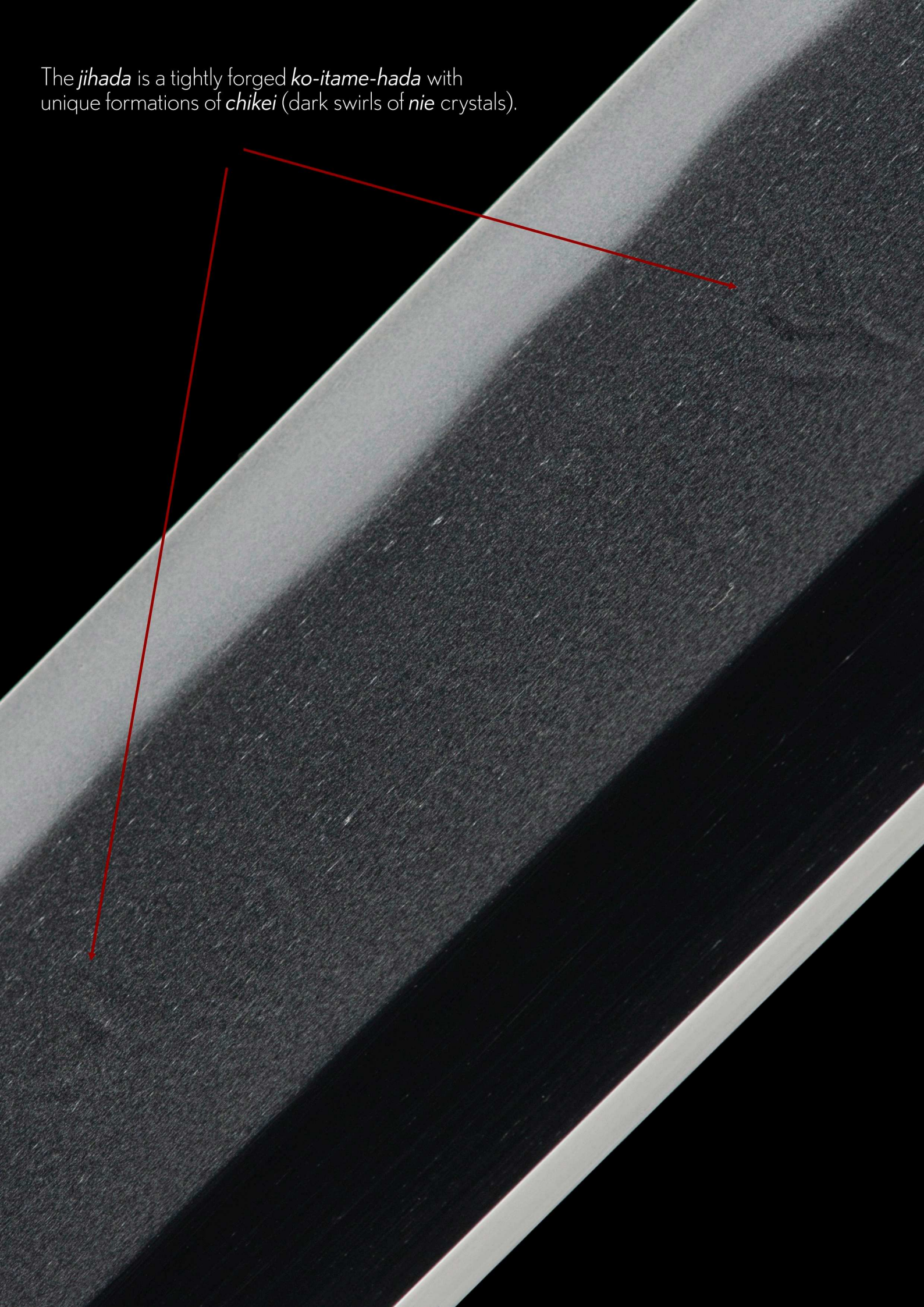
[This blade] was made on the sixth day of the tenth month of Bunka twelve (October 6, 1815) commissioned by ***Kakei Takahiro***. It is also inscribed that Naotane's student ***Sawahara Shigetane*** performed with it a cutting test that severed through three bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below, testifying the blade's cutting ability, which also makes it an important reference. Naotane was capable of working in all Five Traditions, but most of his masterworks are interpreted in the Bizen and Sôshû traditions. This blade follows the Bizen tradition, in concrete terms the style of ***Osafune Kagemitsu***, and with the presence of ***midare-utsuri*** and the shape with deep koshizori, the blade, which is of an excellent deki, is a very faithful recreation of a ***Kotô-era*** work.

刃長弐尺参寸分半有之
Hachô ni-shaku san-sun bu han kore ari
Blade length ~ 69.6 cm

時在令和癸卯季睦月探山識「花押」
Jjizai Reiwa mizunoto-usagidoshi mutsuki Tanzan shirusu + kaô
Written by Tanzan sensei [Tanobe Michihiro] in January of the Year of the Hare of the Reiwa era (2023) + monogram.






The *jihada* is a tightly forged *ko-itame-hada* with
unique formations of *chikei* (dark swirls of *nie* crystals).



A clear bluish hue dances off the wavy ***gunome hamon***.

This is class.

Naotane was one of only three smiths ranked as ***saijô-saku,*** a grandmaster swordsmith during the ***shinshintô*** period. His talents are said to have surpassed his master Masahide's achievements and became one of the most important swordsmiths of the late Edo period.

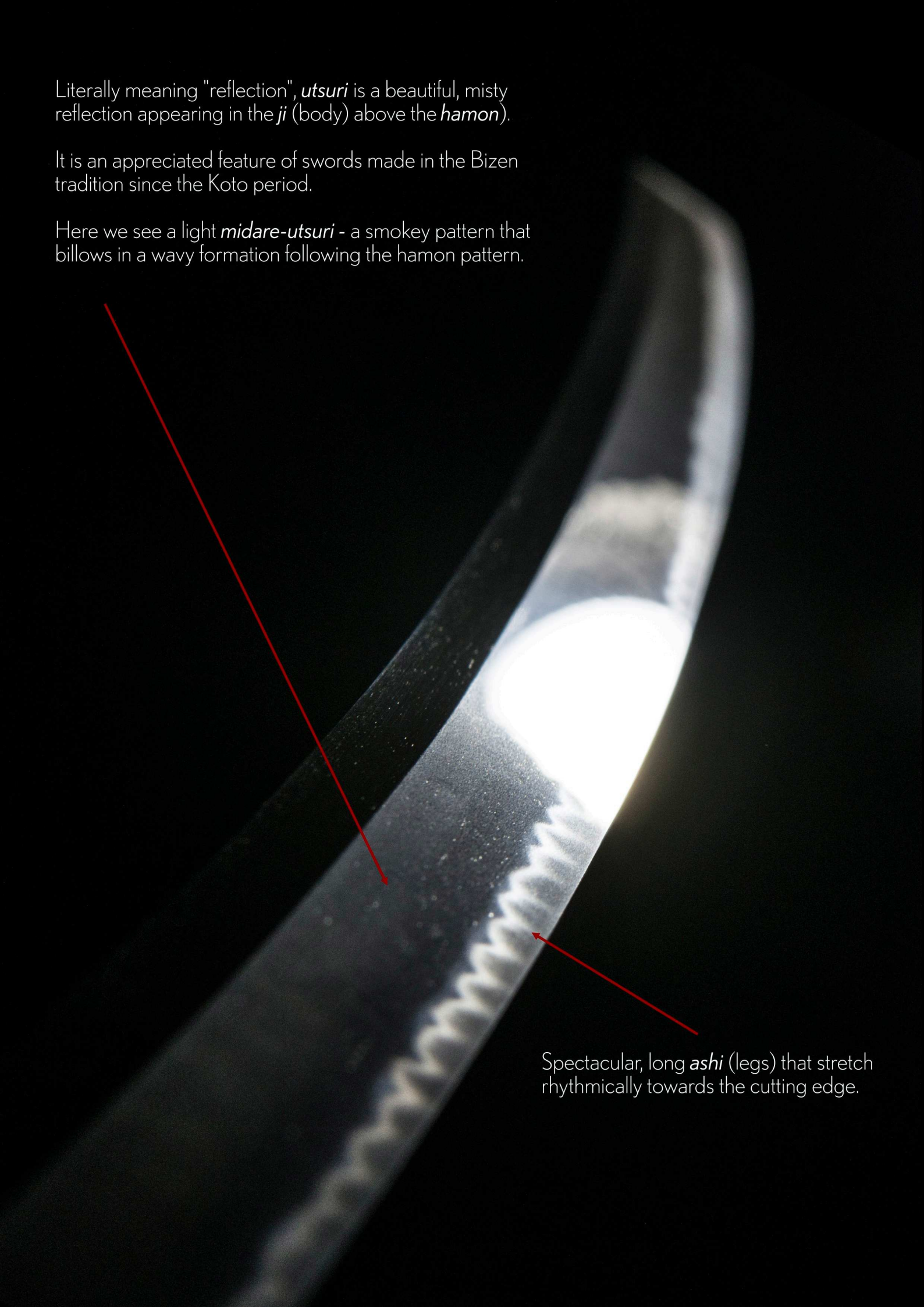


Portrait of Taikei Naotane by Takada Enshû circa 1850 destroyed in the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923.

Literally meaning "reflection", ***utsuri*** is a beautiful, misty reflection appearing in the ***ji*** (body) above the ***hamon***).

It is an appreciated feature of swords made in the Bizen tradition since the Koto period.

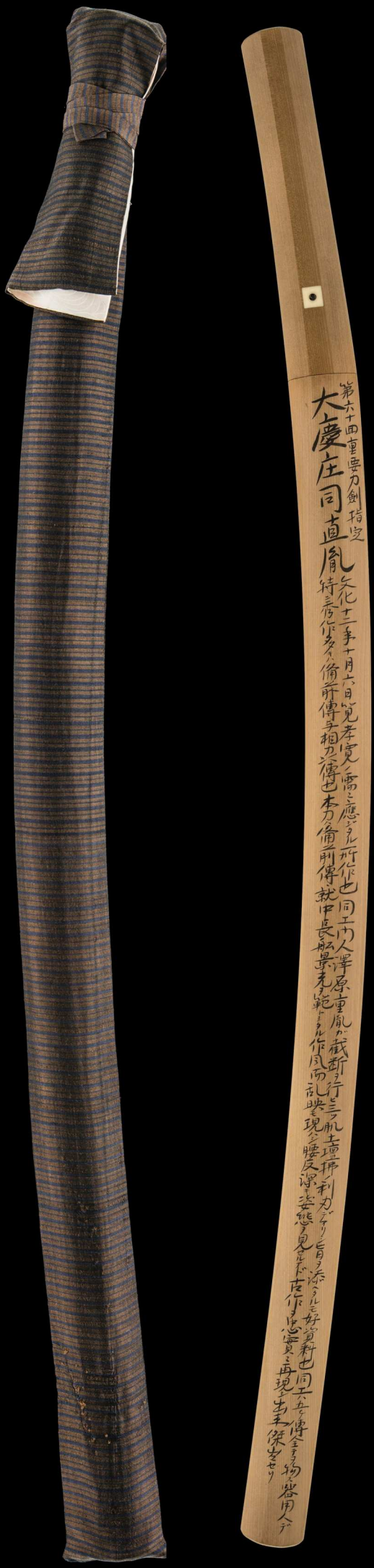
Here we see a light ***midare-utsuri*** - a smokey pattern that billows in a wavy formation following the hamon pattern.



Spectacular, long ***ashi*** (legs) that stretch rhythmically towards the cutting edge.



A nihontô eclipse.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



A gold ***habaki*** with
'*Hokusai-esque*'
silver waves



front

side





back



inspiration



Kuro-ro-urushi
sumi-maki-e nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
(黒呂漆墨蒔絵塗鞘打刀拵)

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black
with black maki-e

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



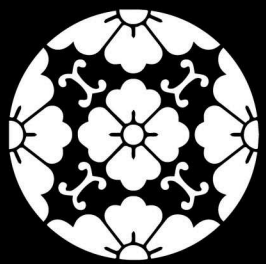
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity





These emblems/crests appear to be original creations by the ***maki-e*** artist. The designs were inspired from ***fusenryô***, a circle of flowers, originally used on fabric.

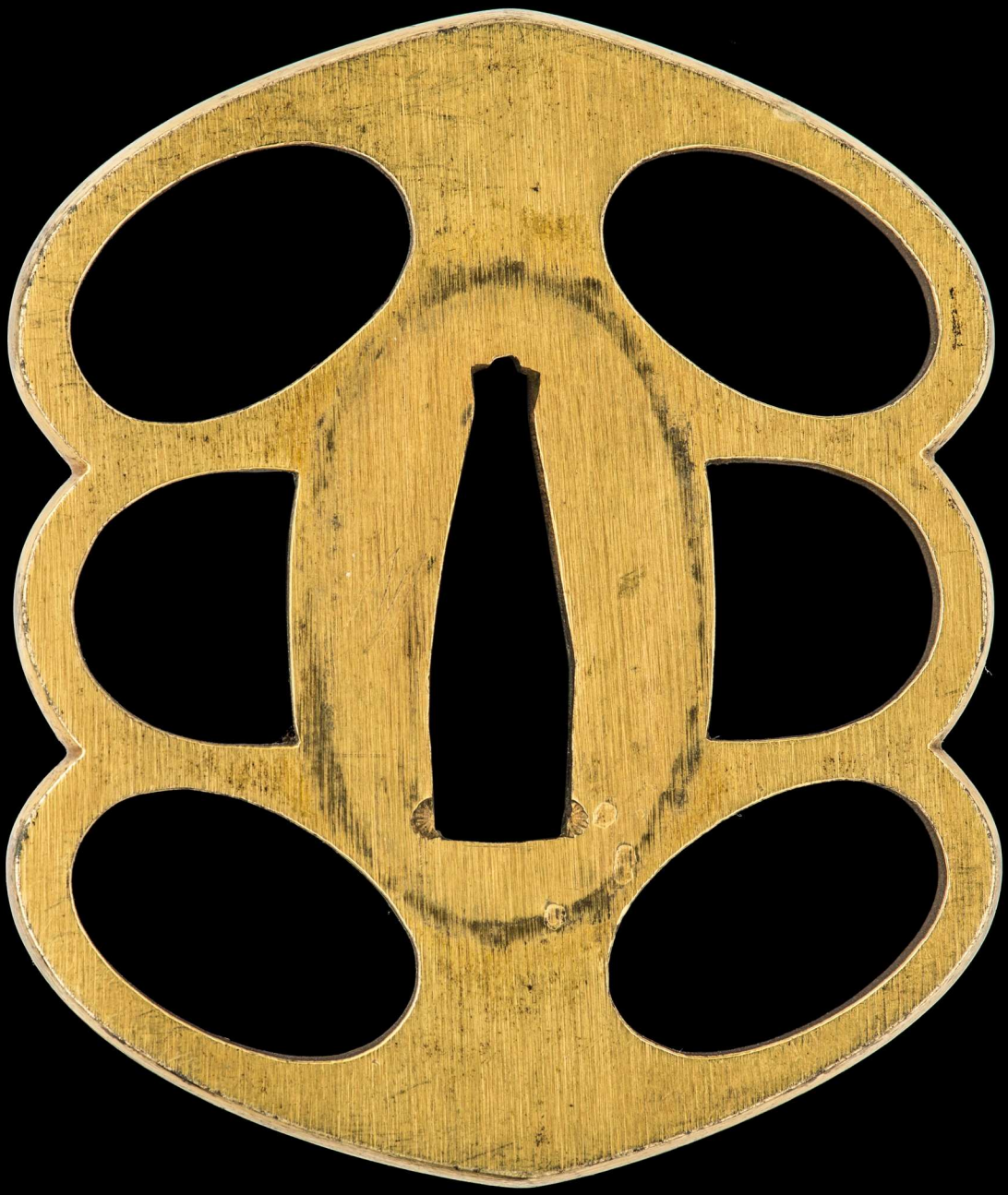
The top looks to be a combination of ***karakan,*** a handle of a chest and ivy. The bottom crest is based on ***karahana***, Chinese flowers. ***Kara*** means Chinese, therefore both are related to Chinese culture, notably Buddhism that originated in China.



Fusenryô ni karahana mon



Karakan mon



Kawari-gata (a uniquely shaped tsuba)
brass, openwork design



Fabulous depictions of sea life.
A theme that is united with the wave-designed *habaki.*



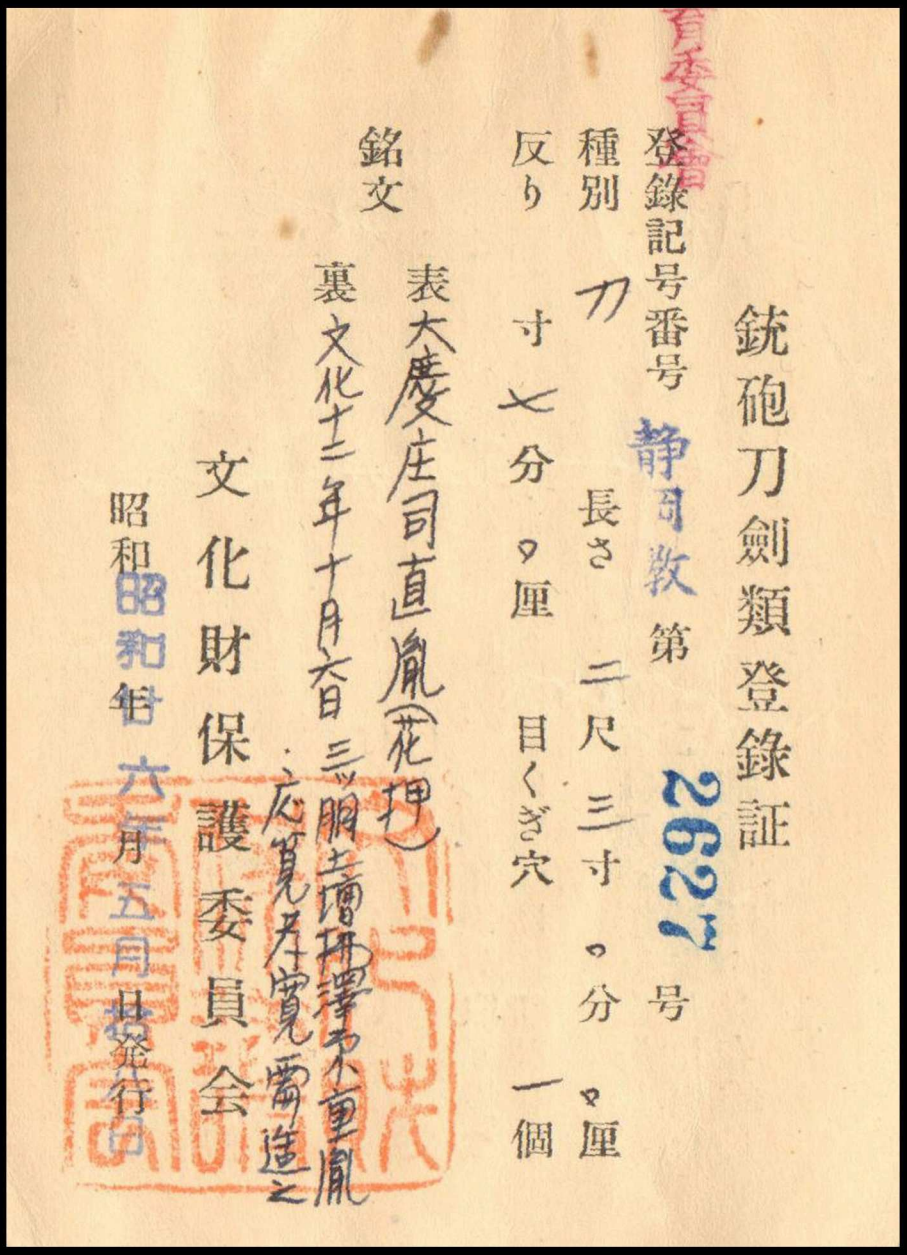
Fuchi-kashira
polished ***shibuichi***
bas-relief
Colour accents of gold, silver, copper

Depicting an ocean beach



Beautifully detailed golden ***hata*** (pigeons) depicted as ***menuki***.
Pigeons are spiritual messengers, bringing luck, companionship and prosperity.





銃砲刀劍類登錄証

登錄記号番号 静岡教 第 2627 号

種別 刀 長さ 二尺三寸〇分〇厘

反り 寸七分〇厘 目くぎ穴 一個

銘文 表 大慶庄司直胤(花押)

裏 文化十二年十月六日 三ッ胴土壇拂澤不重胤 応覧尋覧需造之

文化財保護委員会

昭和 昭和廿 年 六月五日発行

This is the original *torokushô* (registration card) for the *Naotane katana*.
The card was registered in the 26th year of Showa (1951).

This is significant as 1951 was the very first year that swords were formally registered in Japan. Many former Daimyô families were invited to submit their collections suggesting this blade was clearly held by a prominent family.

The serial number is just **2627**, one of the very first swords registered in Japan.



Koshirae bag

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA423

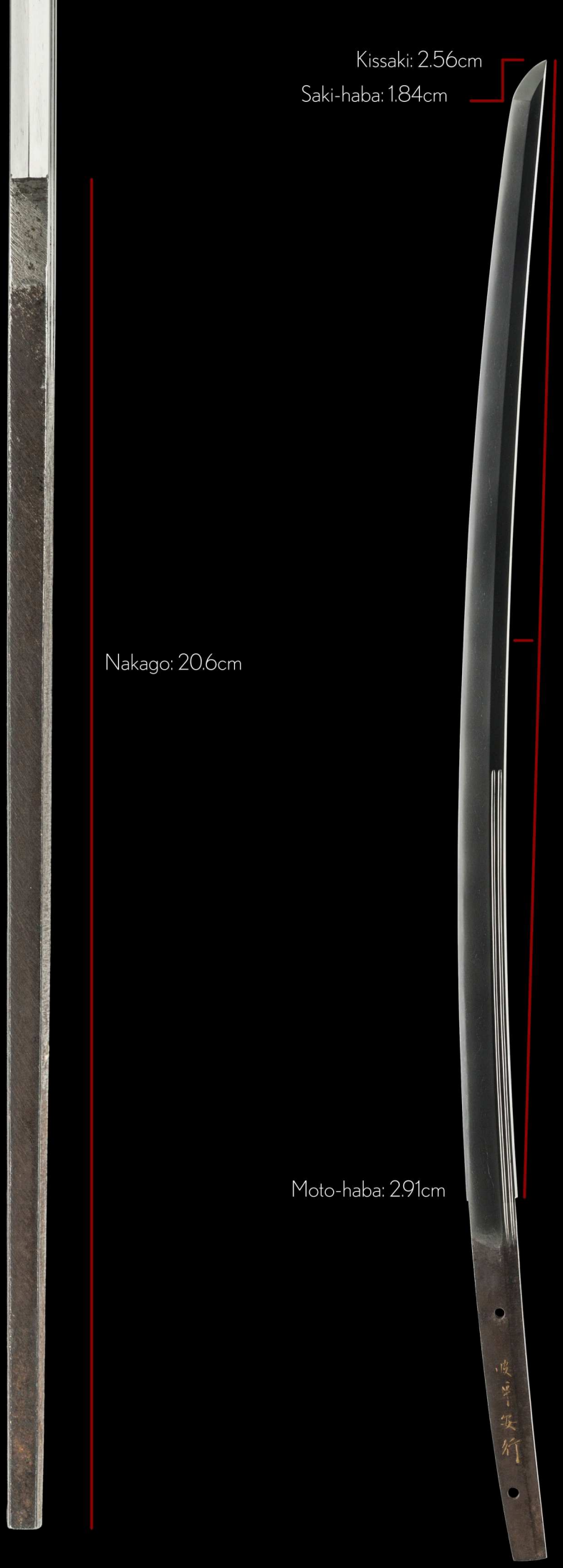
A NAMINOHIRA YASUYUKI KATANA

ATTRIBUTION IN GOLD LACQUER, NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (1346~1368)

Swordsmith:	***Naminohira Yasuyuki*** (*signed in kinpunmei by Hon'ami Kôson & monogram*)
Measurements:	**Length:** 66.8cm (*o-suriage*) **Curvature:** 1.2cm **Moto-haba:** 2.96cm
Jihada:	*Masame-hada mixed with* ayasugi-hada *and nagare with deep swirling chikei*
Hamon:	*Chû-suguha and ko-gunome in nie-deki, ko-ashi and uchinoke*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** *(for the tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae)*
Authentication:	**Hon'ami Kôson** (*1879~1955 - notable sword appraiser, author, gokaden founder)*
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo Satsuma koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, description

SOLD

The *Naminohira school,* situated in *Satsuma* province on the southern end of the island of *Kyûshû,* can trace its roots to the late *Heian* period (900~1184). Smiths from Satsuma worked exclusively for the *Satsuma clan* and adhered to a rule known as *Isshi-soden*, which meant that the secrets of their trade could only be passed down to one's son or a single student. This fine katana has been attributed to *Naminohira Yasuyuki* by the late great *Hon'ami Kôson* who was an immense figure in Japan's sword world. Its distinctive *ayasugi-hada* and bright *suguha/ko-gunome hamon* is a joy to study under the light. *Nami* is "wave" and *hira* means "flat". Together this translates to be "*calm seas*". Naminohira swords were, in fact, popular with the Japanese Navy given the positive omen and superb quality of workmanship. Comes with a brilliant set of antique *Satsuma-koshirae*.


Saki-kasane: 4.0mm
Moto-kasane: 5.9mm
Omosa: 770g
Nakago: 20.6cm
Kissaki: 2.56cm
Saki-haba: 1.84cm
Nagasa: 66.8cm
Sori: 1.20cm
Moto-haba: 2.91cm
Mekugi-ana: 2

The *Naminohira* school, situated in *Satsuma* province on the southern end of the island of *Kyûshû*, can trace its roots all the way back to the late *Heian* period (900~1184). Smiths from Satsuma worked exclusively for the Satsuma clan and adhered to a rule known as *Isshi-sôden*, which meant that the secrets of their trade could only be passed down to one's son or a single student.

Nami is "wave" and *hira* means "flat". Together this translates to be "*calm seas*". Naminohira swords were popular with the Japanese Navy given the positive omen and superb quality of workmanship.

This wide and strong katana has been attributed to *Naminohira Yasuyuki* who worked during the warring *Nambokuchô* period circa 1338~1362. His given name was *Shôhei* and was said to be the son or nephew of first generation Yasuyuki.

The sword's attribution was painted in gold lacquer on the nakago sometime in the early 1900s by late great *Honami Kôson* along with his monogram. Kôson was a distinguished author and a foremost scholar and spread knowledge of the Japanese sword to a wide audience. He coined the famous term *gokaden*, meaning the five traditions of the *kotô* period, namely: *Yamato-den*, *Yamashiro-den*, *Bizen-den*, *Sôshû-den* and *Mino den*.

The distinctive *ayasugi-hada* and bright *suguha/ko-gunome hamon* is an absolute joy to study under the light. This is a sword to admire its subtleties and simply take time with. Impressively carved *gomabashi* grooves add an extra dimension too.

This katana comes with a brilliant set of antique *koshirae* also from the *Satsuma* region making it a complete set so to speak. An all-around fine lot for the new or seasoned Japanese sword collector.





School: *Naminohira*
Swordsmith: *Yasuyuki* (second generation)

o-suriage-nakago (greatly shortened)
kiri-yasurime (straight file marks)

波 (Nami, no)

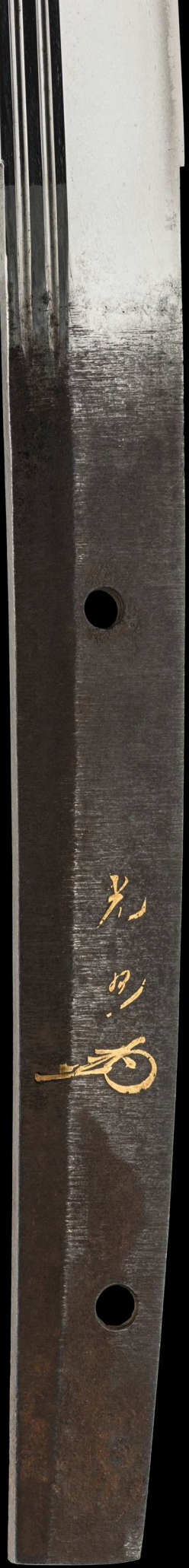
平 (hira)

安 (Yasu)

行 (yuki)

Kôson + kao
(inscribed and appraised by *Hon'ami Kôson*)
together with his monogram.

(Kô) 光
(son) 遜
(kaô) 花押





Kôson posing with the famous yari *Otegine* (御手杵)

Hon'ami Kôson's distinguished career began as a sword polisher within the notable *Hon'ami* family that for generations were the official sword appraisers and polishers of the *Tokugawa shogunate*. They also issued *origami appraisals* for blades.

Kôson published a magazine called *Nihontô Kenkyû* (刀剣研究, "Sword Studies"), and among others in 1914 and 1924 the books *Nihontô* (日本刀, "The Japanese Sword") and *Tôken Kantei Kôwa* (刀剣鑑定講話, "Lectures on Sword Appraisal") respectively.

He even founded a sword club, the *Nihontô Kenkyû Kai* (日本刀研究会). And it was Kôson who introduced the system of the *gokaden*. Kôson was instrumental in disseminating knowledge of the Japanese sword to a much wider audience.

Kôson monogram
(*kinpunmei* - gold lacquer)



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 31st year of Heisei (2019), February 25th

One, Katana

Kinpunmei (gold inscription)
Naminohira Yasuyuki (Jidai Nanbokuchô)
Kôson (kaô)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 0 han (66.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





Goma (or "Homa" in Sanskrit) means "*to burn*".
Hashi means "chopticks".

These double narrow short grooves with the same length and rounded top are symbolic of chopsticks used during *Goma* - a deeply spiritual Buddhist ceremony.

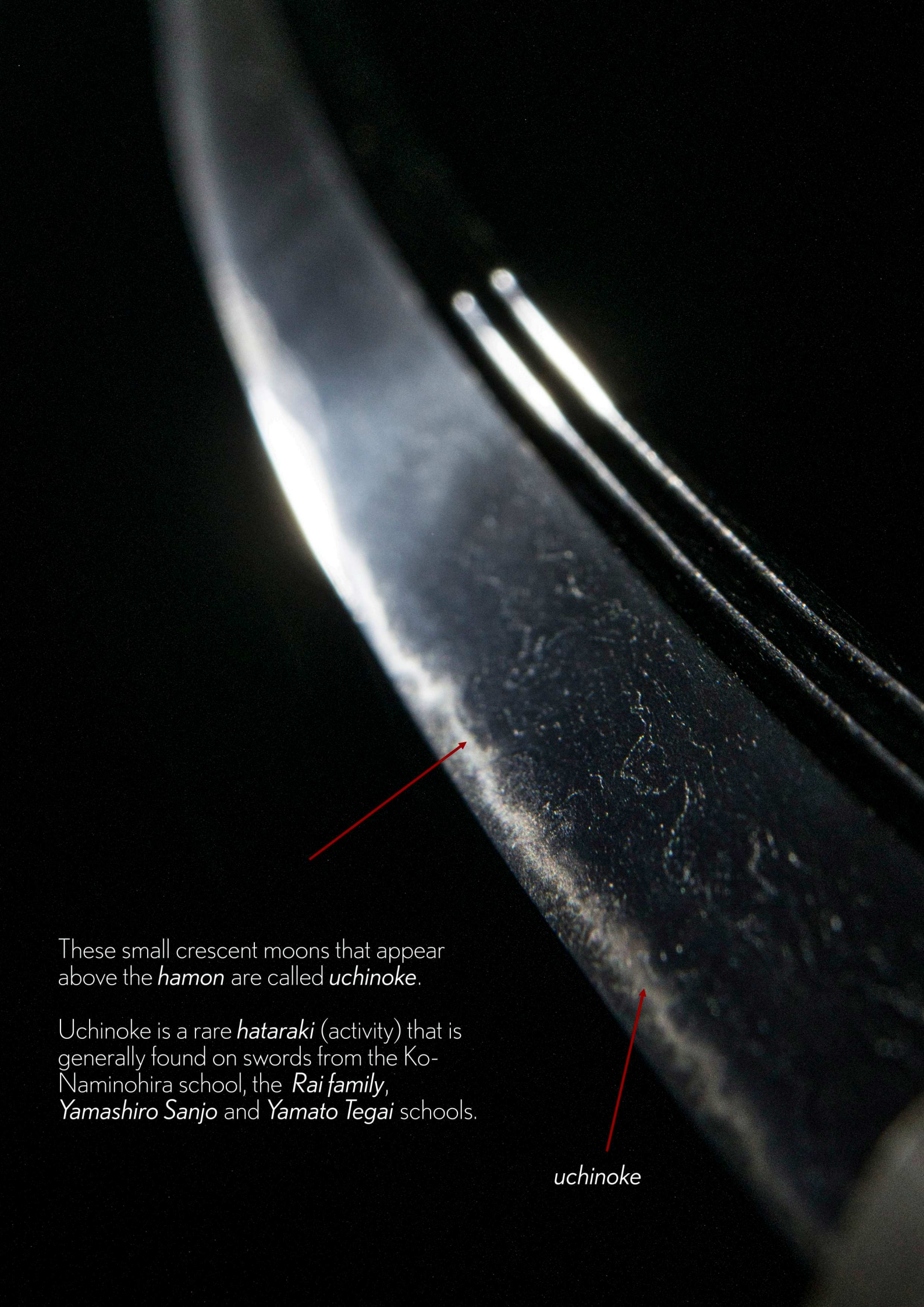
The officiating priest, who has performed the self-purification rites for both his mind and body, burns the goma wood in the center of the fireplace of the goma platform, which is in front of the principal holy image of *kôbo daishi.*



Masame-hada (straight grain) that is somewhat compressed forms *ayasugi-hada* - named after the special wavy carving pattern on certain *koto* or *shamisen* music instruments that enhances its resonance.

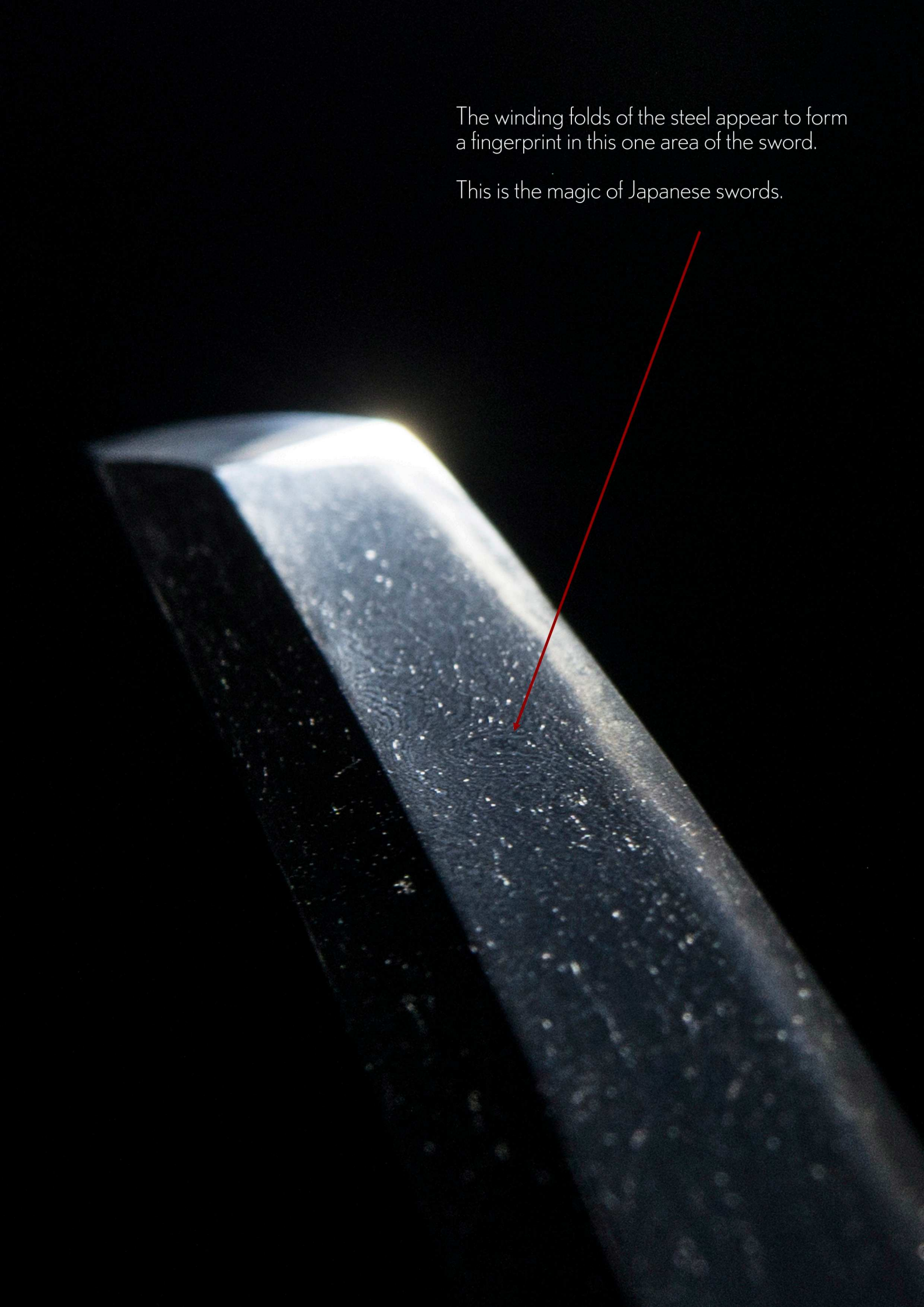


ayasugi-hada



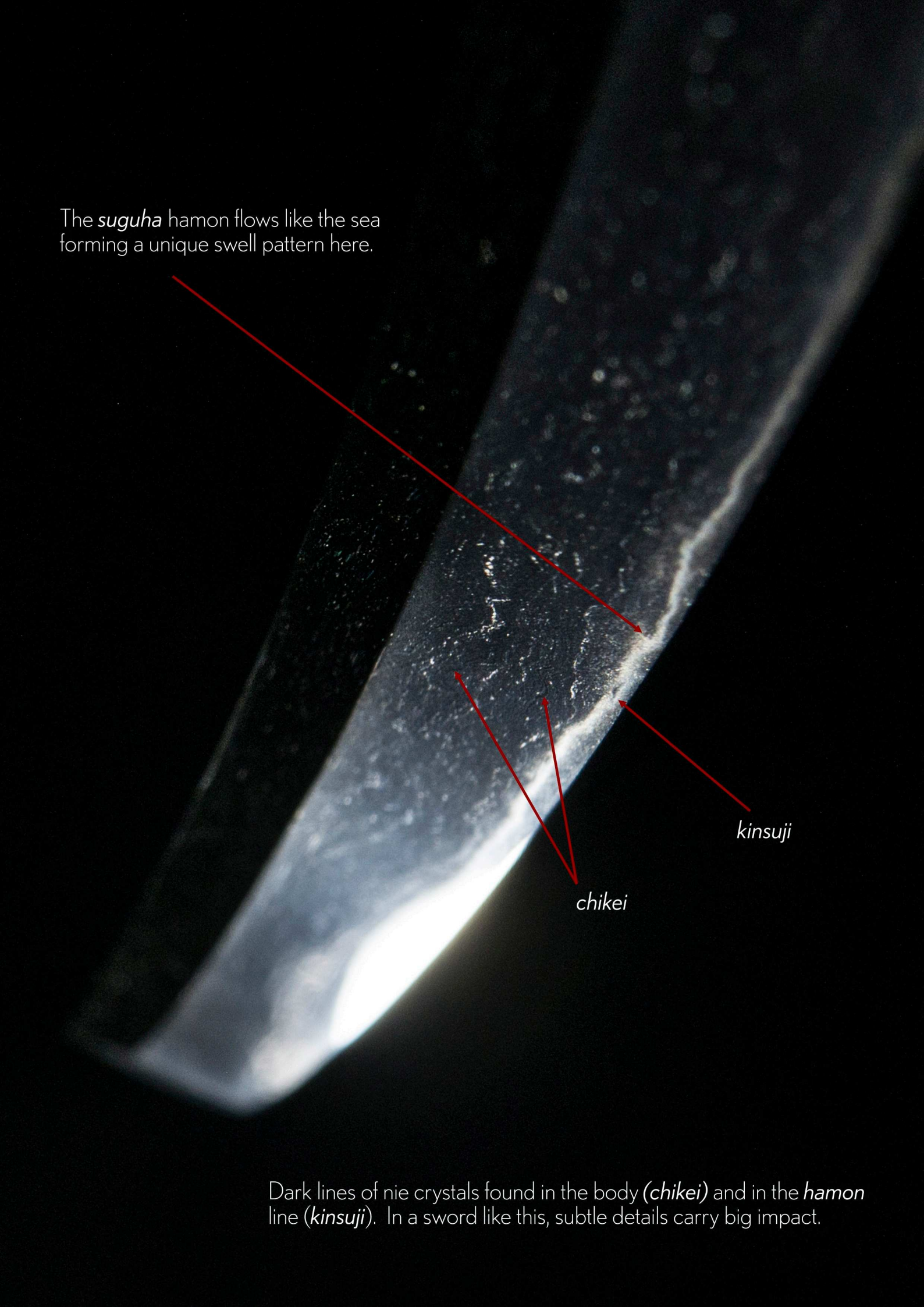
These small crescent moons that appear above the ***hamon*** are called ***uchinoke***.

Uchinoke is a rare ***hataraki*** (activity) that is generally found on swords from the Ko-Naminohira school, the ***Rai family***, ***Yamashiro Sanjo*** and ***Yamato Tegai*** schools.

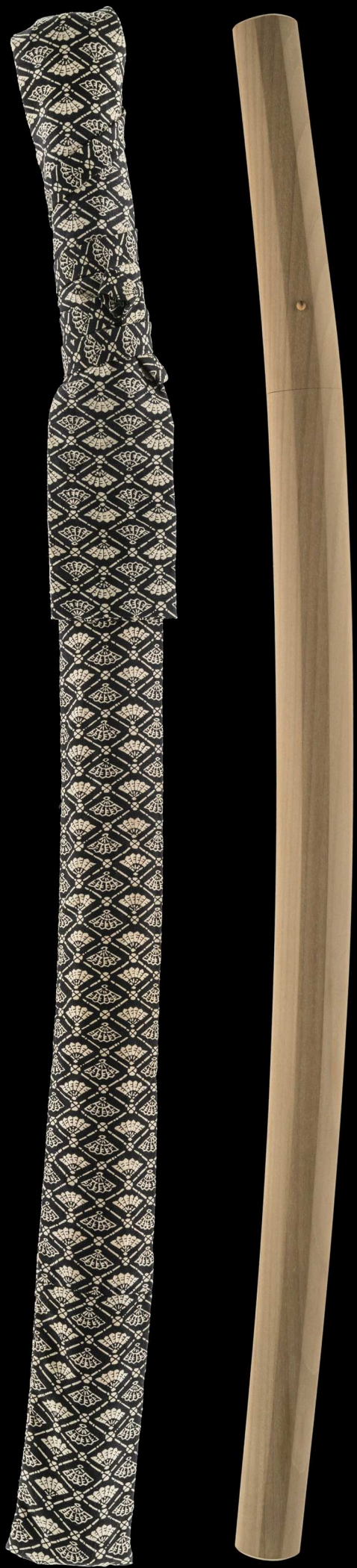

The winding folds of the steel appear to form
a fingerprint in this one area of the sword.
This is the magic of Japanese swords.



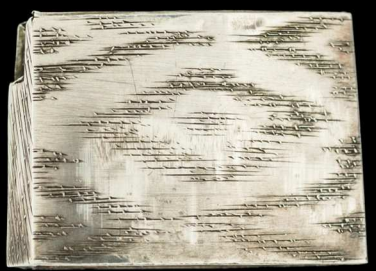
A good view of the tiny ***nezumi-ashi*** (rat's legs) that extend from the hamon to the cutting edge, a strong feature of the Naminohira school.



Dark lines of nie crystals found in the body ***(chikei)*** and in the ***hamon*** line (***kinsuji***). In a sword like this, subtle details carry big impact.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



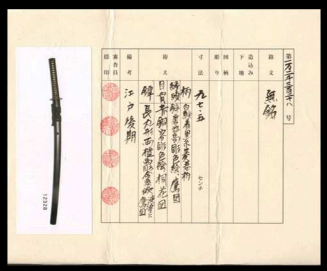
silver ***habaki*** with
diamond design file marks



Kuro-ishime-ji nuri saya
satsuma-gatana-koshirae
（黒石目地塗鞘薩摩刀拵）

Satsuma-gatana-koshirae
lacquered in black with
stone-surface texture

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity





This unique ***kaeri-tsuno*** is a feature of ***Satsuma-koshirae***. It is designed so that the scabbard can only be drawn with a strong pull. A reminder not to be too hasty in drawing your sword.

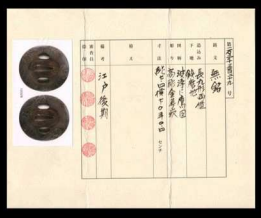
All told, this is a battle ready koshirae. Nothing too fancy - austere in nature.

Let the games begin.



This polished iron tsuba has been attributed to ***Ishiguro Koretsune*** of the ***Edo Ishiguro school*** from the Late Edo period.

Its hawk/wave theme is a matching set to the ***fuchi-kashira***.





On the attack.



Wonderfully aged silk, carries a waxy texture to be appreciated.



waves paying tribute to the Naminohira school.



Shakudô menuki are designed in paulownia flowers. Known as the 'Tree of Life', the royal paulownia has a traditional significance in Japan and China, where it is most often planted. During the newborn birth of a child or daughter, a family would plant the Tree of Life in honour of the birth. Once the daughter or child grew and married, the tree would be cut down to make a special chest for the home.



hawk



Vintage koshirae fabric bag
with ***sensu*** (Japanese fans).

A complimentary sword maintenance kit with ***mekugi-nuki*** and a bottle of ***Fujishiro*** sword oil (trusted by the Japanese sword museum) is included with all sword purchases.





safe, extra large cloth for adding oil to the blade

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA415

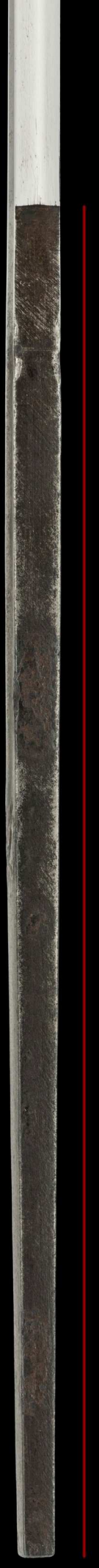
A RAI KUNIZANE KATANA

UNSIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (CIRCA 1312~1317)

Swordsmith:	***Rai Kunizane*** *(mumei)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 69.4cm (*o-suriage*) **Curvature:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba:** 2.89cm
Jihada:	*Mokume-hada with Rai-hada, channels of chikei and kinsuji*
Hamon:	*Clusters of ko-chôji-midare mixed with suguha-chôji in nie-deki*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(a sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(a tsuba that is Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #3-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*handachi fittings and menuki certified as Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Included:	Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, description

SOLD

This lovely katana from the golden Kamakura period has been attributed to celebrated swordsmith *Rai Kunizane* of the famed *Rai* school that is said to have roots from Korea. Kunizane's given name was *Tôgorô* and was the son/student of grandmaster *Rai Kunitoshi*, with national treasure swordsmith *Rai Kunimitsu* being his older brother and *Rai Tomokuni* his younger sibling. Kunizane flourished circa the *Shôwa* era (1312~1317) and into the *Nambokuchô* period. The curvy blade features a *torii-zori* shape with a full-length grooves and a substantial *kissaki* giving the sword an elegant appearance. The *jihada* has classic *Rai-hada* and an eclectic mix of *itame* and *ko-mokume-hada* and a *hamon* that is a bright *ko-chôji midare*. An outstanding handachi koshirae was recently completed by UJ for the sword featuring a gorgeous tachi tsuba with NBTHK Hozon certification.



Saki-kasane: 4.8mm

Moto-kasane: 5.9mm

Nakago: 17.8cm

Omosa: 630g



Kissaki: 3.72cm

Saki-haba: 1.90cm

Nagasa: 69.4cm

Sori: 1.3cm

Moto-haba: 2.72cm

Mekugi-ana: 3

Born with given name *Tôgorô*, *Rai Kunizane* was ether the son or student of grandmaster *Rai Kunitoshi*, with national treasure swordsmith *Rai Kunimitsu* being his older brother and *Rai Tomokuni* his younger brother.

The character 来 'Rai' means *'to come'* with the founding smith *Kuniyoshi* thought to have come from Korea. However, none of his works are extant so his son *Kuniyuki* is now credited with being the founder.

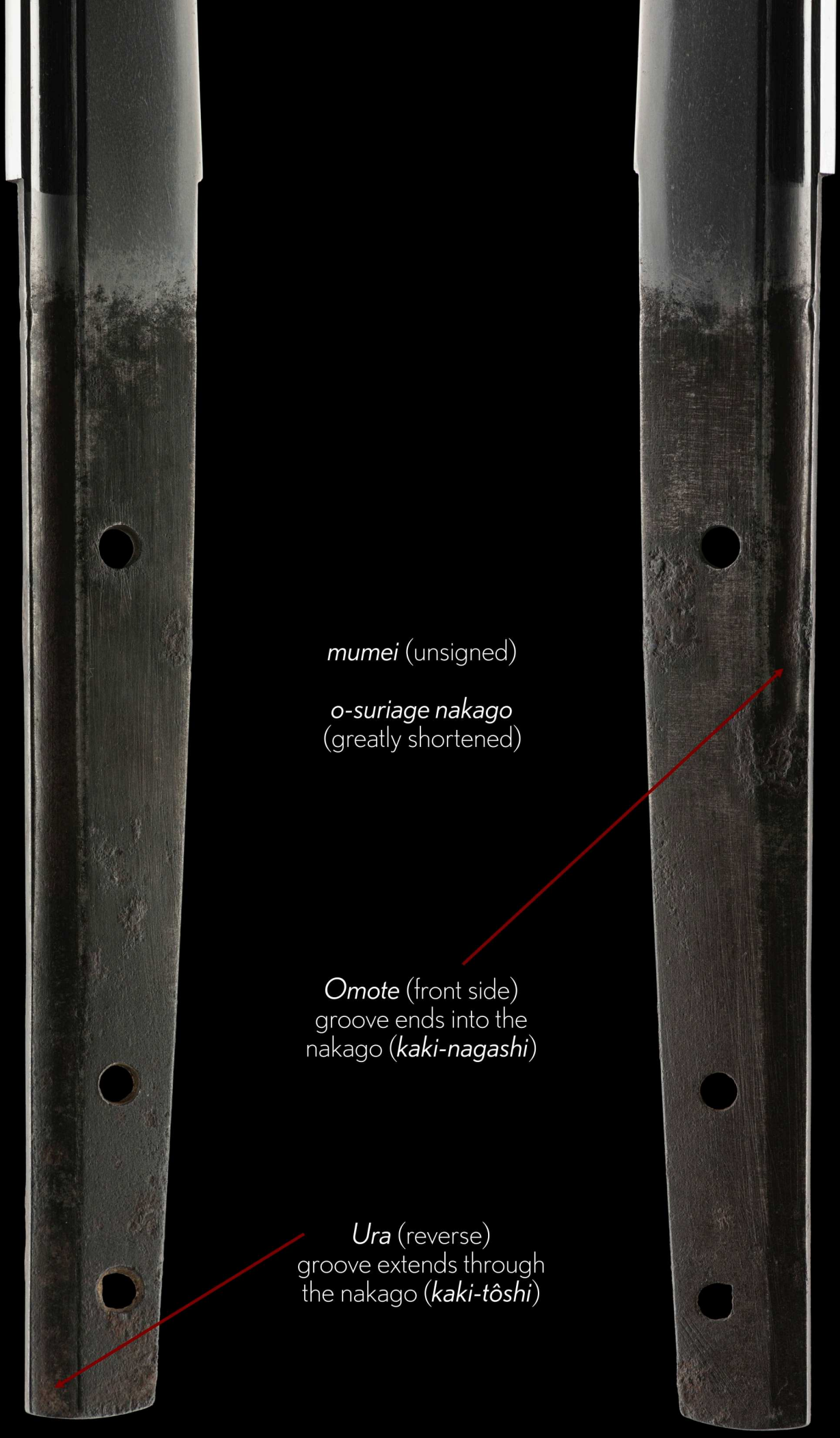
Kunizane flourished during the end of the *Kamakura* period, circa the *Shôwa* era (1312~1317) and worked into the Nambokuchô period that started in 1333.

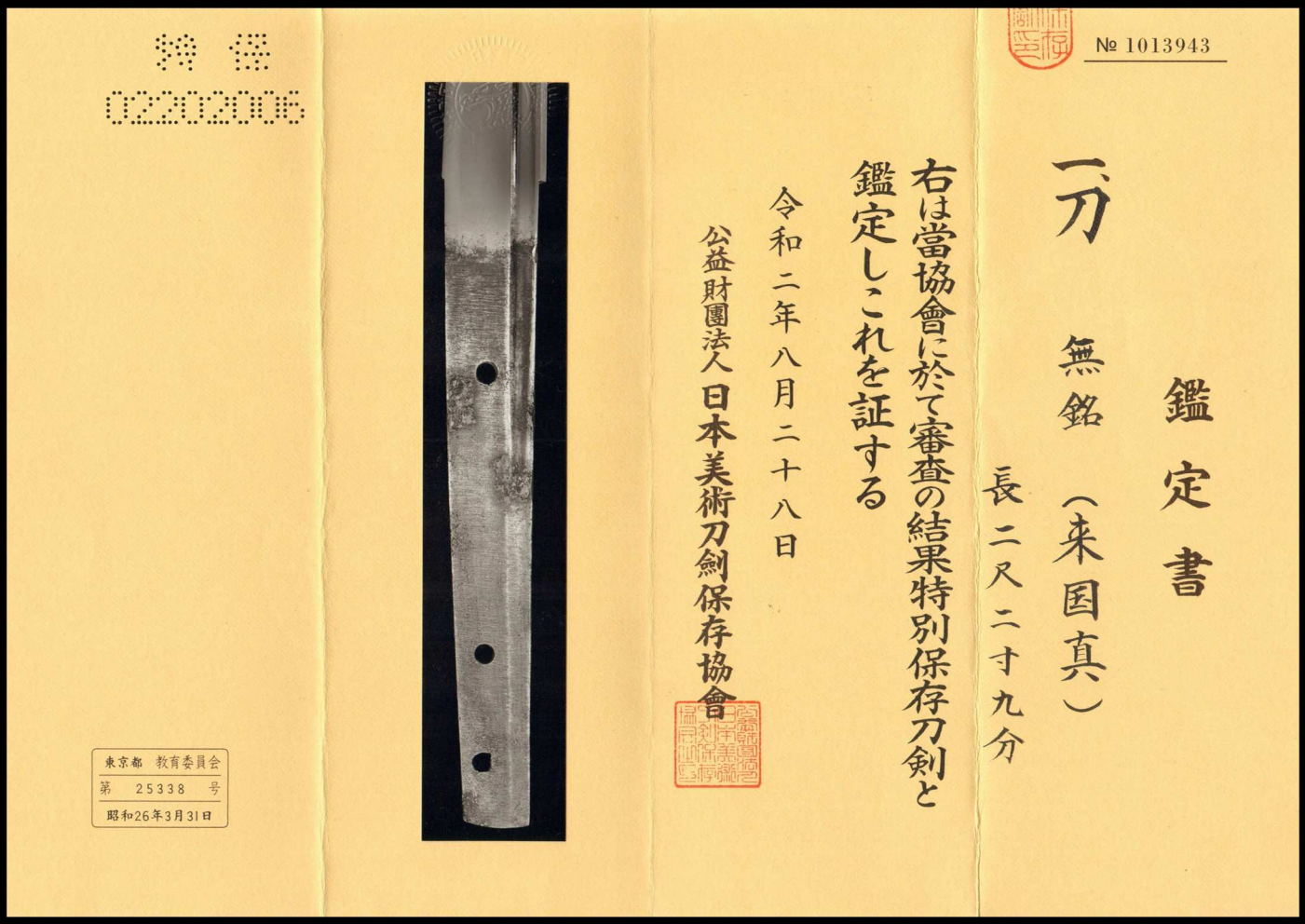
The shape of the blade features a *torii-zori* shape, where the curvature is found in the middle section. The *kissaki* is healthy and substantial, which gives the blade a rather statuesque appearance.

The *jihada* features classic *Rai-hada* with an enjoyable mix of both *itame* and *mokume*-hada. The *hamon* is a bright *ko-chôji midare* that uniquely thickens in areas like *sumi-e* (charcoal ink) brush strokes.

Rai Kunizane is deservedly rated *jô-saku* (a superior smith) and hails from the highest echelons of the Rai family. There is much to appreciate in this 700-year-old sword that also has custom koshirae potential.




mumei (unsigned)
o-suriage nakago
(greatly shortened)
Omote (front side)
groove ends into the
nakago (*kaki-nagashi*)
Ura (reverse)
groove extends through
the nakago (*kaki-tôshi*)



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 2nd year of Reiwa (2020), August 28th

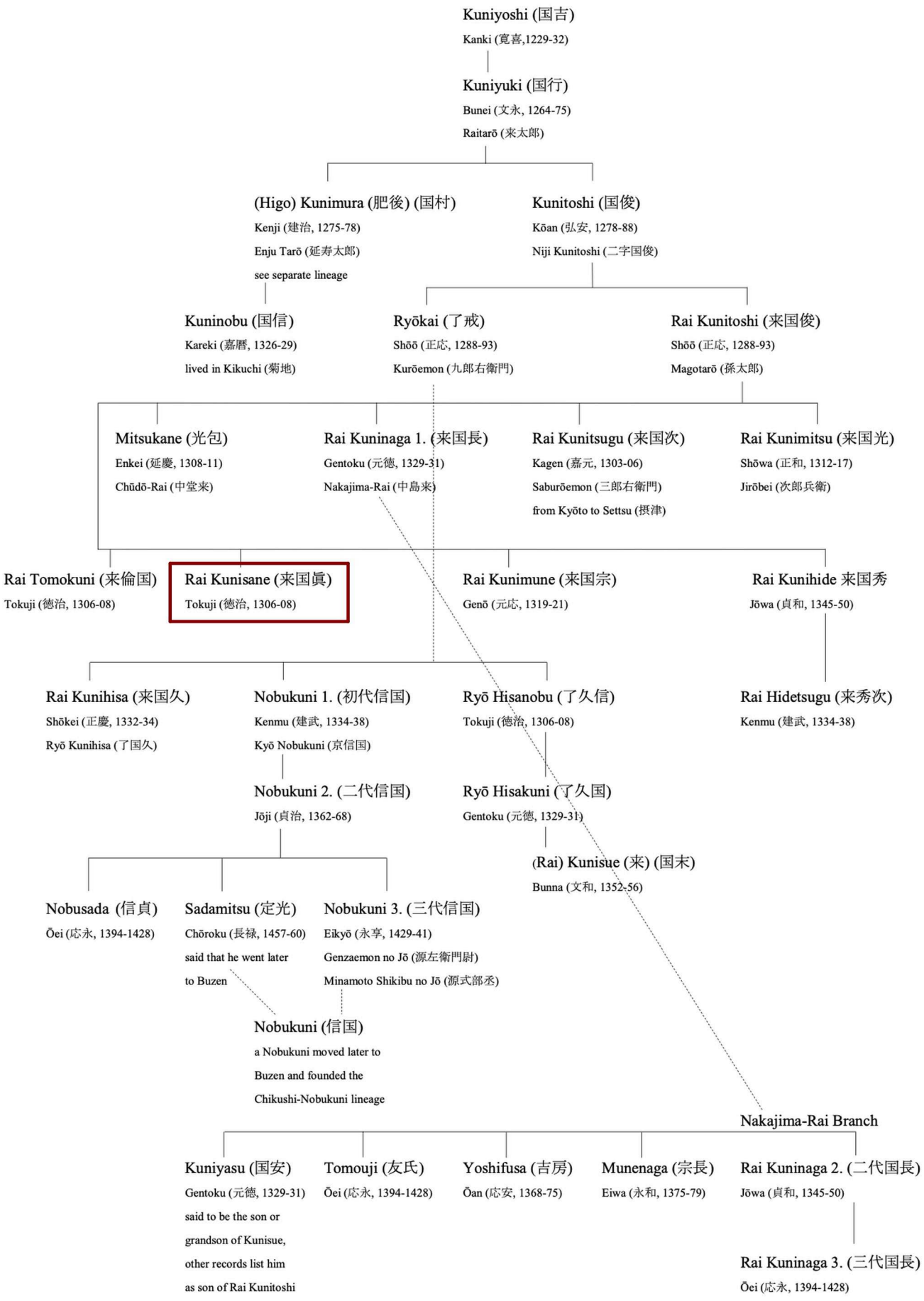
One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Rai Kunizane

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu (69.4cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Rai School (来)
Yamashiro



Source:
"*Genealogies and Schools of Japanese Swordsmiths*" by Markus Sesko

Order here:
https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/nihontobooks



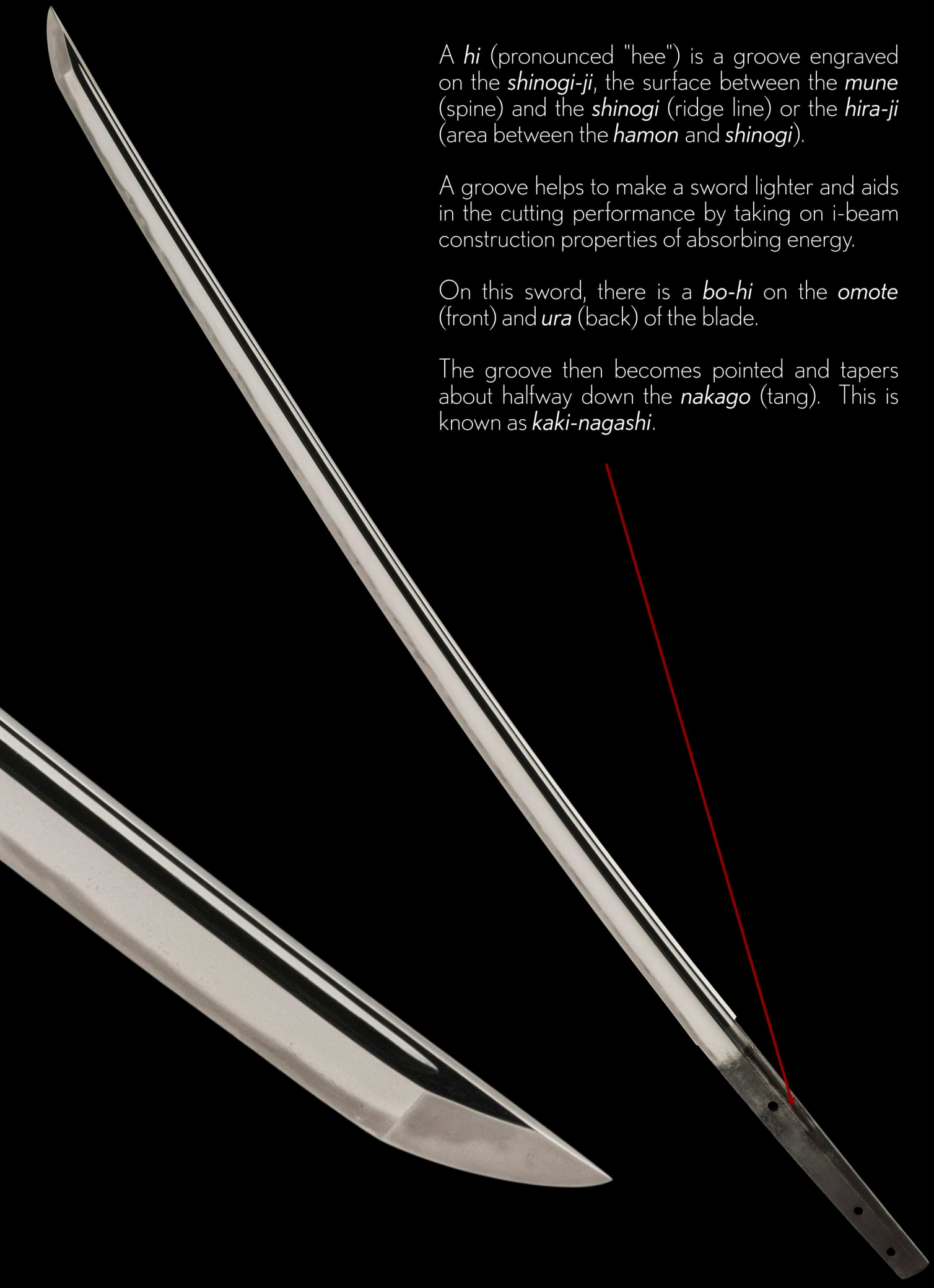


A *hi* (pronounced "hee") is a groove engraved on the *shinogi-ji*, the surface between the *mune* (spine) and the *shinogi* (ridge line) or the *hira-ji* (area between the *hamon* and *shinogi*).

A groove helps to make a sword lighter and aids in the cutting performance by taking on i-beam construction properties of absorbing energy.

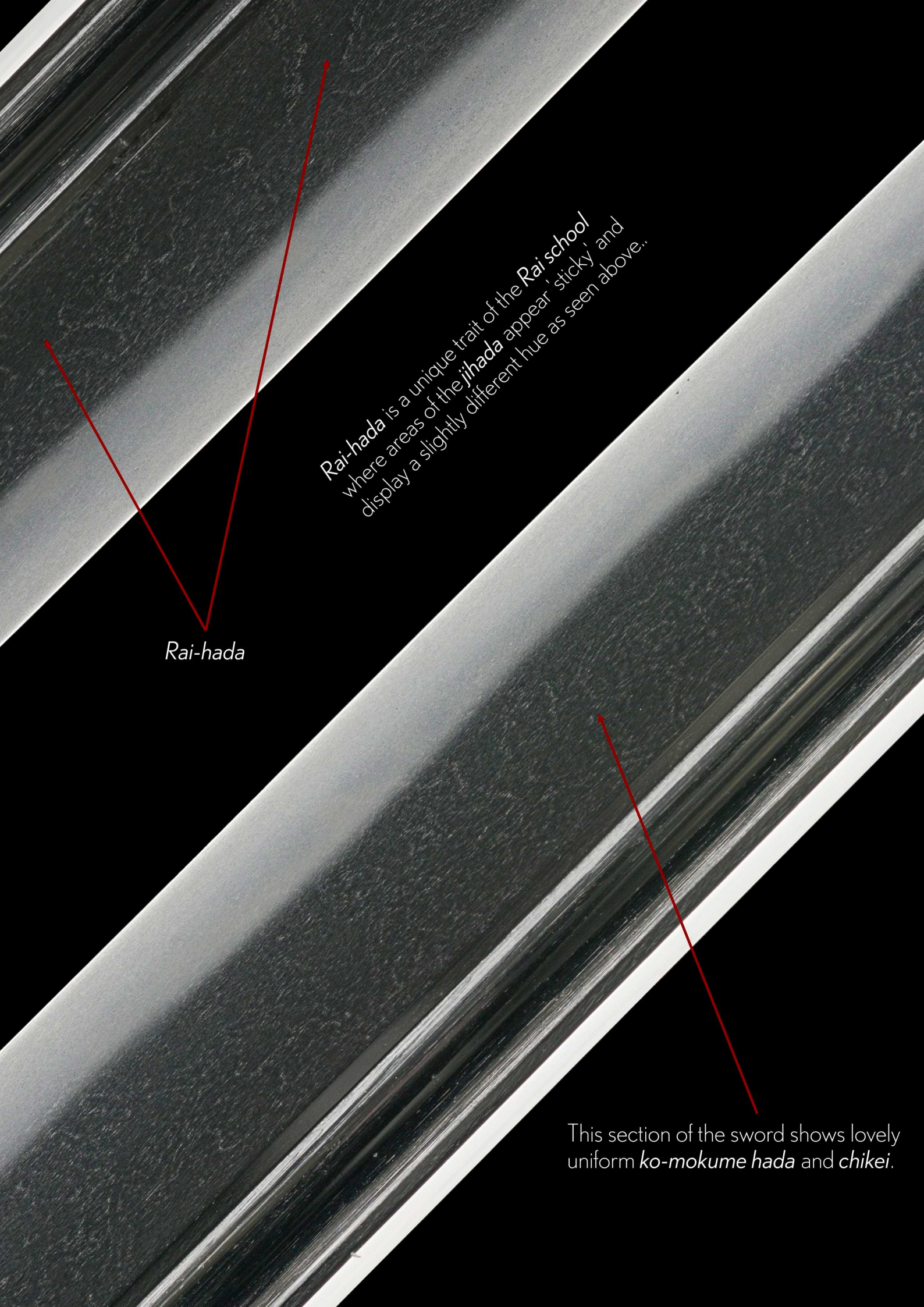
On this sword, there is a *bo-hi* on the *omote* (front) and *ura* (back) of the blade.

The groove then becomes pointed and tapers about halfway down the *nakago* (tang). This is known as *kaki-nagashi*.



Sharp, healthy extended *chû-kissaki*




Rai-hada is a unique trait of the *Rai school* where areas of the *jihada* appear 'sticky' and display a slightly different hue as seen above..
Rai-hada
This section of the sword shows lovely uniform *ko-mokume hada* and *chikei*.



Ko-chôji (tiny clove blossom buds) burgeons in the ***monouchi*** (hitting zone) portion of the blade.

A line of ***kinsuji*** slashes its way below.

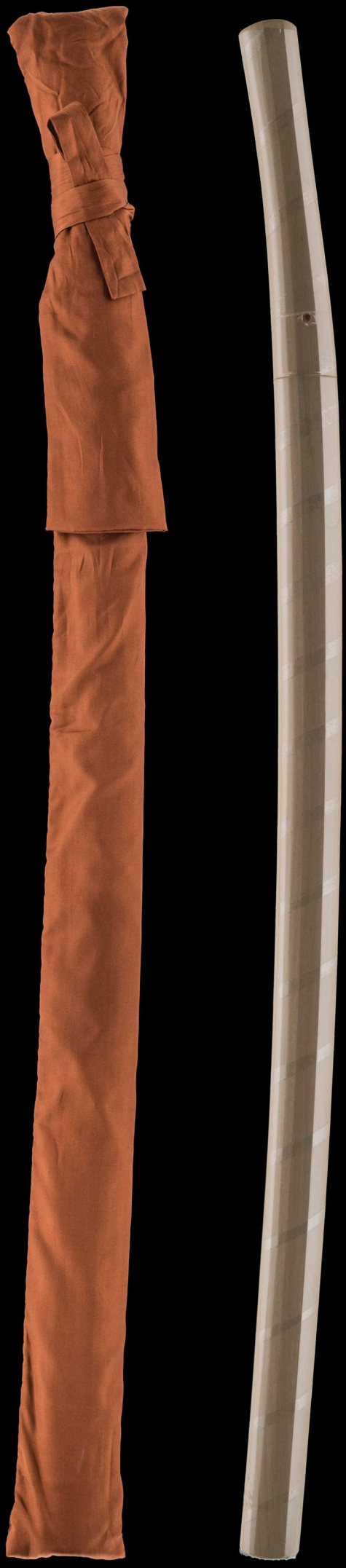
Bright bunches of ***ko-chôji midare*** appear like brush strokes against the dark, rich ***jigane.***



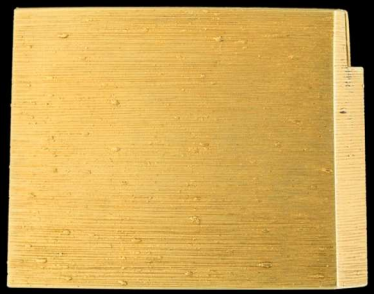


This section of the blade displays a *chû-suguha* as islands of *Rai-hada* reveal themselves under the light.


nie crystals sparkle
ko-midare in *nie-deki*



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard, newly created)



gold ***habaki*** with
horizontal file marks

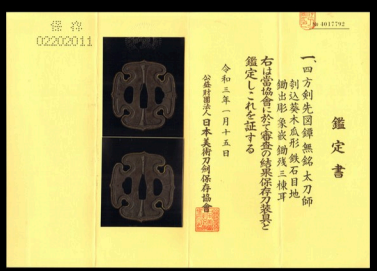


Handachi Koshirae
completed in 2023-24
by master craftsman in Japan.

Produced by Unique Japan.



An iron tsuba with a stone-surface and a sword tipped motif in the corners was crafted by a tachi smith during the Edo period.



NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Authenticity







Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) carry a bird and rice theme. These menuki have been attributed to *Inagawa Naokatsu* from Edo of the Middle Edo period, and placed on an expertly wrapped ***tsuka*** (hilt) traditionally balanced for a one-handed grip.

Rice has been an agricultural fixture in Japan for more than 2,000 years. It is a symbol of the country's spiritual connection with nature, the gods and gifts within the community.

Rice has always been valued highly in Japan. In fact, during the Edo period, salaries and daily wages were calculated in rice. Rice is sometimes called ***chikara*** (a homonym for "strength"), meaning "divine grain."

NTHK Kanteisho Certiciate of Authenticity

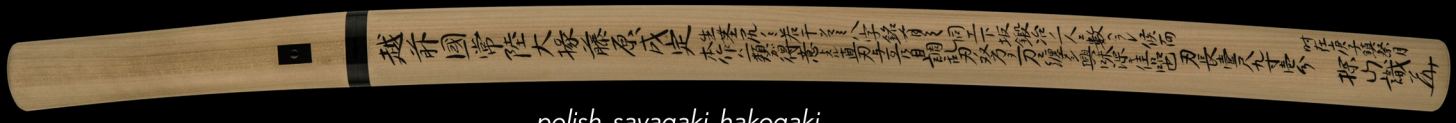


Submit, Repair, Sell & Create!

Unique Japan offers a ***full-service menu*** to assist clients with their Japanese swords and fittings. All services are performed in Japan with top quality craftsmen and women.

Services include (non exhaustive):

* NBTHK and NTHK-NPO ***shinsa*** certification (swords and fittings)
* polishing for all types of Japanese swords (standard to Jûyô-level quality polish)
* ***shirasaya*** making (standard to high quality with horn fittings)
* ***habaki*** making (gold, silver, copper in most any design pattern)
* fix wobbly koshirae, repair cracked scabbards, new lacquer work, etc.
* ***otoshi*** presentation boxes for your beautiful ***tsuba, menuki, fuch-kashira***, etc.
* ***tsuka-maki*** (re-wrap your hilts in silk or leather in most any colour, weave or braid)
* ***oshigata*** (sword/hamon tracing on a scroll with a large choice of background)
* ***sayagaki*** services with ***Tanobe-sensei*** (qualifying conditions apply)
* sword boxes with ***hakogaki*** (with humidifying options for dry climates)
* custom koshirae projects (see separate page)
* sell your sword(s) on consignment (qualifying conditions apply)



polish, sayagaki, hakogaki





tsuka-maki



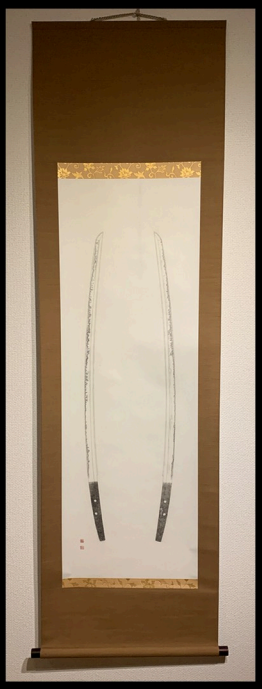
All NBTHK and NTHK-NPO Shinsa authentication services



habaki creations



otoshi boxes



oshigata scrolls

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ITEM# UJWA260

A SHODAI MASATSUNE SUNNOBI TANTÔ

SIGNED, MOMOYAMA PERIOD (BUNROKU~KEICHÔ ERAS: 1591~1607)

Swordsmith:	***Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune*** (*shodai*, first generation)
Measurements:	**Length:** 30.3cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 0cm **Moto-haba:** 2.89cm
Jihada:	*Ko-itame mixed with mokume, standing hada and utsuri*
Hamon:	*Suguha with ko-gunome and ashi*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** *(for the tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jôjô-saku** (*ranked as a highly superior swordsmith*)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, description

SOLD

Born *Nôshû Tarôsuke* in 1535 distinguished swordsmith Masatsune was the second son of the ninth generation *Sukemon Kanetsune* and the most accomplished swordsmith of the *Owari Shintô* group. He was bestowed title of *Sagami no Kami* in 1591 from *Toyotomi Hidetsugu*, nephew of powerful *daimyô* lord *Toyotomi Hideyoshi*, known as the second great unifier of Japan. This splendid *sunnobi-tanto* by *shodai Masatsune* is exactly one-shaku in length and features a wide, healthy body and a bright *suguha-hamon* with *ko-gunome* and *ashi* over a well-forged *itame-hada* with fine *ji-nie*. It is a prime example of his work early on into his career before his son – *Nidai Masatsune* - died quite unexpectedly in 1609. A rare and beautiful Edo-period *toppei koshirae* accompanies the piece that pays homage to the ruling *Tokugawa shogunate* of the Edo period.



Moto-kasane: 5.6mm

Nakago: 11.6cm

Omosa: 235g



Nagasa: 30.3cm

Sori: 0.0cm

Moto-haba: 2.89cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

Born *Nôshû Tarôsuke* in 1535 distinguished swordsmith *Masatsune* was the second son of the ninth generation *Sukemon Kanetsune*. He initially signed *Kanetsune* when he established his own branch of the *Kanetsune* lineage in the village of *Komaki* in the *Kasuga* district of *Mino* province.

He later moved to *Kiyosu* in *Owari* province where he was employed by *Fukushima Masanori* and subsequently changed his name to *Masatsune* in 1592. A year prior in 1591, Masatsune was granted the honorary title of *Sagami no Kami* by *Toyotomi Hidetsugu*, alongside fellow swordsmiths *Hida no Kami Ujifusa* and *Hoki no Kami Nobutaka* who together were known as the *Owari san-saku* (three major smiths of Owari province).

After the decisive *Battle of Sekigahara* that brought unity to Japan, he was employed by *Matsudaira Tadayoshi* - the new lord of the Kiyosu fief - whereupon he moved to the flourishing castle town of *Nagoya*. He retired in 1607 and gave the leadership of the school to his son *Tarôsuke*, but Tarôsuke died unexpectedly in 1609. He thus resumed work as a swordsmith and did so up until he died. After his son's untimely death, he signed his nakago with the supplement "*Nyûdô*" (Buddhist priest name). Masatsune died on February 18, 1619 at the age of 84.

Masatsune is ranked as a *jôjô-saku* smith (highly superior) was mostly known for producing *tantô*, *sunnobi-tantô*, *ko-wakizashi* but also produced many fine *katana* and *naginata* and *yari*.

This wonderful *sunnobi-tanto* by shodai Masatsune is exactly one *shaku* in length (30.3cm) - a traditional measurement in Japan used by carpenters and smiths for centuries. It has a wide, healthy body and features a bright *suguha-hamon* with *ko-ashi* over a well-forged *itame-hada* with fine *ji-nie*. It is a prime example of the work of this remarkable swordsmith, and father. A rare Edo-period *toppei* koshirae accompanies the piece that pays homage to the ruling *Tokugawa shogunate* of the Edo period. This is a prime collectible from the very early years of the *shintô* period.



Traditional Japanese units of measurement is largely based on the Chinese system, which has remained mostly unaltered since its adoption from the *Tang* dynasty in 701 AD.

This sword was almost certainly purposely commissioned to be 1-shaku in length.

30.3cm = 1 shaku



A shaku is known as the 'Japanese foot'.
Note: 1 Imperial foot is 30.48cm



Title: ***Sagami no Kami*** (Lord of Sagami province)
Family name: ***Fujiwara***
Swordsmith: ***Masatsune*** (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

相 (Sa)

模 (gami, no)

守 (Kami)

藤 (Fuji)

原 (wara)

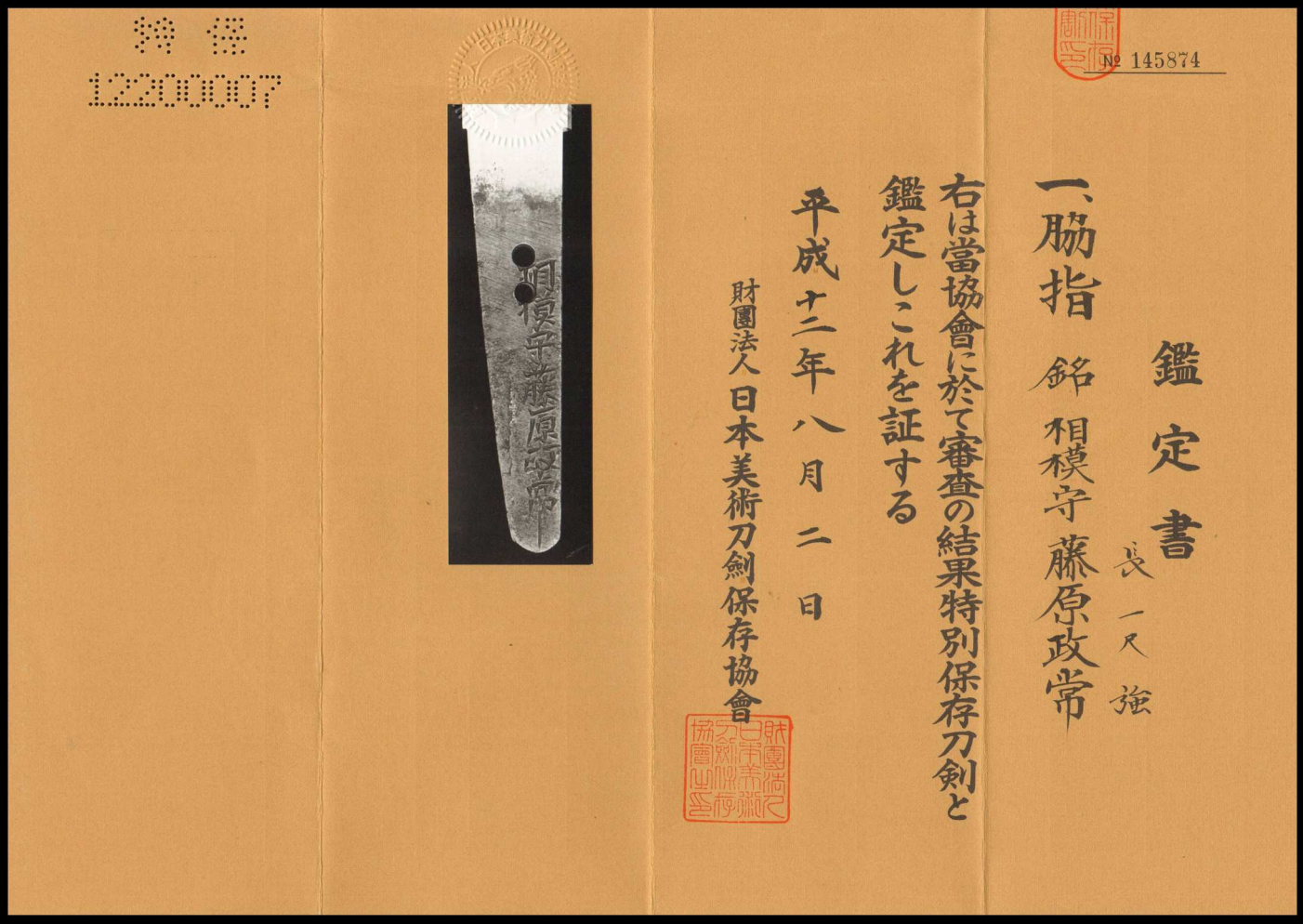
政 (Masa)

常 (tsune)

Shodai Masatsune was known for signing '***tsune***' in an elongated manner.



(*ura*, reverse)



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 12th year of Heisei (2000), August 2nd

One, Wakizashi *

Mei (signature)
Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune

Nagasa (length)
1-shaku kyô (30.3 cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

* NOTE: this sword is technically registered as a wakizashi as it is 30.3cm - the transition point of when a tantô becomes a wakizashi for the purpose of sword registration. A sunnobi-tanto is a tanto that is slightly longer than 1-shaku.



登録証番号	愛知第六五九四四号
交附年月日	平成八年九月十二日

造り込み	平造、三棟高く、ふくら尋常になる。
地肌	小板目に杢がまじって肌立ち、映りが立つ。
刃文	直刃に小互の目足が入る。
茎	生茎在銘。
時代	慶長前半ころの作。
系統	助右衛門兼常次男で、納戸太郎助と号す。
寸評	政常としては比較的に初期の作がとおもわれるが、地鉄は独得のよく錬れた地肌で、直及も見事。

Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

This wakizashi was designated as *Authentic*
by Tokunô Kazuo

One, Ko-wakizashi

Mei (signature)
Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune

Nagasa (length) 30.3cm
Sori (curvature) 0.05cm

Well forged blade by Masatsune in his early days

Issued in 12th year of Heisei (2000), March 23rd

Tokunô Kazuo



第一五二三二号

銘文	造り込み	鍛	刃紋	鋩子	彫刻	中心	備考	審査員捺印
相模守藤原政常	平造り 真の棟 生ぶ中心	板目良く錬れ地沸付き映り立つ	直刃 足入る	直調丸く返る		目釘穴一個 鑢 筋違い	慶長頃	

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

This wakizashi was designated as *Authentic*
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

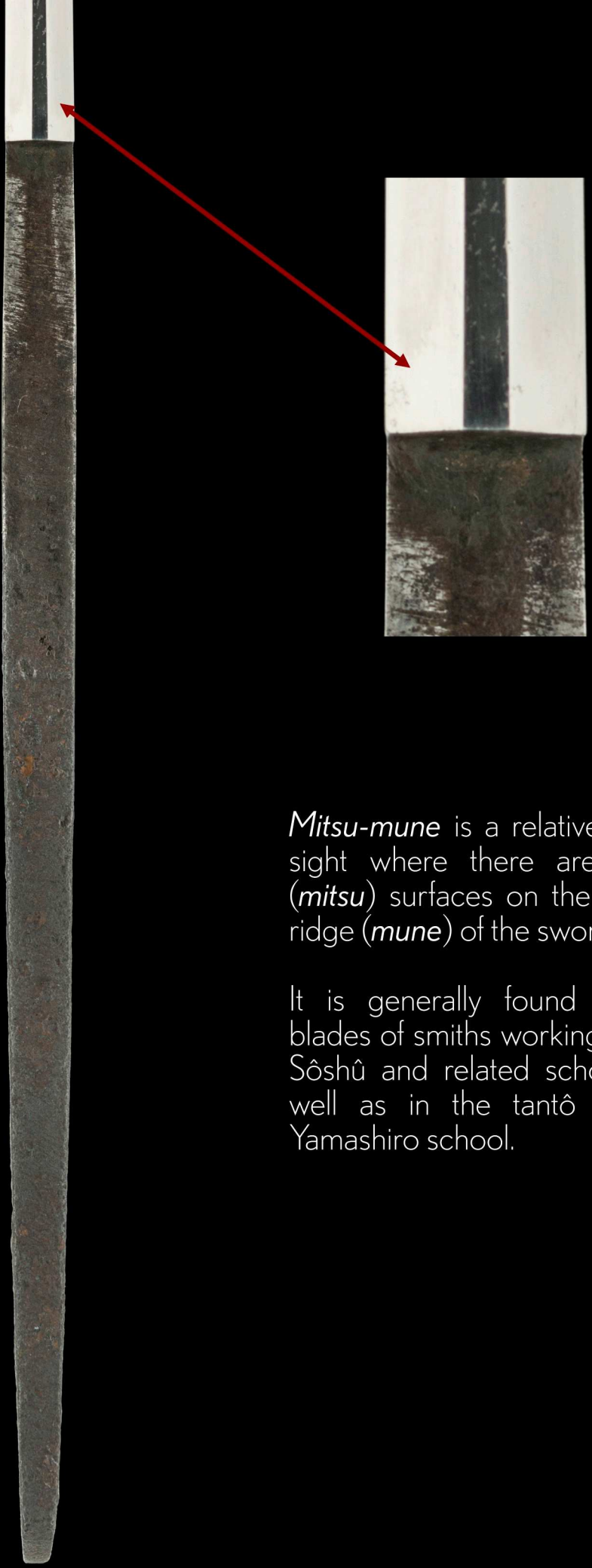
One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)
Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune

Nagasa (length)
1-shaku (30.3cm)

Issued in 5th year of Reiwa (2023), June 16th

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)



Mitsu-mune is a relatively rare sight where there are three (*mitsu*) surfaces on the spine/ridge (*mune*) of the sword.

It is generally found in the blades of smiths working of the Sôshû and related schools as well as in the tantô of the Yamashiro school.







Boshi displays a *suguha-chô* with round *kaeri.*

The decision for a *toppei-koshirae* may have been influenced by this temper line.

A beaming straight ***suguha hamon*** with a weaving ***ko-gunome.***

There is a ***togari*** (pointed) element to the hamon showcasing Masatsune's roots with the Mino tradition.




Whirlpools of *itame* and *mokume-hada*
to dive into and enjoy under the light.
ashi (legs)



Ji-nie is when the visible surface of the steel (***jigane***) shimmers with visible ***nie***-crystals.

Found on top quality swords, ***ji-nie*** is most definitely a beautiful sight.



utsuri tatsu (standing *utsuri*)
- a subtle reflection in the *ji*.





Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



antique gold and silver
ni-ju habaki with
horizontal file marks



Kuro-ishime-ji-nuri saya
toppei-tantô-koshirae
(黒石目地塗鞘突兵短刀拵)

Toppei-tantô-koshirae
lacquered in black with
stone-like surface

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity




'Toppei-koshirae' got its name from how the kojiri (scabbard end-cap) resembles a toppai-kabuto (a tapered helmet bowl).

The *kojiri* (end cap) is designed with *aoi-mon* (hollyhock).

This is the official *kamon* (crest) of the ruling shogunate of the Edo period, the Tokugawa family who were based in Owari province. This toppei koshirae may have once been the property of the Tokugawa family or this kojiri was placed in honour of the family and the connection it had with first-generation Masatsune.



Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616)
Founder and first shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate (Edo period)



Matching branches of plum blossoms decorate the ***saya***.



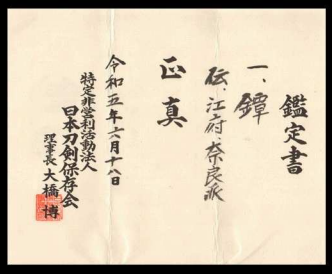


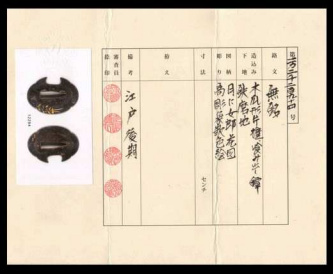


A charming polished iron lobed-tsuba attributed to the work of the *Nara* school from *Edo* (Tokyo).

Tsuki (moon) and ***ominaeshi*** - a flower known as the Japanese golden lace - are expressed in lovely detail.







NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity

(reverse)

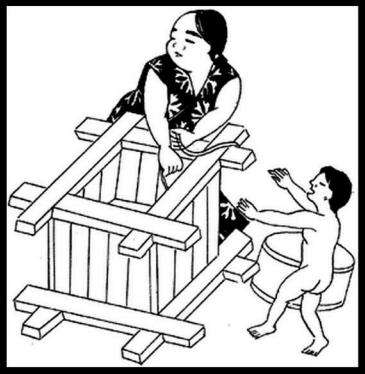


The *Igeta kamon* (Igeta family crest) can be found on the *fuchi* (collar).

Mon are hereditary, handed down the male line of the family (often of samurai heritage) for several generations.

Different families often shared the same mon – those that share the Igeta kamon were the *Hanai*, *Orii*, *Fujii*, *Nagai*, *Ida*, *Sakai*, *Asai*, *Hashimoto*, and *Handa* families.

Igeta is a wooden frame on the surface of a well. The origin of the kanji is an abstraction from the shape of the frame.



Igeta frame



Fuchi-kashira
attributed to *Kyôto Kanagu-shi*
(metalsmith based in Kyôto)

Crafted during the Late Edo period (1780-1867).

Its powdered gold symmetrical design pattern depicts a motif of ***sensu***, Japanese fans, which were considered a symbol of high court aristocracy.





This antique ***tsuka*** (hilt), clearly from the Edo period, features ***menuki*** with a design of ***ume*** (plums) and a flute. These two articles are traditionally associated with the ***Tale of Genji,*** the classic work of literature by the noblewoman and poet ***Murasaki Shikibu*** who lived during the 11th century ***Heian*** period. Plum blossoms bloom early in spring thus capturing a celebratory mood.





Quite literally hanging on by a thread, this ***tsuka-maki*** (hilt wrap) has managed to survive for easily over 150 years. It is tradition when collecting koshirae to preserve the past and keep the existing silk whenever possible. If the new owner wishes to re-wrap, however, Unique Japan can arrange for this to be done at a reasonable cost by a top professional craftsman in Japan.

reverse

kogatana (blade) is signed *Masatsune*

美濃守藤原政常 (Mi) (no, no) (Kami) (Fuji) (wara) (Masa) (tsune)



Kozuka (utility knife) has been attributed to the prestigious *Kyô-Gotô* school
Late Edo period, 1780~1867.

The design is that of a Japanese horsetail plant.





Shodô (calligraphy) artist
Nozomi-san creating *sayagaki*





初代相模守藤原政常
Shodai Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune
Sagami no Kami Fujiwara Masatsune (first generation)

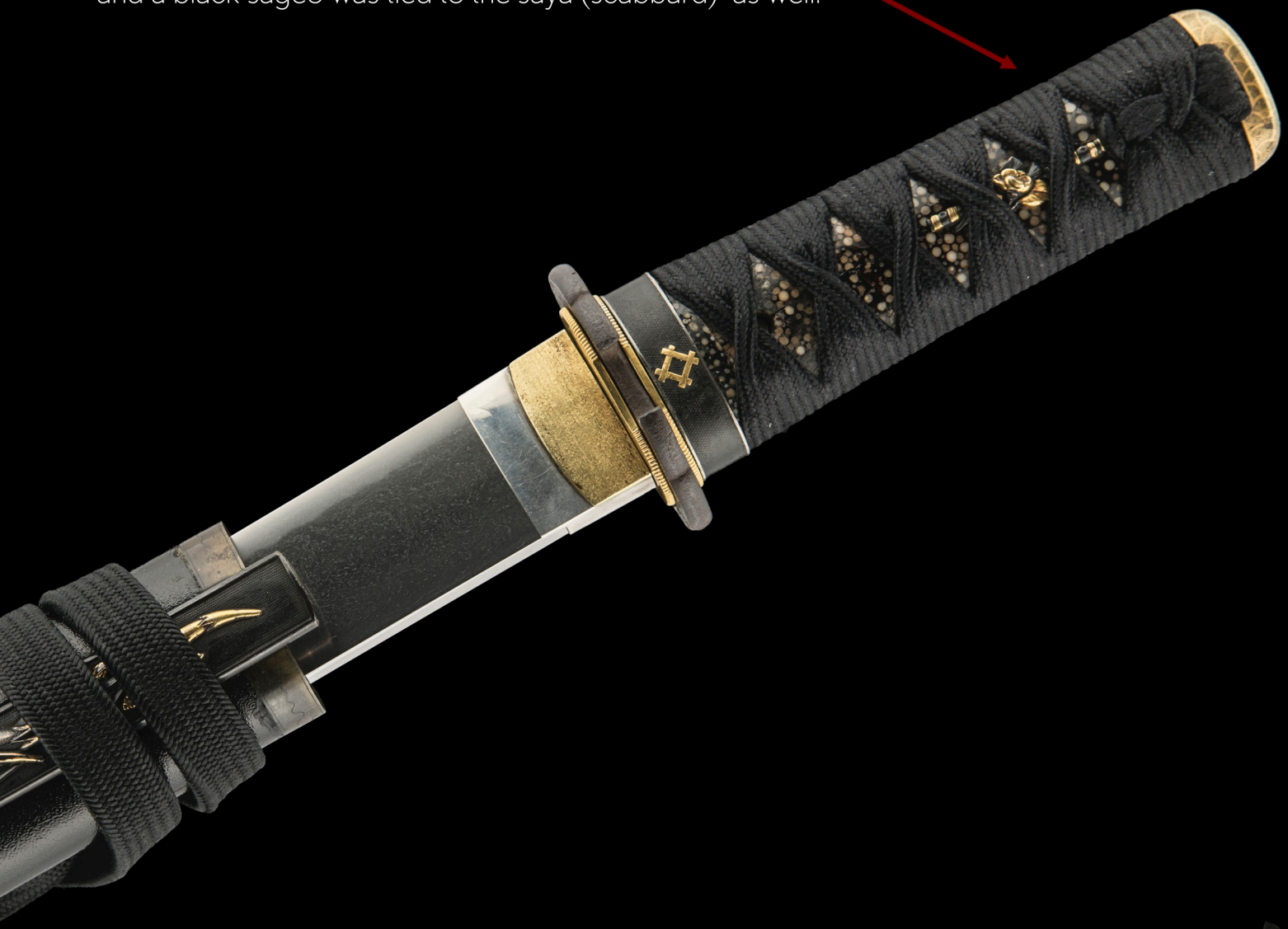
時代慶長頃
Jidai Keichô-goro
Around Keichô Period (1596-1615)

刃長壱尺強有之
Hachô 1-shaku kyô kore ari
Blade length 30.3 cm

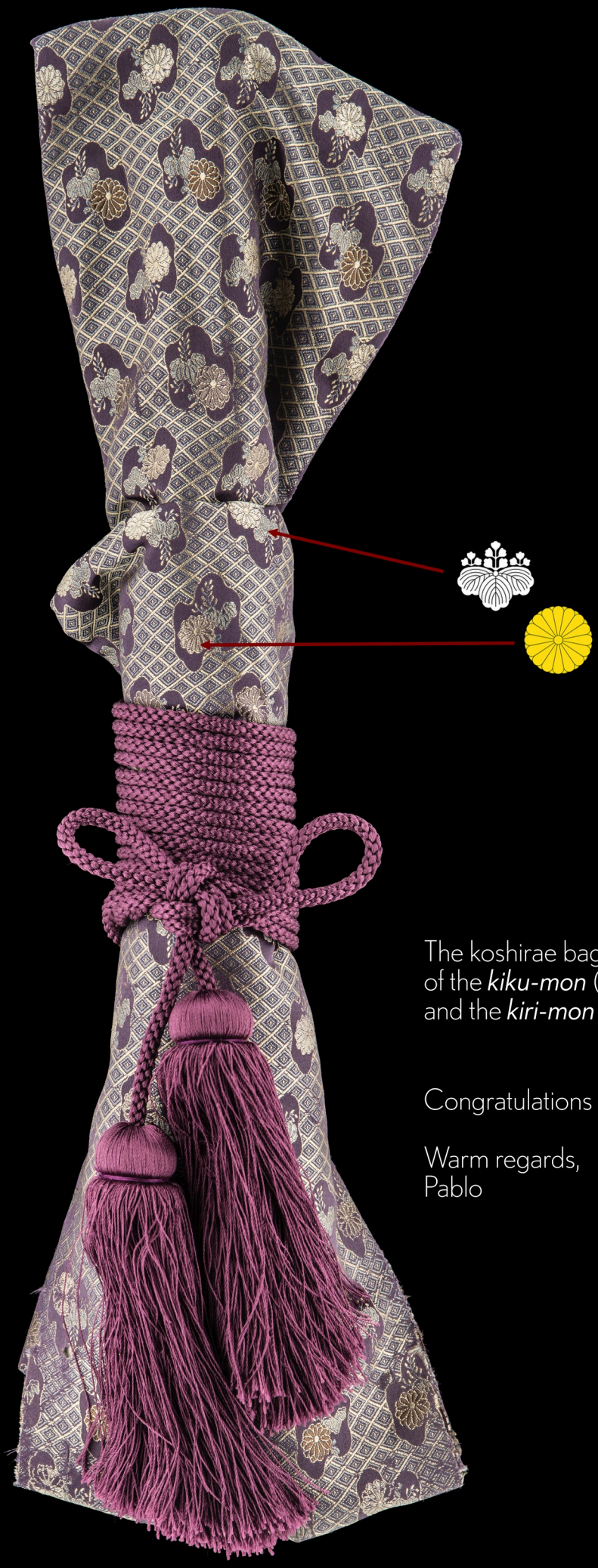
令和六甲辰年卯月誌之
Reiwa roku kinoe-tatsudoshi Yayoi kore o shirusu
Written during the month of April in the sixth year of Reiwa era, in the Year of the Dragon (2024)



The *tsuka* (hilt) was traditionally re-wrapped in black silk and a black sageo was tied to the saya (scabbard) as well.







The koshirae bag displays a regal pattern of the ***kiku-mon*** (imperial chrysanthumen) and the ***kiri-mon*** (Toyotomi family crest).

Congratulations Nick.

Warm regards,
Pablo



Travelling to Japan?

If you are making your way to Tokyo and are serious about acquiring an authentic Japanese sword, be sure to book a **private meeting** with us in advance.

Many swords from Unique Japan are sold privately every year to proud clients around the world. Private meetings are held at our studio near **JR Meguro station** - only minutes away from all major hotels in downtown Tokyo.

Contact Pablo at **service@uniquejapan.com** where we'll discuss the special qualities you are seeking: type of sword, era, hamon pattern, level of certification, cutting test, etc. along with budget parameters in order to best serve you.

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA428

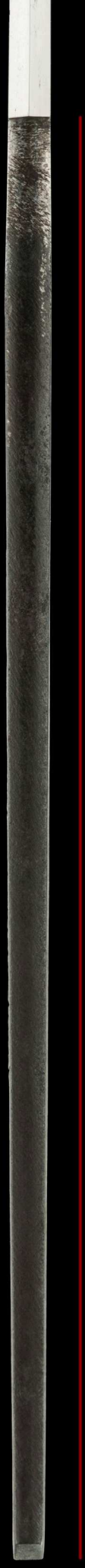
A NIDAI KANEMICHI KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (GENROKU ERA: 1688~1704)

Swordsmith:	***Tanba no Kami Kanemichi*** *(2nd generation, Settsu province)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 71.4cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 1.36cm **Moto-haba:** 3.02cm
Jihada:	*Tightly forged ko-itame-hada*
Hamon:	*Rhythmic gunome-midare with deep nioi and nie*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*sword, koshirae, fk and tsuba certified as Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Chûjô-saku** (*ranked as an above average swordsmith*)
Sharpness:	**Wazamono** (*maker of good sharp swords*)
Included:	Shirasaya, *Tsugaru-nuri* koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD

Nidai Kanemichi was born *Mishina Kaheji* and was the son of *shodai* (first generation) *Kanemichi*, who also signed *Naomichi*. He flourished during the *Genroku* era in *Settsu* province (*Ôsaka*) although he also worked in *Edo* - modern day Tôkyô. Like his famous Mishina ancestor *Tanba no Kami Yoshimichi*, he signed the character '*Tan*' inspired by a sail. This *jô-sun* (2-*shaku* 3-*sun* 5-*bu*) katana features a marvellous snow-capped *gunome-midare hamon* that uniquely bunches of groups of two and three. Awesome cloud dragons guard the *koshirae* both on the *fuchi-kashira* and menuki and the *saya* displays a gorgeous lacquer work called *Tsugaru-nuri* originating from wintery *Aomori*. This sword was rightfully awarded Tokubetsu Hozon in 2001 exactly on Christmas day. Perhaps Santa will make this a present for you or someone special in your life?



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Moto-kasane: 6.2mm

Nakago: 21.4cm

Omosa: 705g



Kissaki: 3.24cm

Saki-haba: 2.01cm

Nagasa: 71.4cm

Sori: 1.36cm

Moto-haba: 3.02cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

Nidai Kanemichi was born *Mishina Kaheji* and was *t*he son of ***shodai*** (first generation) Kanemichi, who also signed Naomichi. He flourished during the *Genroku* era in *Settsu* province (*Ôsaka*) although he also worked in *Edo* - modern day *Tôkyô*.

This striking katana is a feast for the shintô period senses. From the rhythmic snow-capped hamon skiing along the blade in bunches of two and three to its glorious koshirae where cloud dragons and a gorgeous lacquerwork called *Tsugaru-nuri* takes centre stage, this is a sword that will always please.

Although Kanemichi may be ranked *chûjô-saku* (an above-average smith), this superb and healthy sword rivals the work of any *jô-saku* or *jôjô-saku* smith. Nidai Kanemichi is also ranked *wazamono* for the sharpness of his swords.

Enjoy!





Title: *Tango no Kami* (Lord of Tango province)
Swordsmith: *Kanemichi* (2nd generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

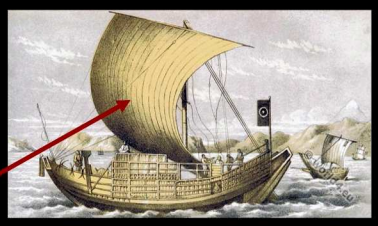
丹 (Tan)

後 (go, no)

守 (Kami)

兼 (Kane)

道 (michi)



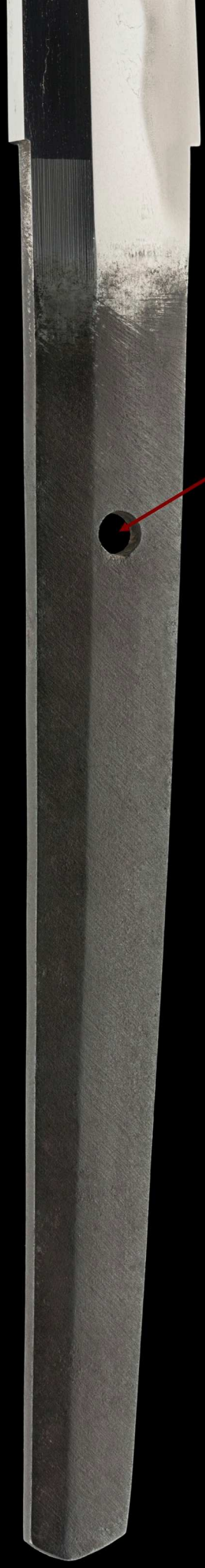
Japanese sailing ship off the coast of *Shimada*.

Shodai (1st gen.) *Tanba no Kami Yoshimichi* from Kyôto uniquely signed the top *Tan* 丹 character of his title like the billowing sails of a sailboat. Thus he is referred to as *Hokake* (sail) *Tanba*. Subsequent generations followed the sail-inspired chiselling of this first character.

There were two main branches of the *Mishina* school, one in *Kyôto* and the other in *Ôsaka*, which this blade belongs to. Blades of the two branches can be distinguished by the way in which they chiseled the "*kami*" character.

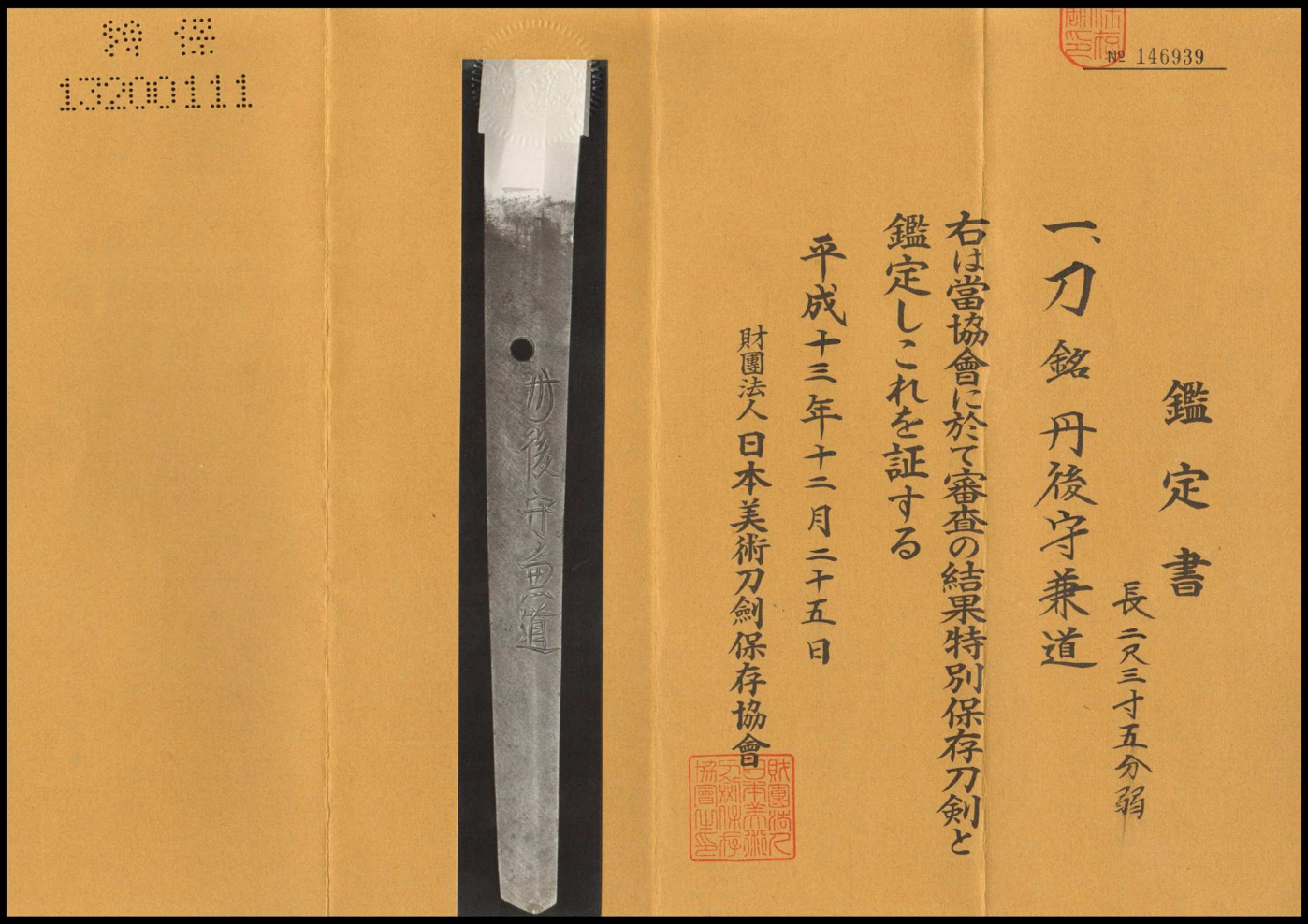
The *Kyôto* branch (*Kyô-Tanba*), placed the stroke pointing to the west to north-west position.

The *Ôsaka* branch (*Ôsaka-Tanba*) as depicted here chiselled the same stroke pointing to the *south.*



The patina has aged beautifully, crisp file marks and one clean ***mekugi-ana***.

(***ura***, reverse)



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 13th year of Heisei (2001), December 25th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Tango no Kami Kanemichi

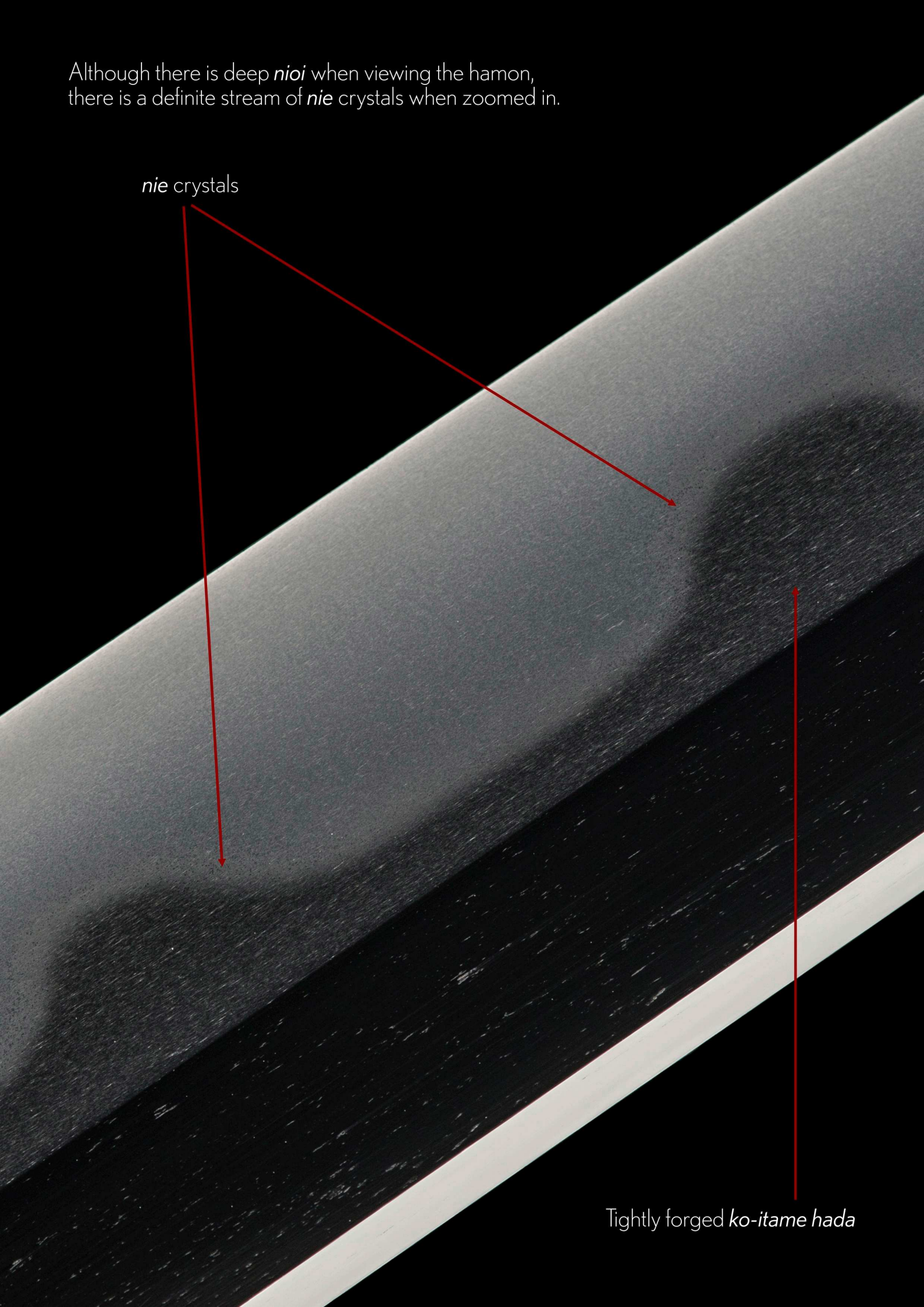
Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 5-bu (71.4cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyôkai
(NBTHK)





Although there is deep ***nioi*** when viewing the hamon,
there is a definite stream of ***nie*** crystals when zoomed in.





This marvellous *gunome-midare hamon* connects in bunches of two or three stretching high into the body of the sword.

It is similar in style to Ôsaka *Nidai Kunisuke*'s *kobushi-gata* (fist shaped) or the rounded *gunome-midare* pattern from swordsmith *Kanefusa.*



Like snow-capped mountains, the *yakigashira* (head of the hamon) are blankets of *nioi-deki*.

yakigashira

Although the ***samurai*** weren't exactly skiing in the late 1600s, one can't help but be inspired to hit the fresh powder when admiring this rhythmic ***gunome-midare hamon*** under the light.



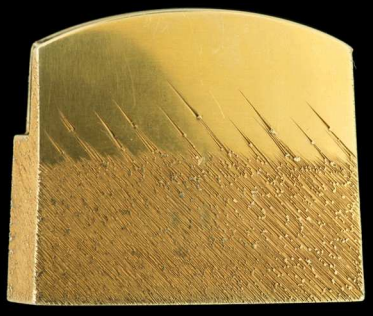
Ôsaka samurai skiier


A light show like no other.



buffalo horn

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold *yûjô-habaki*

Kincha-Tsugaru-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
（金茶津軽塗鞘打刀拵え）

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in
Tsugaru-nuri technique
wrapped with gold-brown braids

Crafted during the
Late Edo Period



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

Divine *tsugaru-nuri* lacquer work

tsugarunuri.org



Tsugaru nuri is the traditional lacquerware of the *Tsugaru* region in northern *Aomori* prefecture. Tsugaru has an extensive history dating back to the mid-Edo period during the reign of the fourth leader of *Hirosaki* clan, *Tsugaru Nobumasa* (1646~1710).

The crafting process of Tsugaru nuri involves *48 steps*. The base is made of wood, typically Japanese cypress. A sheet of cloth is applied to the wood base and covered with *urishi* (lacquer) base coat for durability. Coloured lacquer is applied over many coats and polished after every coat. The final step involves top quality Japanese lacquer and polishing, creating a durable and refined finish.



Reinforced brass ***kojiri*** (end cap) of ***amaryû*** (rain dragon)



This striking polished ***shakudô tsuba*** from the Late Edo period was crafted by the respected ***Mogarashi school***. It depicts China's ***Three Kingdoms*** - a period of time that was marked by chaotic infighting between warlords in various parts of China from 220 to 280 AD.

Liu Bei (161-223) was a warlord in the late ***Eastern Han*** dynasty who founded the state of ***Shu Han*** in the Three Kingdoms period and became its first ruler.

The courageous energy captured in this tsuba is palpable. Note the intensity of the dragon at the base swelling within the waves and staring into the eyes of the warrior.



As these holes were not needed to pass through a ***kôzuka*** or ***kôgai***, a previous owner (with definite financial means!) decided to fill them in with ***gold***.

It has a beautiful contrasting effect against the polished ***shakudô***.





NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
certificate coming soon



Fuchi-kashira featuring an ***unryû*** (cloud dragon) in ***shakudô*** with ***nanako*** ground and gold accents.

This piece has been attributed to *Yokoya Eisei* of the *Yanagawa* school from the Late Edo period. NTHK-NPO certificate coming soon.



unryû looking skyward

kashira (pommel)





Extra large dragon ***menuki*** on ***samekawa*** (ray skin) and secured by gold-braided silk.





Vintage koshirae bag

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA424

A KATSUKUNI KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1673)

Swordsmith:	***Iyo Daijô Tachibana Katsukuni saku*** (*shodai*, first generation)
Measurements:	**Length:** 70.2cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 1.0cm **Moto-haba:** 2.96cm
Jihada:	*Itame with with masame hada with swirling chikei*
Hamon:	*Kanemoto-like sambonsugi with sunagashi and kinsuji*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** *(for the tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Cutting ability:	**ô-Wazamono** (*maker of extremely sharp swords*)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, description

SOLD

Katsukuni literally means '***victorious country/province***' – a name bestowed upon by the powerful *Maeda daimyo* family of the Edo period. First generation and superior swordsmith Katsukuni of the *shintô Darani* school excelled in a *sanbonsugi-hamon* modelled upon the *Seki-Kanemoto* school and forged his blades with a skilful mix of *itame* and straight grain *masame-hada*. Katsukuni blades were also famous for their superior sharpness (he is ranked *ô-wazamono*) and the line existed for seven generations until the *Meiji* era. This strong and magnificently sharp katana has a brilliant *sambonsugi* hamon cascading the length of the blade like a pulsing heartbeat. Its elegant Edo period koshirae features imperial chrysanthemums, surging waves and adorable monkeys compliments such an alluring collectible from the heart of the shintô era.

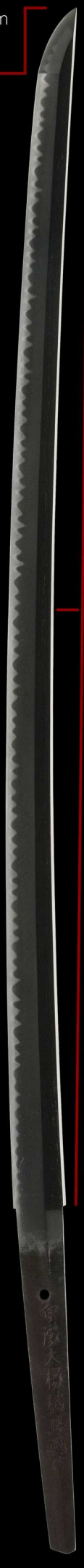


Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 6.9mm

Nakago: 19.3cm

Omosa: 755g



Kissaki: 3.99cm

Saki-haba: 2.02cm

Nagasa: 70.2cm

Sori: 1.00cm

Moto-haba: 2.96cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

The history leading up to first generation (*shodai*) *Katsukuni* begins in the *kotô* period. Below is a historical summary of events as they unfolded.

The ancestor of the *Darani* school was swordsmith *Katsuie*, active around the *Ôei* era (1394~1428). According to transmission he was the son or a student of *Kunitsugu*, who in turn, came from the *Echizen Chiyozuru* school and moved to the neighbouring *Kaga* province around the *Ôan* era (1368~1375). The first to use the school name *'Darani'* was the 5th generation *Katsuie* during the *Tenshô*-era (1573~1592).

The third son of the 4th generation Katsuie was the first generation *Ieshige* who was considered as the actual ancestor of the shintô-era Darani school. His second son received the honorary title *Iyo no Daijô* from chancellor *Yotsuji Yoshiie* through the recommendation of his employer, the powerful *Maeda daimyô* family. Furthermore, the clan name of *Fujiwara* was changed to *Tachibana* and the smith's name became *shodai* (first generation) *Katsukuni.*

The Katsukuni name has an auspicious connotation as it literally means *'victorious country/province'*. Katsukuni counted himself as the 17th generation *Rai Kuniyoshi,* the legendary founder of the *Rai* school.

Katsukuni excelled in a *sanbonsugi-hamon* modelled upon the *Seki-Kanemoto* school with a key difference being that the *Kaga* smiths applied *nie* in the valleys of the sanbonsugi elements. Katsukuni blades were also famous for their superior sharpness (he is ranked *ô-wazamono*) and the line existed for altogether seven generations up to the Meiji era.

This strong and delightfully sharp katana is classic Katsukuni with a prominent *sambonsugi* hamon cascading the length of the blade. It has a relatively thick *kasane*, substantial *kissaki,* and solid overall weight to the blade. Katsukuni is ranked *jô-saku* (superior swordsmith), and this blade is indicative of his respected skill level. An elegant Edo period koshirae with wonderfully designed fittings makes this an alluring collectible from the heart of the *shinto* era.

Historical research source: *Nihon-shintô-shi* by Markus Sesko





Title: *Iyo Daijô* (Lord of Iyo province)
Family name: *Tachibana*
Swordsmith: *Katsukuni* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
kata-sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

伊 (I)

豫 (yo)

大 (Dai)

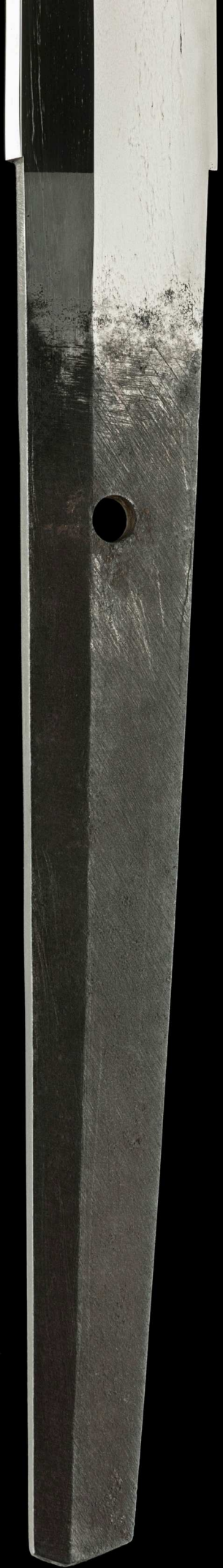
掾 (jô)

橘 (Tachibana)

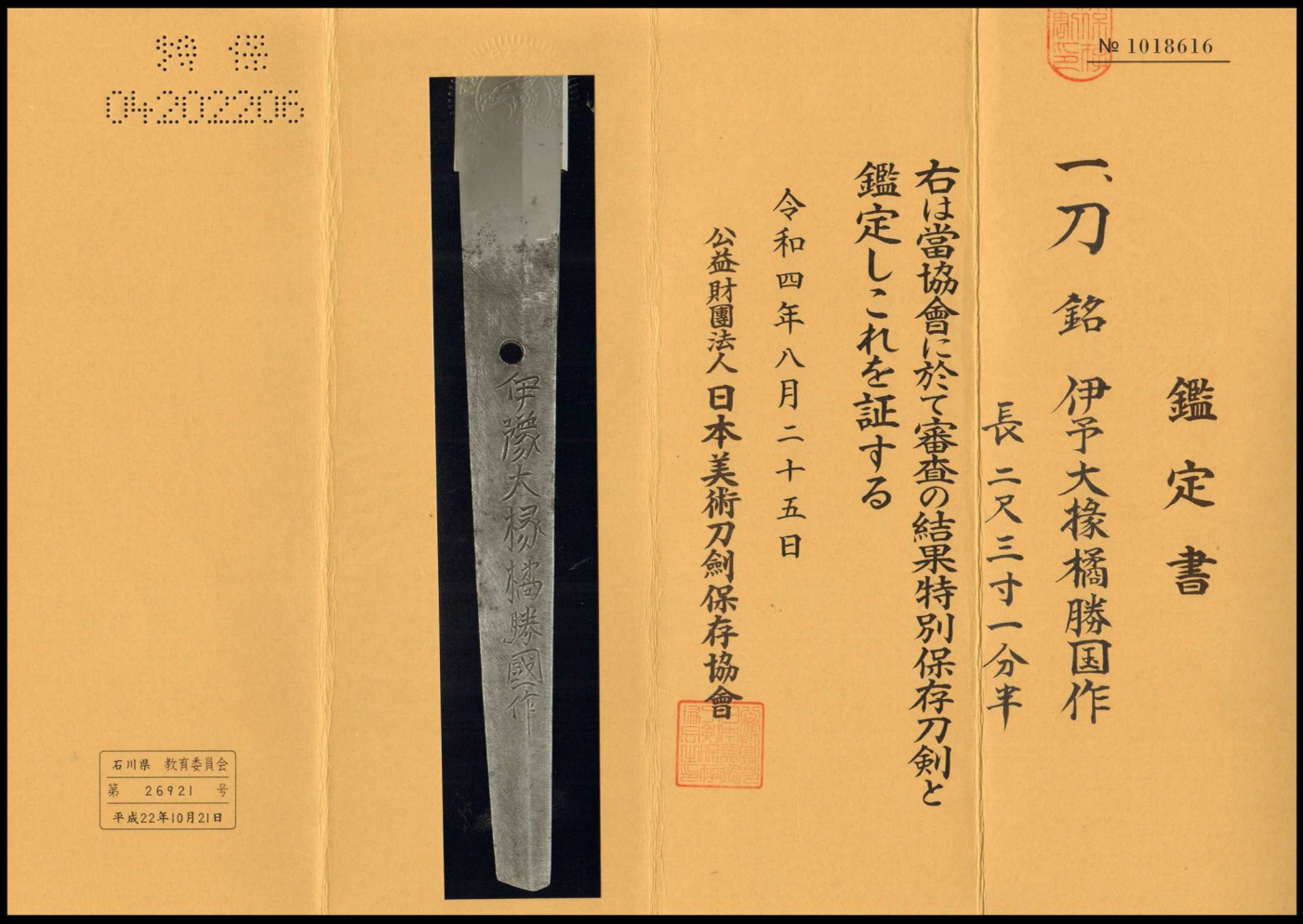
勝 (Katsu)

國 (kuni)

作 (saku)



The *ura* (reverse) side of the nakago is unsigned - standard for the majority of swords crafted during the *shinto* period.



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 4th year of Reiwa (2022), August 25th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Iyo Daijô Tachibana Katsukuni saku

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu han (70.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





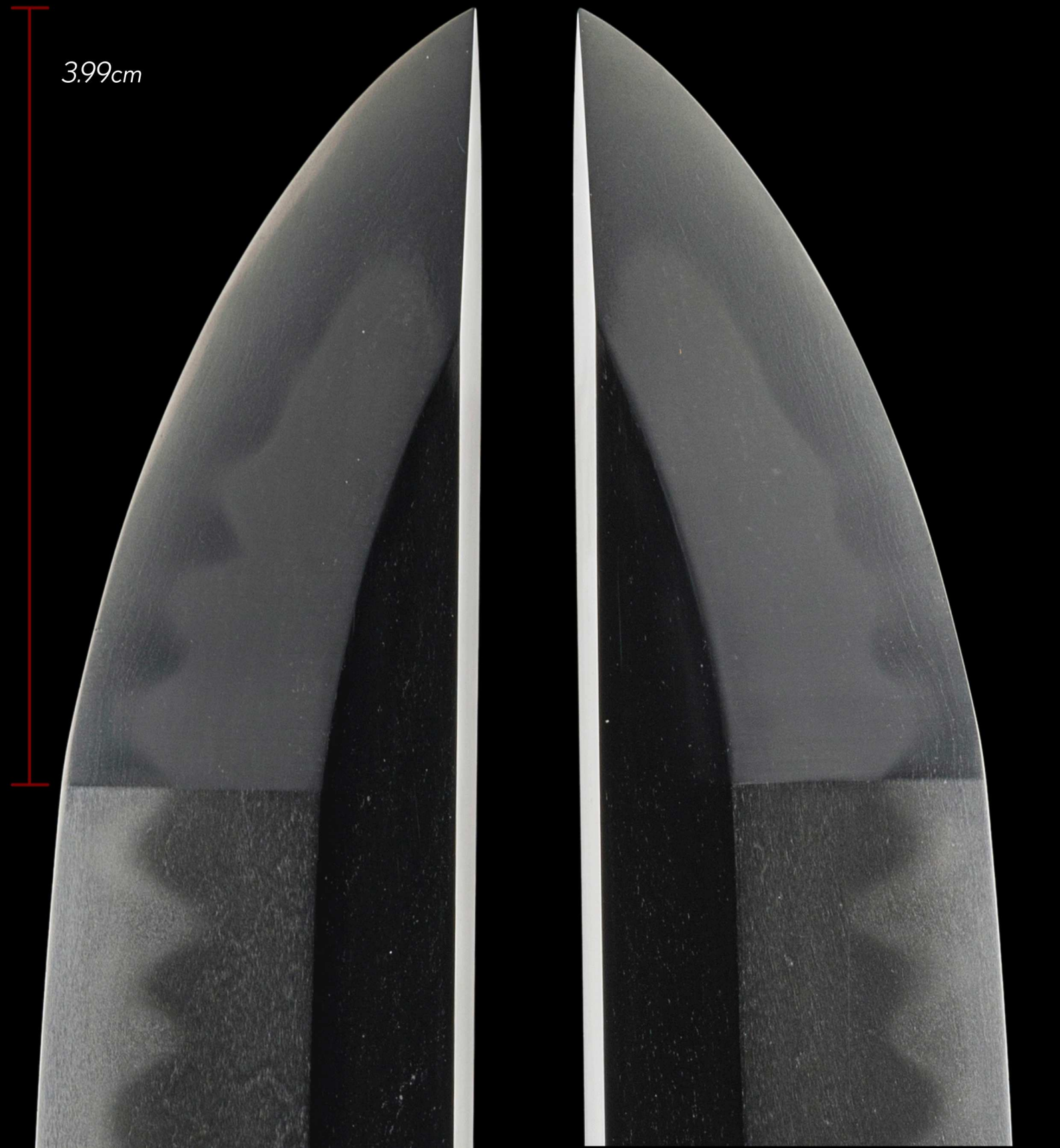
This imperfection at the base of the blade is not a typical ***hada-ware*** flaw for it does not run lengthwise through the folds of the steel. It is dug in at more of an angle. And in the majority of cases where you see hada-ware of this nature, there are usually other parts of the blade that have it too, but this is an isolated situation.

Did it come from being in contact with another blade during combat? It's hard to say. It's best we'll treat it as a forging flaw to be safe and upfront.



This sizeable ***chû-kissaki*** of 4cm is a length that would typically be seen during the warring ***Nambokuchô*** era (1333~1392).

This sword exhibits an inspiration from this time period.



Katsukuni's forging technique shows a mix of ***masame-hada*** (straight grain) with ***itame*** (plank grain).

In this cross-section image we clearly see the smooth transition of the two types of ***jihada*** with ***masame*** along the hardened ***yakiba*** along the cutting edge and ***itame*** running toward the ***shinogi*** in the ***ji***.



A classic ***sanbon-sugi hamon*** - temper line that resembles a cluster of three cedar trees. Note how the hamon 'peaks' at about every third wave, like a heart beat.

This hamon was originated by second generation ***Magoroku Kanemoto*** circa 1530 and loyally replicated by subsequent generations.

Mino province is a heavily forested region of Japan, so it's clear where the artistic inspiration for the hamon originated from.

sambonsugi hamon



Beautiful ***Takayama*** in Gifu prefecture (old Mino province)


The jaws of the hamon stand ready to sink its teeth into those that dare cross the line.

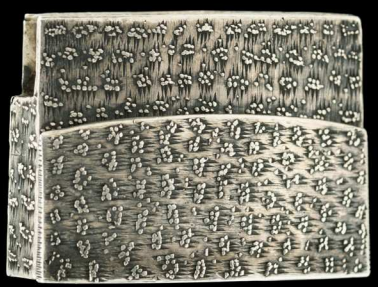


Clear and consistent.

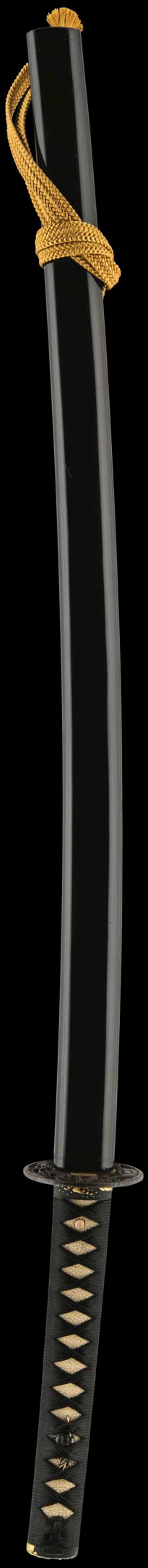
Be courageous.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



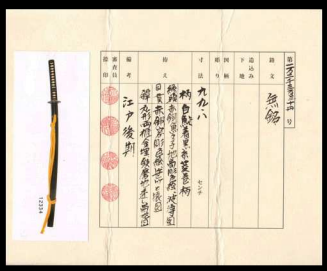
a silver ***habaki*** with a
unique cluster design



Kuro-roiro-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
（黒呂色塗鞘打刀拵え）

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

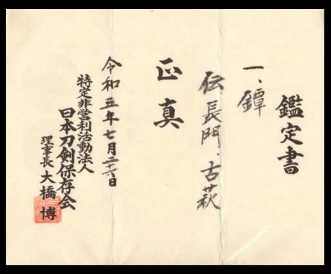




The koshirae features a wonderful polished iron tsuba crafted by ***Ko-Hagi*** school from ***Nagato*** province. It has been certified to the early Edo period, which is when the sword was crafted.

The intricate ***sukashi*** (open art work) is that of a ***kikka-no-zu*** (chrysanthemums), the imperial flower of Japan

Note that the two ***hitsu-ana*** (holes) that normally slot the ***kôgai*** and ***kozuka*** are filled in with gold. Only a samurai with extra financial means could have afforded such a luxury.


鑑定書

一、鐔

伝長門、古萩

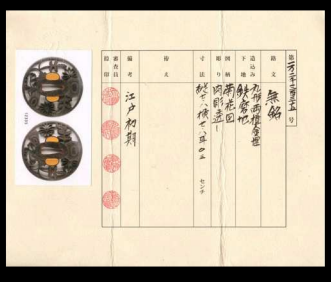
正真

令和五年七月二十日

特定非営利活動法人

日本刀剣保存会

理事長 大橋 博







(reverse)





Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Ozaki Naomasa
(circa 1763~1782)

Shakudô with ***nanako*** ground depicting
a gorgeous motif of surging waves.



The founder of the *Ozaki* school was a certain *Ozaki Tôemon Munekore* of whom it is said that he came from *Kyôto* to *Edo* (Tôkyô) on orders of *Tokugawa Ieyasu* at the beginning of the Edo period.

Ozaki Naomasa – first name *Ki'emon* and later *Mago-zaemon* – was born in Kyôto in the 17th year of *Kyôhô* (1732) and belonged therefore to the Kyôto branch of the Ozaki family. But he went later to Edo as he was hired by the *bakufu* for a salary of 200 *koku* with the opportunity to work in the atelier of *Gotô Genjô*, the 6th gen. of the Genbei line. This took place in the 14th year of Hôreki (1763).

Ozaki Naomasa was a very skilful metalsmith and old documents that were published in the years after his death on March 20, 1782 state that his works were on par with that of the renowned *Gotô* family.





The *menuki* depict monkeys carrying bamboo upon their shoulders.
An amusing facial expression is captured on the monkey as it gazes up above.





Koshirae bag

To the heavens.



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ITEM# UJKA427

A SUKENAO KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (GENROKU ERA: AUGUST 1690)

Swordsmith:	***Tsuda Ômi no Kami Sukenao*** *(1st generation)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 71.5cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 3.18cm
Jihada:	*Tight koitame-hada with plenty of ji-nie*
Hamon:	*Billowing gunome mixed with tôran-ba, bright with a plenty of nie*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2:	**NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku** *(Designated as a Highly Excellent Masterwork)*
Certificate #3-5:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, tsuba, fk, certified as Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jôjô-saku** (*ranked as a highly superior swordsmith*)
Sharpness:	**Ryô-wazamono** (*maker of extra sharp swords*)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD

Maestro ***Sukenao*** was born in the village of *Takagi* in 1639, and entered as an apprentice with grandmaster ***Echizen no Kami Sukehiro*** soon becoming his most prolific student. This sword is dated to August 1690 when Sukenao was 53 years old, three of four years before records show he died in 1693~94. This absolutely brilliant katana features a gorgeous *toran-midare hamon* in Sukehiro style and comes with an outstanding tiger-themed Edo period koshirae. Sukenao is ranked *jôjô-saku (*highly superior) and *ryô-wazamono* for the excellent cutting ability of his swords.


Saki-kasane: 5.2mm
Moto-kasane: 6.2mm
Nakago: 22.7cm
Omosa: 720g
Kissaki: 3.50cm
Saki-haba: 2.16cm
Nagasa: 71.5cm
Sori: 1.80cm
Moto-haba: 3.18cm
Mekugi-ana: 2

Maestro *Sukenao* was born in the village of *Takagi* in 1639, his birth name being *Tsuda Magodayû*. He entered as an apprentice of grandmaster *Echizen no Kami Sukehiro*, one the greatest smiths of the Shintô period. Sukenao later married Sukehiro's daughter in 1675 and became his most prolific student.

Sukenao lived in *Osaka Soya-chô* and his works are seen up until about *Genroku Roku-nen* (1693) as this was the year he died at the age of 55.

Dated to August 1690 when *Sukenao* was 53 years old, this brilliant katana features a gorgeous *toran-midare hamon* in *Sukehiro* style. This katana comes with an outstanding tiger-themed Edo period koshirae.

Sukenao is ranked *jôjô-saku* (highly superior smith) and *ryô-wazamono* for the excellent cutting ability of his swords.

This sword comes with an NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate and NTHK-NPO *Yûshûsaku* designation, their highest rank.





Location: ***Settsu*** (resident of Osaka)
Title: ***Ômi no Kami*** (Lord of Ômi province)
Family name: ***Tsuda***
Swordsmith: ***Sukenao*** (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

津 (Tsu)

田 (da)

近 (Ô)

江 (mi, no)

守 (Kami)

助 (Suke)

直 (nao)

Genroku sannen hachigatsu hi

Dated on a day in the eighth month in the third year of Genroku era (August 1690)

(Gen) 元

(roku) 禄

(san) 三

(nen) 年

(hachi) 八

(gatsu) 月

(hi) 日



Note the beautiful cursive script on the nakago which Sukenao began in 1682.



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

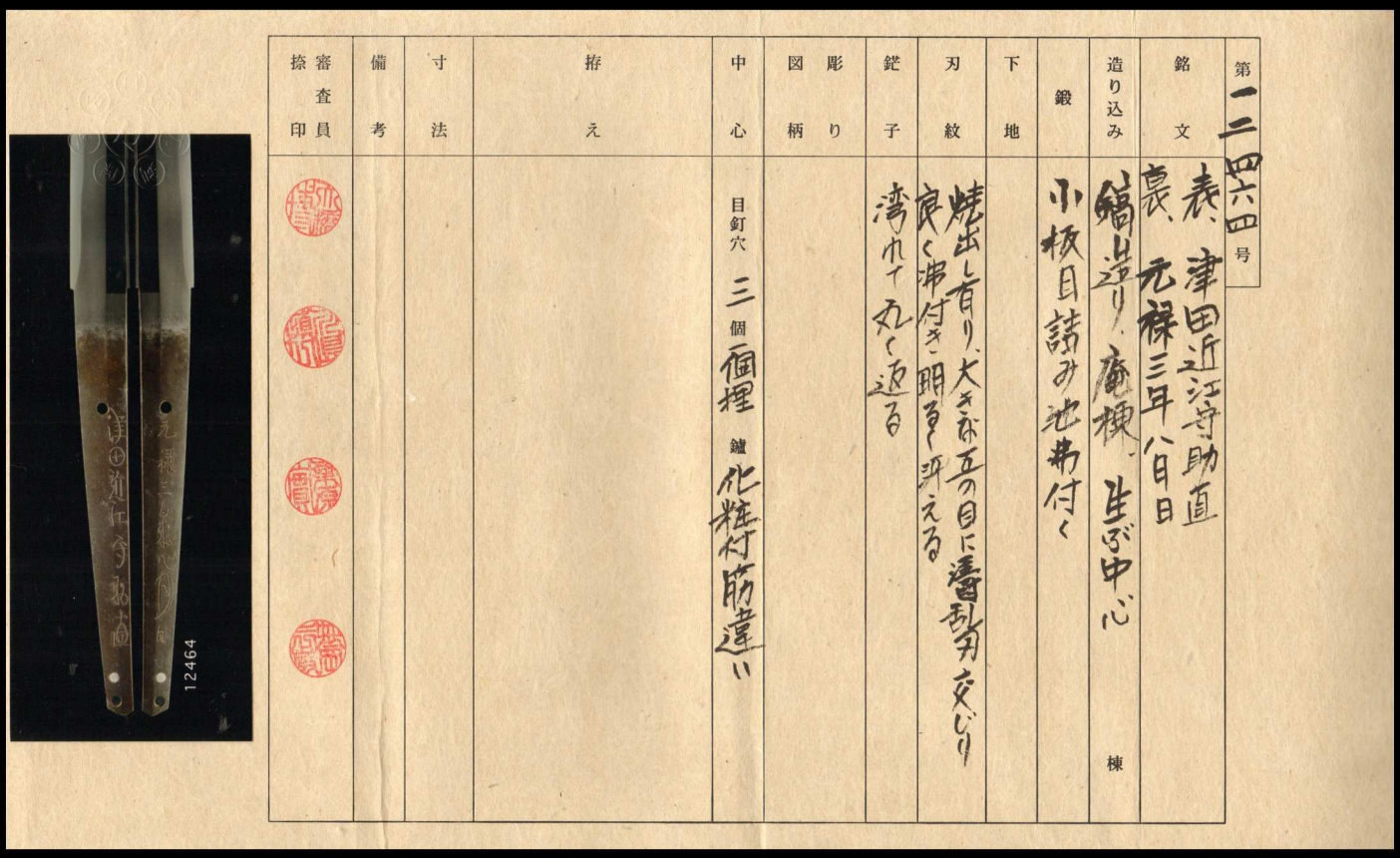
Issued in the 11th year of Heisei (1999), June 11th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Tsuda Ômi no kami Sukenao
Genroku sannen hachigatsu hi

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 6-bu jaku (71.5cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



NTHK-NPO Yushusaku
Certificate of Authenticity

This katana was designated as *Yushusaku* (Highly Excellent)
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Tsuda Ômi no Kami Sukenao

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 6-bu kore ari (71.5cm)

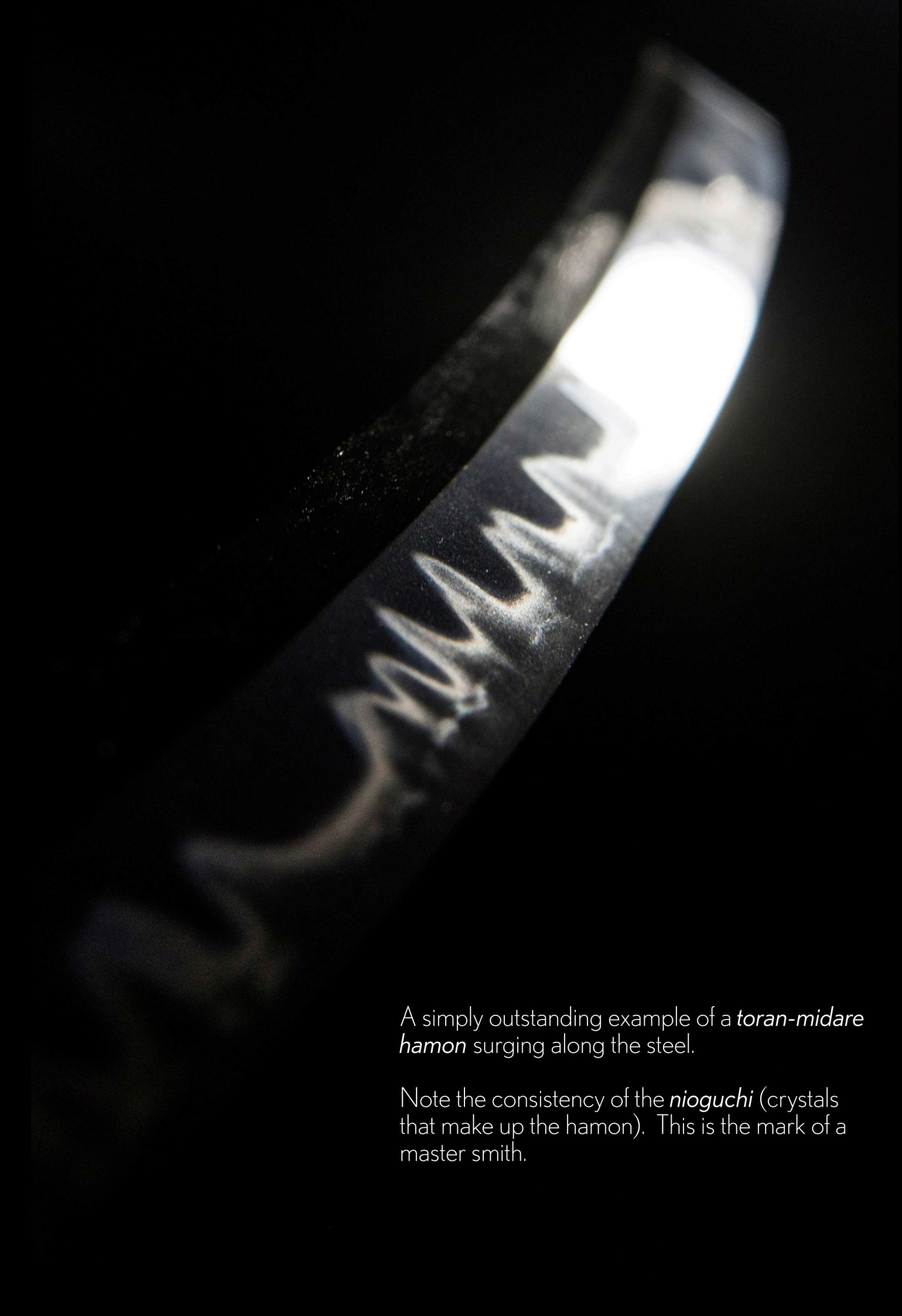
Issued in 5th year of Reiwa (2023), December 17th

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)

This sword has reached the highest level of honour at the NTHK-NPO.
Four judges have stamped their names to the certificate.







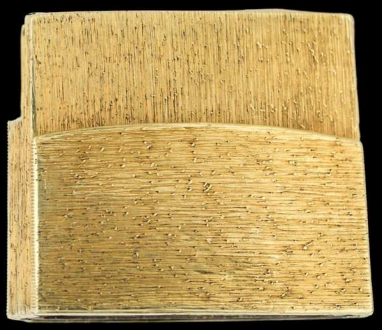
A simply outstanding example of a ***toran-midare hamon*** surging along the steel.

Note the consistency of the ***nioguchi*** (crystals that make up the hamon). This is the mark of a master smith.


See the light.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold-wrapped ***ni-ju habaki***
with crisp file marks



Shunuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
（朱塗鞘打刀拵）

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in red

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

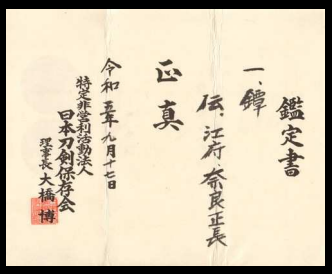


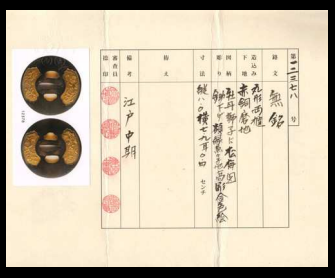


This splendid ***tsuba*** has been attributed to ***Nara Masanaga*** from Edo (Tokyo). It is unsigned and made of polished ***shakudô***. The design is that of peony, guardian shisa lions, with a pine tree and plum.

It features ***gakubuchi*** (lit. frame) carved into the plate. Nanako ground inside the plate, gold accents.

Certified authentic from the NTHK-NPO.


鑑定書
一、鐔
伝 江府 奈良正長
正真
令和 五年 九月十七日
特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋 博


江戸中期



(reverse)





Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Yokoya Eisei
(1700s)

Tiger motif

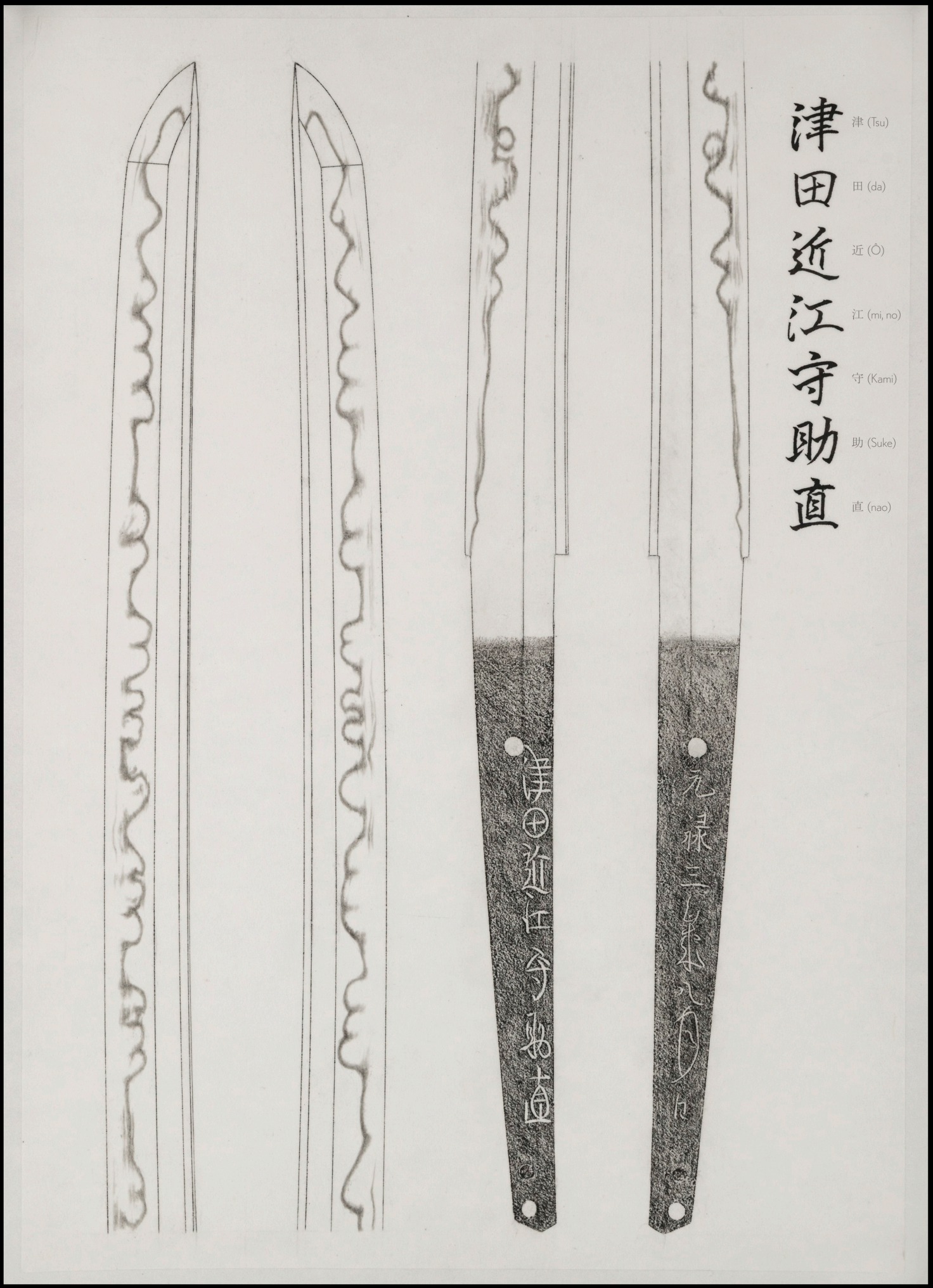






Tigers in the form of ***menuki*** peek through the interwoven silk that is braided in ***jabara-maki*** form.





A traditional ***oshigata*** (tracing) was produced by hand in Japan on ***washi*** paper documenting the sword's overall shape, signed contents on the ***nakago*** and the beautiful pattern of the ***hamon***.



Congratulations Paul.

Warm regards,
Pablo

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Arigato!

Thank you for downloading our catalogue.
We look forward to serving you.



Nelson playing with Barney in the backyard.
Happy boy!

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