UNIQUE JAPAN
ユニーク ジャパン

# Japanese Sword Catalogue 46

## UPDATED: June 6/2026



(COVER PHOTO)

ITEM# UJKA505

## A CHÛ-AOE KATANA
NANBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (1356~1368)

5TH NBTHK TOKUBETSU JÛYO TÔKEN
FEATURED IN TÔKEN BIJUTSU MAGAZINE

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uniquejapan.com

# Antique Japanese Swords For Sale (volume 46)

## Released: January 30, 2026 to VIP Clients only
## Updated: June 6, 2026

The following pages contain descriptions and images of genuine antique Japanese swords currently available, on hold, or recently 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

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Tokyo, Japan (No.303291102398)

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Hi everyone,

I hope your 2026 is off to a flying start. My son Lennon and I are still coming down from our December climb to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. It's been just over a month, and I'm still processing the experience. Standing at 5,895 metres with my sixteen-year-old son beside me, watching the sun rise over Africa – both of us totally exhausted - that's a memory forged in commitment and effort. It reminded me why we do hard things: not for the comfort, but for what they give us. I encourage you to forge your own memories this year, and make them count!

These ten swords in Catalogue 46 were forged the same way - through commitment, discipline, and an unwavering dedication to excellence. They've survived centuries because someone took responsibility for them. Now it's our turn. I am tremendously proud of this catalogue and the efforts to help make it happen by our hard-working UJ team. Here is a summary of the swords…

**ujka472 - A TOMOTSUGU KATANA** - An exceptionally long (81.6cm, near *ubu*) reference piece by prominent early *Uda school* smith *Tomotsugu*, embodying the transition from *Kamakura tachi* to *Muromachi katana*. *Yamato* discipline meets *Sôshû* influence in a blade that combines *itame*, *mokume*, and classic *masame-hada* with bright *suguha* and impactful *hataraki*. The Edo period *koshirae* features a stunning *Muromachi Ko-Kinkô* wave *tsuba* with crab *fuchi-kashira* and lobster *menuki*.

**ujka473 – A KUNISHIGE KATANA** - Rare and dated blade by *Mishina* smith *Jôshû Kunishige*, forged during the tense months between pacification and rebellion under *Tokugawa* Iemitsu's iron rule. Clear *Shizu* influence with dynamic *gunome-midare*, *kinsuji*, and *togari*. Late Edo *handachi koshirae* with exquisite *nagashi-nuri saya* echoing wood grain patterns. Once owned by *Dr. Katsumi Toriumi*, confiscated by U.S. Forces November 1945. And now it's journey continues, amazing!

**ujka468 – A MORIHIRO TAMESHIGIRI KATANA -** Weighty, powerful, extra sharp katana attributed to *Chiyôzuru Morihiro* from late *Nanbokuchô* period in beautiful *Echizen* province. Rich dark *jigane* with abundant *chikei*, bright *suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, saw-tooth *ashi*, *sunagashi*. *Kinzogan-mei* confirms *tameshigiri* test severing through armpit - *kotô* tested blades exceptionally rare, so claim this one quickly. Handsome koshirae with striped *senden-nuri saya*, *tsuba* depicting heroic *Minamoto Yorimasa*, splendid *Munetoshi fuchi-kashira*. Planning for *Tanobe-sensei sayagaki*.

**ujka505 – A CHÛ-AOE KATANA** - Museum-quality ***Tokubetsu Jûyô*** awarded December 1976 at only the 5th session. Elite group of ten *ô-suriage mumei Aoe* achieving TJ on merit alone. NBTHK November 2025 study sword - nearly all identified correctly. Wide *mihaba*, magnificent *ô-kissaki*, refined *chirimen-hada* with iconic *sumihada*, precise suguha with *saka-gunome*. Every Aoe characteristic in textbook execution. The definitive 14th-century *Nanbokuchô Aoe*. This is *nihontô*.

**ujdi012 – A KANESHIGE TAMESHIGIRI DAISHÔ** - Exceptionally rare katana and wakizashi crafted by *Kazusa no Suke Kaneshige*, ***both*** *tameshigiri* tested severing two bodies, results gold-inlaid by *Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide* just fifteen months apart. Signature *Kotetsu*-like approach: tight *itame* with bright *ji-nie*, thick *nioiguchi*, wavy *gunome-midare* gleaming like fresh snow. Mismatched koshirae available, or consider building a top quality authentic *daishô* with Unique Japan that will launch this *daishô* into the *nihontô* heavens. Either way, *Tanobe-sensei sayagaki* will be arranged.

**ujka489 – A TADATSUNA KATANA** - Superb katana by *shodai Tadatsuna* reflecting precise *Awataguchi* forging skills. Mesmerizing *gunome-chôji-midare* with impressively long *kinsuji* and brushed *sunagashi*. Elegant Edo *koshirae*: rich red lacquer *saya*, marvellous gold-laden *tsuba* attributed to armourer *Myôchin Munehisa*, and terrific menuki in the form of lotus flowers. Signed with pride by a true *shintô* leader of the *Ôsaka-shintô* tradition. A terrific overall package to cherish.

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**ujka488 – A SHIKKAKE KATANA –** Admirable blade from one of five *Yamato-den* traditions, based behind *Tôdai-ji* temple. Retains a clean graceful silhouette with glorious *shikkake-hada* that combines *mokume* with straight *masame* in the *yakiba*. Bright *ko-gunome* with *ashi*, *sunagashi*, *kinsuji*, and *tobiyaki*. Gorgeous *koshirae* with luxurious *mokume*-style black and gold lacquer saya echoing *jihada* and features a signed *Chôshu Tomonori* lotus *tsuba* and powerful cloud-dragon menuki embodying ferocity and protection. A sword that will look incredible in any home or office.

**ujka490 – A TADAKUNI KATANA** - Elegant katana by *Nidai Harima no Kami Tadakuni* showcasing evolved *Hizen* aesthetic of the *Enpô* era. Signature *konuka-hada* with smooth *ko-itame* scattered with *ji-nie* shimmering like silk, subtle *midare-utsuri* drifting across surface. *Chû-suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, thick clusters of *nie*. Brilliant koshirae: cloud-inspired *Ichiryô fuchi-kashira*, *Jakushi* dragon tsuba, and a stunning mother-of-pearl saya that catches the light like dragon scales.

**ujta006 - KANEFUSA TANTÔ** - Rare signed and dated *tantô* to December 1555 by twenty-one-year-old superstar *Fujiwara Kanefusa*, later *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa*, one of the great *Oda Nobunaga's* most distinguished smiths. Bold dynamic *gunome-midare* with huge *tobiyaki* islands and pointed *Mino togari*. Experimental spirit that is palpable under light. Refined understated *koshirae:* black *ishime* saya, gold *kirimon* on *hamidashi tsuba* and *kozuka*. This is young fire in formal samurai attire!

**ujka491 – A MUNEHIRA KATANA** - Imposing *shinshintô* period katana by *Koyama Munehira*, father of maestro *Koyama Munetsugu,* that was inspired by powerful mid-1300s *Nanbokuchô* blades. 71.0cm, 930g, lethal. Gorgeous *sashikomi* polish showcasing *gunome-chôji-midare hamon*, well-forged *itame* and *mokume-hada*. As the sword is unsigned and in *shirasaya* only, it can be offered at very reasonable price. It's a learning and inspiring piece to jump into the Japanese sword world with.

This is a big anniversary year for Unique Japan - we launched in June 2006, twenty years ago. Where does the time go... I want to thank you for two decades of trust and support. Your enthusiasm means the world to me and the team.

You'll notice even more historical research in these pages. We're dedicated to constantly strengthening our catalogues and advancing the standard for how Japanese swords should be presented and understood. It's a responsibility we take seriously.

And if you find yourself travelling to Tokyo, be sure to book a private meeting with us.

We look forward to serving you.

Warm regards,



Pablo Kuntz
January 2026



Nearing the Kilimanjaro summit, December 2025

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

# Index of Japanese Swords


| ITEM# | PAGE | SWORDSMITH & TYPE | CM | CERTIFICATE | ERA / PERIOD | PRICE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ujka472 | 7 | A TOMOTSUGU KATANA | 81.6 | NBTHK Hozon | Ôei (1394~1428) | SOLD |
| ujka473 | 33 | A KUNISHIGE KATANA | 70.0 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Keian (August 1658) | SOLD |
| ujka468 | 61 | A MORIHIRO KATANA | 69.2 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Nanbokuchô (1390~1394) | $25,000 |
| ujka505 | 88 | A CHÛ-AOE KATANA | 69.9 | Tokubetsu Jûyô | Enbun~Jôji (1356~1368) | SOLD |
| ujdi012 | 118 | A KANESHIGE DAISHÔ | 71/52 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Kanbun (1666~1667) | SOLD |
| ujka489 | 154 | A TADATSUNA KATANA | 71.2 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Manji (1658~1661) | SOLD |
| ujka488 | 180 | A SHIKKAKE KATANA | 64.4 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Kamakura (1288~1342) | $12,000 |
| ujka490 | 207 | A TADAKUNI KATANA | 69.6 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Enpô (1673~1681) | $11,500 |
| ujta066 | 233 | A KANEFUSA TANTÔ | 27.6 | Tokubetsu Hozon | Kôji (December 1555) | SOLD |
| ujka491 | 259 | A MUNEHIRA KATANA | 71.0 | NBTHK Hozon | Bunsei (1818~1830) | 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**

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# To online visitors around the world...

Welcome!

I completely respect that purchasing a sword remotely requires trust. You're relying on photographs and descriptions for something deeply important.

It's my promise to answer every question thoroughly. I want you to feel absolutely confident that the sword you choose is meant for your family to cherish and preserve.

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 regularly and can source specific smiths or schools for serious collectors. Please inquire about latest arrivals not yet listed in the catalogue.

If you're travelling to Tokyo, book a private meeting at our studio near JR Meguro station. Please email me for details.

Domo arigato,
Pablo

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# CURRENTLY AVAILABLE JAPANESE SWORDS

## Released: January 30, 2026 to VIP Clients only

The following pages contain descriptions of authentic and certified Japanese swords that are currently available, on hold or sold in catalogue 46.

**Please contact me at service@uniquejapan.com for further images and information into items of interest.**

**All swords are offered on a 'first serious hold request', first served basis. Even if an item is listed as being "on hold", register your interest as it may come available.**

Swords may be purchased over a number of months if required, please inquire for details. Descriptions and availability are subject to change without notice.

Thank you,



Pablo Kuntz
Founder, Unique Japan

service@uniquejapan.com
+44 7954 102 277
(mobile on 'signal & whatsapp' / british time)

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ITEM# UJKA472

# A TOMOTSUGU KATANA

## UNSIGNED, KOTÔ MUROMACHI PERIOD (ÔEI ERA: 1394~1428)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Uda Tomotsugu*** (宇多友次) |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 81.6cm (!) **Sori:** 1.7cm **Moto-haba:** 2.88cm **Weight:** 740g |
| **Jihada:** | *Fabulous pools of itame and mokume-hada, flowing masame and dark chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Bright suguha with kinsuji, uchinoke, sunagashi and kuichigaiba* |
| **Certificate #1-2:** | **NBTHK Hozon** *(sword and tsuba Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #3-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae and fk certified as Authentic)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

***Uda Tomotsugu*** was a prominent early smith of the *Uda* school, which relocated from *Yamato* province to *Etchû* in the late *Kamakura to Nanbokuchô* period. The school combines the disciplined craftsmanship of the Yamato tradition with elements of the *Sôshû* tradition. This exceptionally long katana at over 81cm is a rare reference piece that embodies the transition point from a *Kamakura* period *tachi* to that of a *Muromachi* period katana. The *jigane* is a lovely mix of *itame* and *mokume-hada* mixed with classic *Yamato-den masame*. The *hamon* is a bright *suguha* with impactful *hataraki*, such as *sunagashi, kinsuji* and crescent-moon *uchinoke*. The accompanying Edo-period *koshirae* is set in a glossy black saya with gold-accented details, featuring a stunning *Muromachi* period *Ko-Kinkô* wave-motif tsuba, crab-themed *fuchi-kashira*, and terrific lobster menuki. This katana is such a wonderful find and will become an adored addition for any Japanese sword collector.



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Moto-kasane: 6.6mm

Nakago: 23.6cm

Omosa: 740g



Kissaki: 2.75cm

Saki-haba: 1.73cm

Nagasa: 81.6cm

Sori: 1.7cm

Moto-haba: 2.88cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

*Uda Tomotsugu* (宇多友次) was a prominent early smith of the *Uda* school, which relocated from *Yamato* province to *Etchû* in the late *Kamakura* to *Nanbokuchô* period. The school's founder, *Ko-Nyûdô Kunimitsu* (古入道国光), is said to have moved to *Etchû* in the *Bunpô* era (1317~1319), establishing a lineage of smiths – such as *Kunifusa* (国房), *Kunimune* (国宗), and *Kunitsugu* (国次) – known for combining the disciplined craftsmanship of the *Yamato* tradition with elements of the *Sôshû* tradition, likely through exposure to *Norishige* (則重) and his circle.

*Tomotsugu*, a direct disciple or close successor of *Kunimitsu*, was active from the late 14th century with blades attributed between the *Eitoku* and early *Ôei* eras (1381~1428) especially valued.

This exceptionally long katana at over 81cm is a fascinating piece as it is a *tachi* in length, however, the curvature is slightly more shallow than tachi found in the 1200s to 1300s. We therefore asked a judge at the NBTHK (in person) two important questions:

- When did he think Tomotsugu crafted the sword?
- Whether he thought the sword was *ubu-nakago*?

The response was so interesting. Age wise, the sword can be dated to the first era of the *Muromachi* period *Ôei* (1394~1428). And to the question of *ubu-nakago* the answer was 'yes', with possibly a slight *machi-okuri*.

*Piecing this information together, what we have here is a rare reference piece that demonstrates the transition point from a Kamakura period tachi to that of a Muromachi period katana.* The katana truly came into being further in the Muromachi period, by the early 1400s where swords were drawn from a standing position rather than on horseback like the tachi was.

The *jigane* is a well-forged *itame and mokume-hada* mixed with flowing *masame*, showing clear *Yamato* influence. The *hamon* is a tight *suguha* with subtle undulations and scattered *hotsure*, imparting beauty and refinement. The accompanying *koshirae* is unified by a water theme. Set in a glossy black *saya* with gold-accented details, it features a wave-motif *tsuba*, crab-themed *fuchi-kashira*, and terrific lobster *menuki*.

This katana is such a wonderful find and will become a super addition for any Japanese sword collector.





Location: *Etchû province*
Swordsmith: *Tomotsugu* (1st or 2nd generation)
Period: *Ôei era* (1394~1428)

*ubu-nakago* (unaltered, possible slight *machi-okuri*)
*katte-sagari-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

It is a rare opportunity to claim a sword that is over 600 years old and essentially in its original shape. The vast majority of swords from this time period or older are *ô-suriage* (greatly shortened).

With a *nakago* of 23.6cm and cutting edge of 81.6cm, the bare blade measures a whopping 105.2cm (41.5 inches).

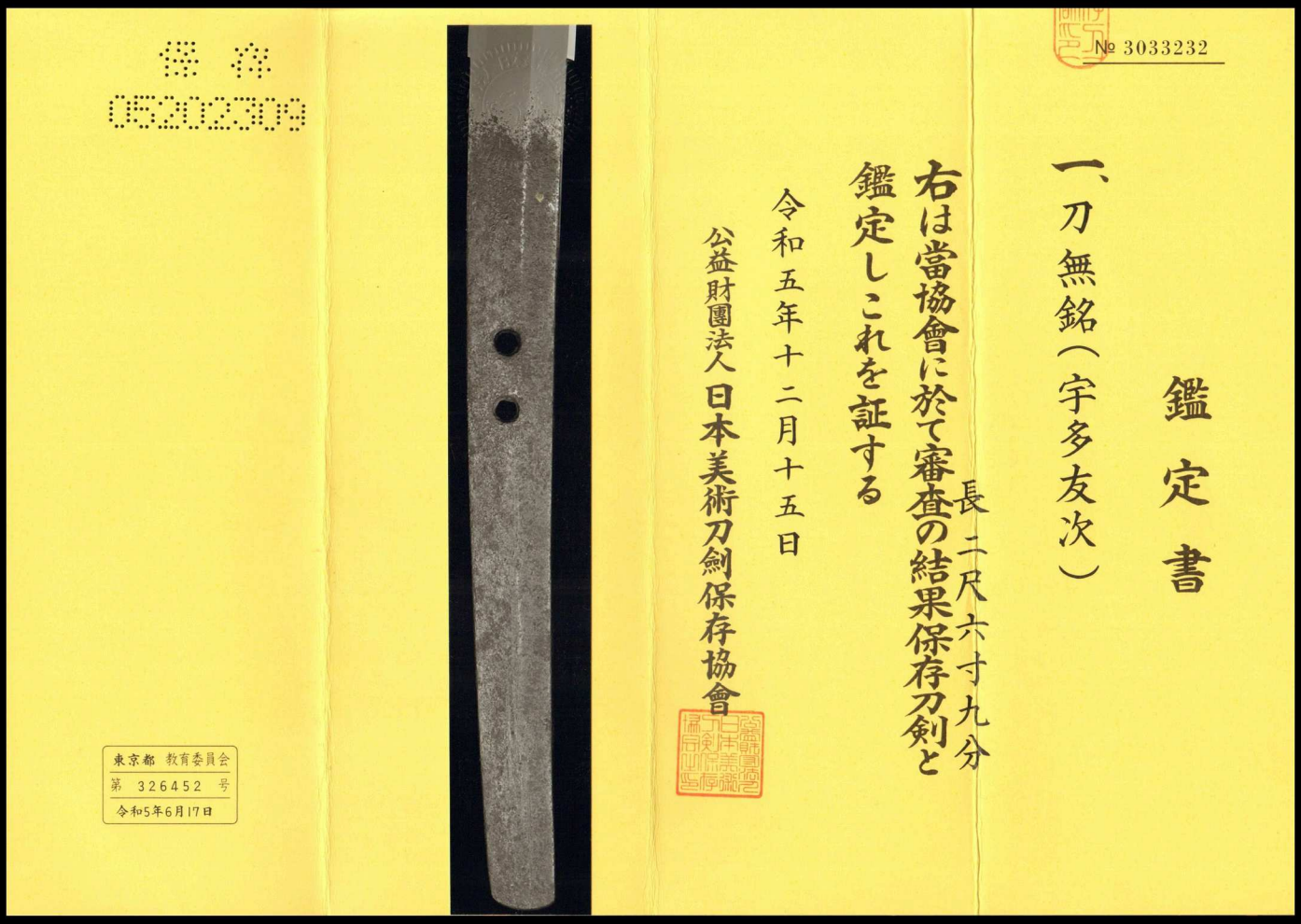


*ha-agari kurijiri*

(*ura*, reverse)

The ***nakago*** ends in a ***kuri-jiri*** shape, rounded like a chestnut – with a slight upward angle at the base (***ha-agari kuri-jiri***). This distinctive form, where the tang slopes upward toward the cutting edge, is a trait often seen in early ***Uda*** workmanship.

Among ***Uda***-attributed blades, the ***ha-agari kuri-jiri*** style is particularly noted in pieces bearing strong associations with ***Tomotsugu***.




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 5th year of Reiwa (2023), December 15th

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Uda Tomotsugu*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 6-sun 9-bu (81.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




宇多友次
*Uda Tomotsugu*
Uda Tomotsugu

磨上無銘也時代應永頃
*Suriage mumei nari jidai Ôei goro*
Suriage, unsigned, around Ôei period (1394~1428)

長貳尺六寸九分有之
*Nagasa 2-shaku 6-sun 9-bu kore ari*
Blade length 81.6 cm

令和八丙午年如月吉日誌之
*Reiwa hachi hinoe-umadoshi Kisaragi kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the second month in the eighth year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Horse (February 2026)






A long, impressive line of *chikei.*

Fabulous pools ***mokume and itame hada***
are on full display to enjoy.



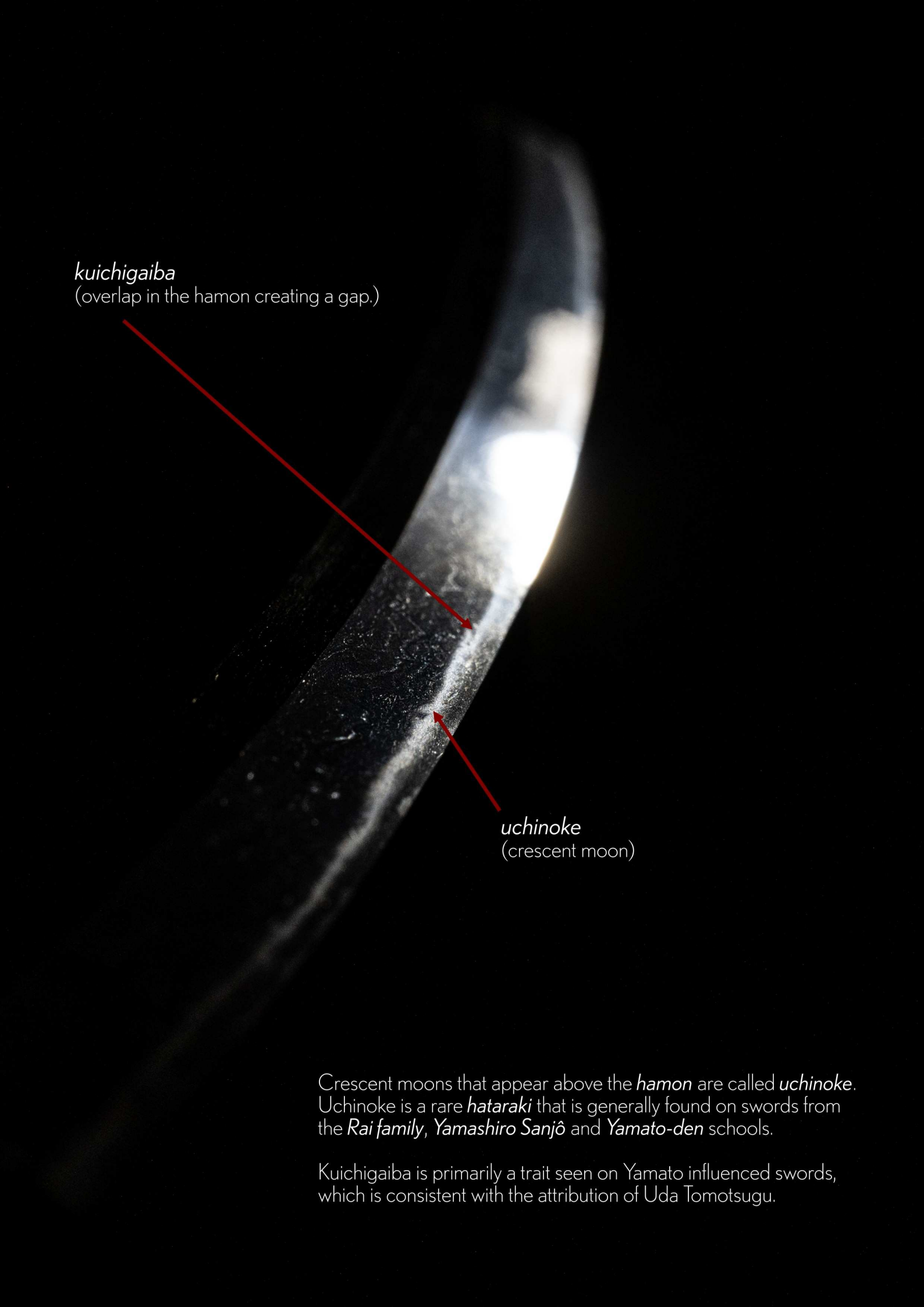


A bright hamon based on ***suguha***, features a tight wave pattern.  Dark channels of ***chikei*** abound.



An eye-catching brushing of ***sunagashi*** kicks off the hamon in a glorious manner.

This pattern is made possible by the sword's straight-grain masame-hada towards the edge of the blade.




Crescent moons that appear above the ***hamon*** are called ***uchinoke***. Uchinoke is a rare ***hataraki*** that is generally found on swords from the ***Rai family***, ***Yamashiro Sanjô*** and ***Yamato-den*** schools.

Kuichigaiba is primarily a trait seen on Yamato influenced swords, which is consistent with the attribution of Uda Tomotsugu.



A brushed ***kissaki*** that takes one back to the early 1400s.
Time travel, Japanese style.

## The Ôei Era (1394-1428): Fragile Peace After Civil War

The *Ôei* era began in July 1394, just two years after the Southern and Northern Courts finally reunified in 1392, ending 56 years of bitter *Nambokuchô* period civil war. *Ashikaga Yoshimitsu*, the third *shogun*, had persuaded the weakened Southern Court emperor *Go-Kameyama* to surrender the Imperial regalia - the sacred artifacts that confirmed legitimacy. The promise was that the two imperial lines would alternate succession. Within 20 years, the Northern line broke that promise without consequence. The reunification was real, but the peace was fragile.

This wasn't the stable Japan of the later *Tokugawa* era. The *Ashikaga shogunate* was weak compared to what came before and what would come after. Yoshimitsu ruled from *Kyoto* and controlled the central provinces, but his power depended heavily on the loyalty of regional military governors called *shugo daimyô*. These men were growing stronger, wealthier, more independent. Within five years of the era's start, in November 1399, one of the most powerful - *Ôuchi Yoshihiro* - raised an army against the shogun in what became known as the *Ôei Rebellion.* Yoshimitsu crushed it, but the message was clear: the *daimyô* were a constant threat. In 1419, Korean forces invaded *Tsushima* to suppress Japanese pirates in the *Ôei Invasion*. The shogunate's reach barely extended to *Kyûshû*. Authority was contested everywhere.

## A Sword Forged in Transition

This katana from *Uda Tomotsugu* was forged during this unsettled time. At 81.6cm, it's long - very long - but it doesn't have the pronounced *tachi* curvature of the Kamakura period. That's the point. The Ôei era marked the shift from mounted tachi worn edge-down to katana drawn from a standing position. Warriors were adapting. The civil wars of the Nanbokuchô period were officially over, but conflict simmered. Regional lords feuded. Pirates raided Korea. Rebellions erupted every few years. Swordsmiths were responding to what warriors actually needed - longer reach for infantry combat, less curvature for faster draws, blades that could handle the messy reality of ongoing violence despite the supposed peace. This wasn't a sword forged in total war like the Nanbokuchô pieces, but it was hardly made for display either. The *Ôei* era was the eye of the storm - 34 years between one period of chaos and another. Within 40 years of this era's end, the *Ônin War* would erupt in 1467, plunging Japan into a century of the Warring States *Sengoku-Jidai* period. This sword came from that brief window when smiths were perfecting new forms for the conflicts they knew were coming.



The Forces of Ashikaga Yorimitsu Returning Home
*Ashikaga Yoshimitsu kijin no zu*
Utagawa Yoshitora (1862)

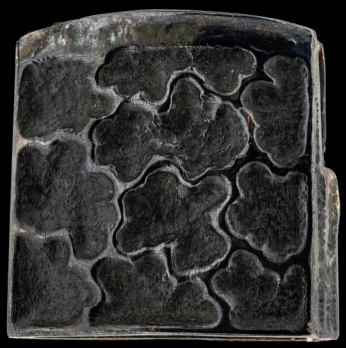



*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

Two ***habaki*** are included.



gold ***habaki*** with
copper ground



***shakudô ganseki-habaki***
(rock texture)

*Kuro-cha ishime-ji*
*mokume-nuri saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒茶石目地杢目塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in dark brown with*
*stone-surface texture in*
*wood-grain pattern*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*




無 (Mu)

銘 (mei)

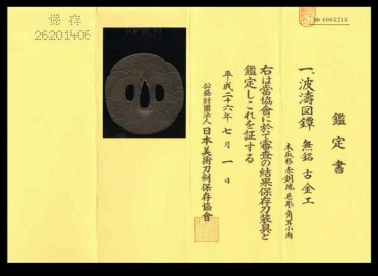
宇 (U)
田 (da)
友 (Tomo)
次 (tsugu)

*Tsunagi*
A handcrafted duplicate wooden sword blade that holds together the ***koshirae*** when the blade is resting in ***shirasaya***.



The *tsuba* is a fine example of *Ko-Kinkô*（古金工）workmanship, a tradition predating the *Edo* period that is valued for its hand-carved detailing, rich patination, and classical aesthetic sensibilities. *Ko-Kinkô* fittings often emphasize natural motifs rendered in materials such as *shakudô* or *yamagane* copper.

This handsome *mokkô-gata* (lobed) piece is crafted in dark *shakudô* and features a motif of billowing waves finely carved in *ke-bori* (hairline engraving). The *tsuba* is accompanied with a *NBTHK Hozon certificate*, recognizing its quality and historical significance.


保存
26201406

鑑定書

一、波濤図鐔　無銘　古金工

木瓜形赤銅地　毛彫　角耳　小肉

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀装具と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十六年七月一日

公益財團法人日本美術刀剣保存協會




*Katsushika Hokusai's masterpiece comes to mind.*





(reverse)

保存
26201406



№ 4005218

鑑定書

一、波濤図鐔　無銘　古金工
木瓜形赤銅地　毛彫　角耳小肉

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀装具と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十六年　七　月　一　日

公益財團法人　日本美術刀劍保存協會

NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 26th year of Heisei (2014), July 1st

One, Tsuba

*Depicting raging waves*

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Ko-Kinkô*

*Round shape with multiple lobes, shakudô ground,*
*hairline carvings, angular rim with a little roundness*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



The *fuchi-kashira* is attributed to *Tôyama Naoyuki* (遠山直随), also known as *Hamano Naoyuki* (浜野直随) – an accomplished metalworker active in the late *Edo* period and affiliated with the *Hamano* school. *Naoyuki* was known for his wonderful interpretations of natural subjects, executed with technical precision and a sense of playful elegance. The *Hamano* lineage itself descends from *Nara* (奈良) school traditions and was especially influential in *Edo*, producing fittings for samurai of distinguished rank.

This set is superby crafted in *shakudô* with gold accents and features several hard-working crabs. Carved with powerful waves, this set harmonizes well with the *Ko-Kinkô* tsuba and the pair of lobster menuki. This koshirae will appeal to those with a fondness of the open seas.



The *tsuka* (hilt) has been expertly braided in traditional *hishi-maki* style using a deep-yellow silk wrapped  over black-lacquered *samekawa* (ray skin).



The unique pair of *menuki* are that of lobsters. In Japanese tradition, lobsters (*ise-ebi*) are considered highly auspicious: their long whiskers and curved backs symbolize longevity and their repeated moulting represents personal advancement and transformation. Plus their armour-like form represents an enduring strength of character.







*Koshirae bag with a phoenix design pattern signifying rebirth.*

UNIQUE JAPAN ユニーク ジャパン
service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA473 SOLD

# A JÔSHÛ KUNISHIGE KATANA

## SIGNED & DATED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (KEIAN ERA: AUGUST 1658)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Jôshû jû Fujiwara Kunishige*** (城州住藤原国重) |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 70.0cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 2.9cm **Weight:** 680g |
| **Jihada:** | *Impressive pools of mokume-hada mixed with masame and plentiful chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Eye-catching gunome-midare, with notare, sunagashi, kinsuji, togari, Mishina-bôshi* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificates #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Provenance:** | **Dr. Katsumi Toriumi** surrendered the sword to US Allied Forces in 1945 |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description |

This rare and dated katana by *Mishina* smith ***Jôshû Kunishige***, was forged during the tense months between total pacification and a simmering rebellion during which Japan was a nation locked down, isolated, and completely reorganized under iron rule by *Tokugawa Iemitsu*. The blade shines with a clear *Shizu* influence with a dynamic *gunome-midare hamon*, *kinsuji, togari*. The *koshirae* is late Edo *handachi* (half tachi) style that exudes class. The exquisite *nagashi-nuri* saya lacquer echoes the blade's wood grain pattern and flowing textures while the fittings unite around sacred motifs - *Sannô* deities, dragons, arabesque designs. This very sword was once the property of *Dr. Katsumi Toriumi*, but was confiscated by U.S. Forces in November 1945. Now it's incredible journey continues. This is a dignified katana that will sit proudly in a lucky person's *nihontô* collection.

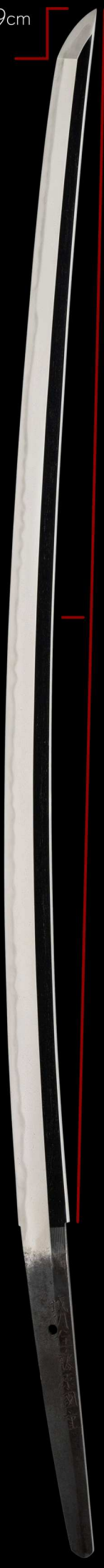


Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 6.4mm

Nakago: 18.9cm

Omosa: 680g



Kissaki: 3.09cm

Saki-haba: 1.87cm

Nagasa: 70.0cm

Sori: 1.8cm

Moto-haba: 2.9cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

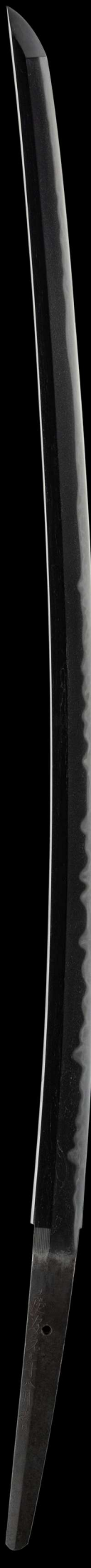
*Jôshû Kunishige* (城州国重) may not appear in the standard reference books, but this blade from the prized *Mishina* school certainly tells its own unique story. Around the *Keian* era (1648-1652) in *Yamashiro* province, swordsmiths showing pronounced *Mishina* traits while using "*kuni* (国)" in their signatures were extremely rare. Only one smith fits - *Dewa Daijô Kunimichi* (出羽大掾国路), top student of *Horikawa Kunihiro* (堀川国広). This katana resembles Kunimichi's work closely. The *nakago-jiri* shaping, the carved "*kuni*" character, the *Fujiwara* surname - all point to *Kunishige* as his disciple.

The dated inscription of August 1648, was just months into the newly declared *Keian* era. Japan was under peak *Tokugawa* control. *Iemitsu* had sealed the borders nine years earlier. The last Jesuit was dead or converted by 1644. The *sankin-kôtai* system was forcing *daimyô* into financial exhaustion. This was a nation locked down, isolated, completely reorganized under iron rule. Within three years, disgruntled *rônin* would attempt the failed *Keian Uprising*, a desperate plot born from the very control policies that defined this era. This sword was forged in those tense months between total pacification and simmering rebellion - a Japan that had turned completely inward and would stay that way for two centuries.

The blade aims squarely at the *Shizu*-inspired style *Kunimichi* mastered, and succeeds. Strong *motohaba* tapering to a slightly extended *chû-kissaki.* The *jigane* shows *itame* mixed with *mokume* in flowing texture, thick *ji-nie*, abundant *chikei*. The *shinogi-ji* displays strong *masame* too. The *hamon* is bright *gunome* with well-applied *ko-nie*, incorporating pointed elements and gentle *notare*. Numerous *ko-ashi*, active *kinsuji* and *sunagashi* also abound The *bôshi* enters in *notare*, finishes with slight *hakikake*, turns back toward the *mune* - the characteristic *Mishina-bôshi*. Naturally this is an NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certified katana.

This very sword appears in '*Token Zuihitsu*' (Token's Essay) by *Dr. Katsumi Toriumi*. According to text written in November 1945, this sword was confiscated by U.S. Forces after the war. Think about what that means - a documented surrender sword that survived confiscation (and seemingly the *koshirae* too), has made its way back to Japan - it's an amazing story.

The *koshirae* is late Edo *handachi* (half tachi) style that exudes class. The exquisite *nagashi-nuri* saya lacquer echoes the blade's wood grain pattern and flowing textures while the fittings unite around sacred motifs - *Sannô* deities, dragons, arabesque designs. This very rare and dignified katana will sit proudly in a lucky person's *nihontô* collection.





Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
ujka473 - A Jôshû Kunishige Katana

uniquejapan.com/ujka473-video

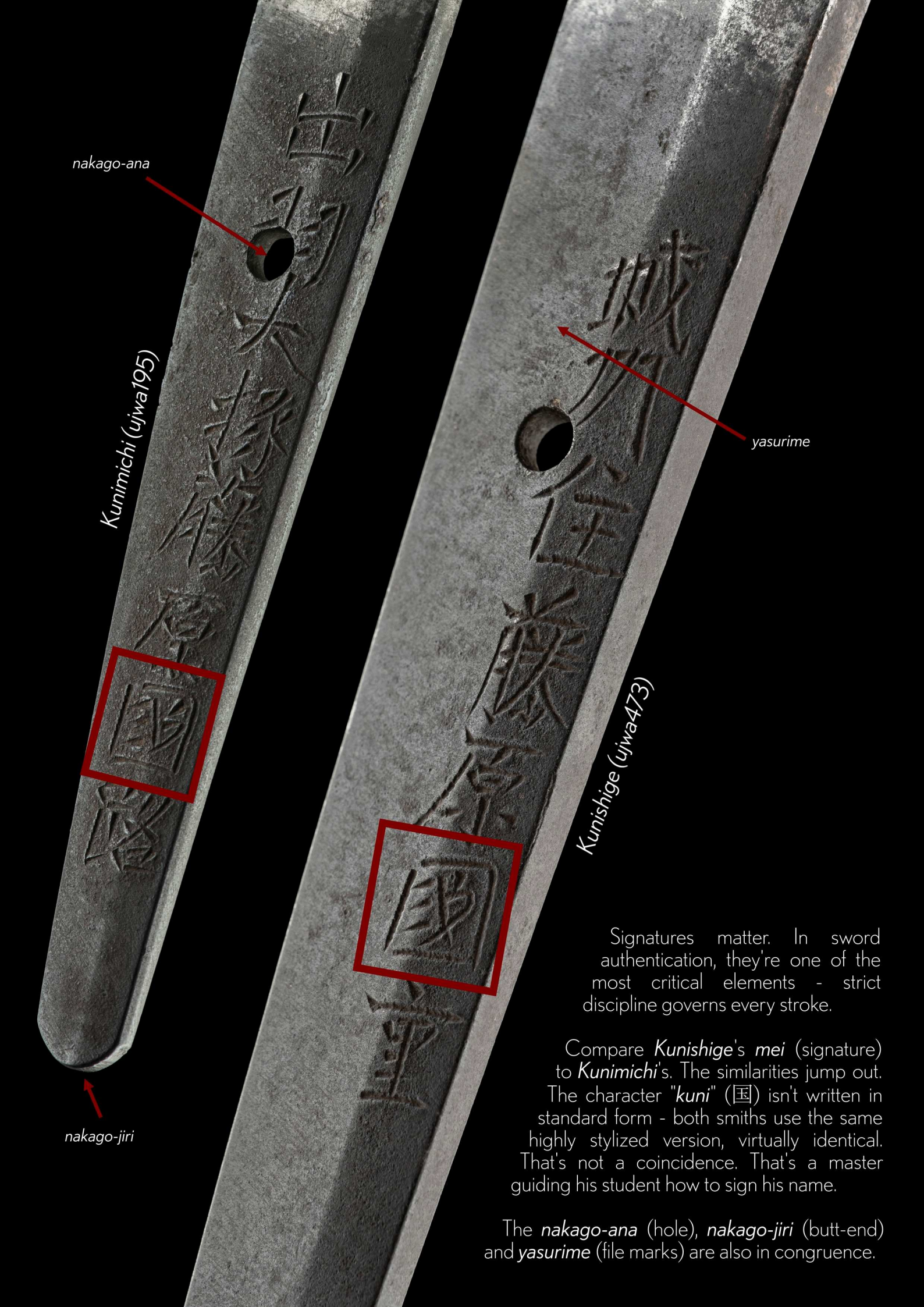




Location: *Yamashiro Province*
Family name: *Fujiwara*
Swordsmith: *Kunishige* (first generation)

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

城 (Jô)
州 (shû)
住 (jû)
藤 (Fuji)
原 (wara)
國 (Kuni)
重 (shige)




Signatures matter. In sword authentication, they're one of the most critical elements - strict discipline governs every stroke.

Compare ***Kunishige***'s ***mei*** (signature) to ***Kunimichi***'s. The similarities jump out. The character "***kuni***" (国) isn't written in standard form - both smiths use the same highly stylized version, virtually identical. That's not a coincidence. That's a master guiding his student how to sign his name.

The ***nakago-ana*** (hole), ***nakago-jiri*** (butt-end) and ***yasurime*** (file marks) are also in congruence.

*Keian gannen hachigatsu kichijitsu*
Dated on a lucky day in the eighth month in the first year of ***Keian*** era (August 1648)

(Kei) 慶
(an) 安
(gan) 元
(nen) 年
(hachi) 八
(gatsu) 月
(kichi) 吉
(jitsu) 日



*Ha-agari kurijiri* is a tang-end style where the rounded tip curves slightly toward the cutting edge.

It is a variation of the ***kurijiri*** (chestnut-shaped) finish, adding subtle asymmetry.

*ha-agari kurijiri*

## The *Shôhô* era (1644-1648): Consolidation and Control

The ***Shôhô*** era began in late 1644 with the enthronement of ***Emperor Go-Kômyô*** and lasted just four years until early 1648. This brief period fell squarely within the reign of ***Tokugawa Iemitsu***, the third ***shogun***, who had spent two decades methodically consolidating Tokugawa power. By the mid-1640s, Iemitsu's most dramatic policies were already in place - the ***sankin-kôtai*** system forcing ***daimyô*** to maintain households in Edo, the ***sakoku*** edicts sealing Japan off from the world (completed in 1639), and the brutal suppression of Christianity. The last Jesuit was executed or forced to apostatize (renounce their faith) by 1644, the year ***Shôhô*** began. This was a Japan already locked down, already isolated, already under control.

## August 1648: First Year of *Keian*

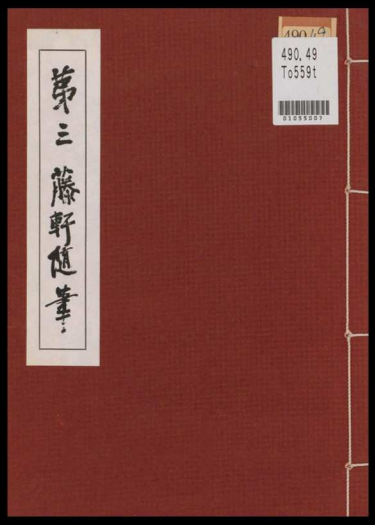
This katana was forged in August 1648 - just months into the ***Keian*** era, which replaced ***Shôhô*** in February of that year. The era name changed because "***Shôhô***" sounded too similar to "***Shôbô***" (death by burning), which was considered inauspicious. Keian meant "joy of quiet righteousness" - an optimistic name that didn't quite match reality. In 1649, a major earthquake struck Edo. That same year, ***Iemitsu*** issued the ***Keian no Ofuregaki***, a comprehensive set of proclamations designed to control rural administration and farmers' lives down to the smallest detail. The shogunate's grip was tightening further. By 1651, just three years into the era, disgruntled ***rônin*** - masterless samurai pushed into hardship by Iemitsu's seizure of ***daimyô*** estates - attempted the ***Keian Uprising***. The plot to burn Edo and storm the castle failed when one conspirator fell ill and revealed the plan in his delirium.

## An Era of Iron Stability

The ***Keian*** era lasted only until September 1652, but it represented something significant - Japan at peak Tokugawa control, a society completely reorganized and locked in place. Iemitsu died in June 1651 at age 46, leaving behind a nine-year-old heir and a Japan utterly transformed from the chaotic Warring States period his grandfather had ended. The sword forged in August 1648 came from a moment when the long peace was established but still young enough to remember conflict - when ***rônin*** conspiracies still simmered, when the machinery of control was running at full power, when Japan had turned completely inward and would remain that way for two more centuries.



***Tokugawa Iemitsu*** ruled from 1623 to 1651 - three decades that sealed Japan shut. He crucified Christians, expelled every European from Japanese soil, and locked the borders. That policy of total isolation lasted over 200 years.



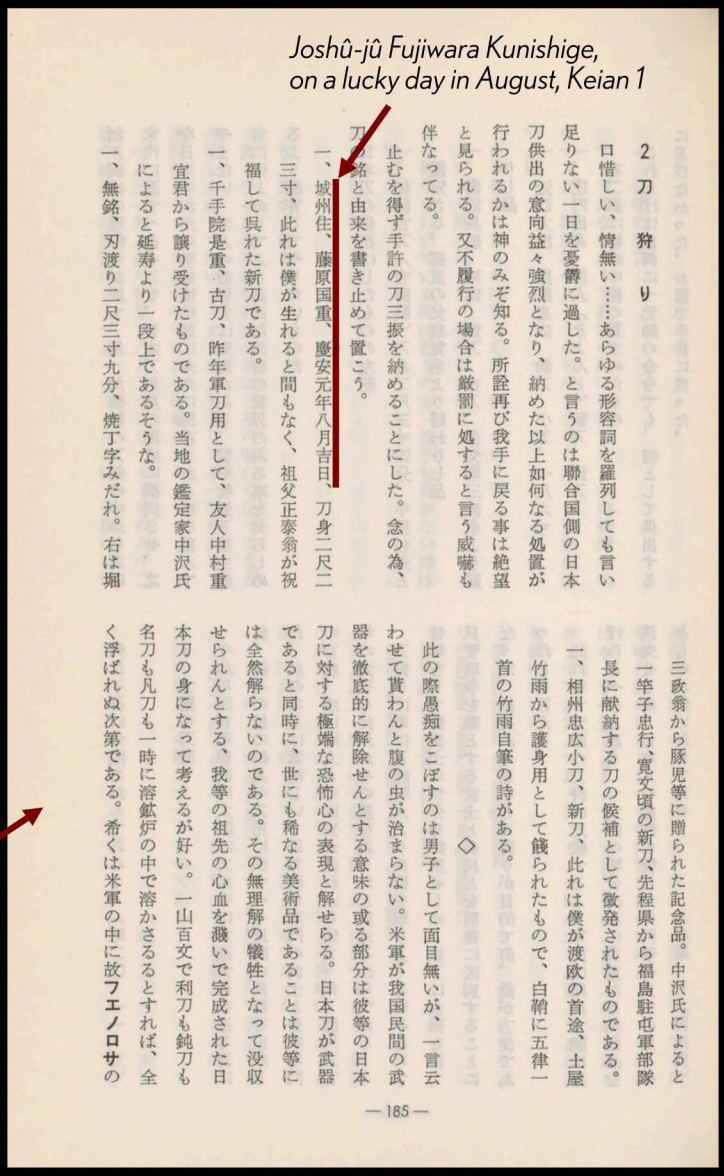

*Token's Essay vol.3 (1975)*




*Toriumi Katsumi*

The actual sword appears in a collection of essays titled '*Token Zuihitsu*' (Token's Essay) by *Dr. Katsumi Toriumi*. According to the text written in November 1945, this sword was confiscated by the U.S. Forces after the war.

*Joshû-jû Fujiwara Kunishige, on a lucky day in August, Keian 1*



2 刀 狩 り

口惜しい、情無い……あらゆる形容詞を羅列しても言い足りない一日を憂鬱に過した。と言うのは聯合国側の日本刀供出の意向益々強烈となり、納めた以上如何なる処置が行われるかは神のみぞ知る。所詮再び我手に戻る事は絶望と見られる。又不履行の場合は厳罰に処すると言う威嚇も伴なってる。

止むを得ず手許の刀三振を納めることにした。念の為、刀銘と由来を書き止めて置こう。

一、城州住、藤原国重、慶安元年八月吉日、刀身二尺二三寸、此れは僕が生れると間もなく、祖父正泰翁が祝福して呉れた新刀である。

一、千手院是重、古刀、昨年軍刀用として、友人中村重宜君から譲り受けたものである。当地の鑑定家中沢氏によると延寿より一段上であるそうな。

一、無銘、刃渡り二尺三寸九分、焼丁字みだれ。右は堀三政翁から豚児等に贈られた記念品。中沢氏によると一竿子忠行、寛文頃の新刀、先程県から福島駐屯軍部隊長に献納する刀の候補として徴発されたものである。

一、相州忠広小刀、新刀、此れは僕が渡欧の首途、土屋竹雨から護身用として餞られたもので、白鞘に五律一首の竹雨自筆の詩がある。

◇

此の際愚痴をこぼすのは男子として面目無いが、一言云わせて貰わんと腹の虫が治まらない。米軍が我国民間の武器を徹底的に解除せんとする意味の或る部分は彼等の日本刀に対する極端な恐怖心の表現と解せらる。日本刀が武器であると同時に、世にも稀なる美術品であることは彼等には全然解らないのである。その無理解の犠牲となって没収せられんとする、我等の祖先の心血を濺いで完成された日本刀の身になって考えるが好い。一山百文で利刀も鈍刀も名刀も凡刀も一時に溶鉱炉の中で溶かさるるとすれば、全く浮ばれぬ次第である。希くは米軍の中に故フエノロサの



translation

## The Sword Hunt (*Katana-gari*)

I spent the day in a state of profound melancholy – a feeling so bitter and heartless that no list of adjectives could ever suffice. The Allied forces' demand for the surrender of Japanese swords has become increasingly aggressive. Once handed over, only God knows what will become of them. The prospect of them ever returning to my hands seems hopeless. Furthermore, the demand is accompanied by threats of severe punishment for non-compliance.

Reluctantly, I have decided to surrender the three swords in my possession. As a precaution, I shall record their signatures and origins here.

One, *Joshu-ju Fujiwara Kunishige*, dated a lucky day in August, the first year of *Keian* (1648). Blade length: approx. *2-shaku 2~3-sun*. This is a *shintô* that my grandfather, *Masayasu*, gave to me as a gift shortly after I was born.

One, *Senjuin Koreshige*, a *Kotô*. I received this last year from my friend, *Shigenori Nakamura*, to be used as a military sword. According to *Mr. Nakazawa*, a local appraiser, its quality surpasses that of the *Enju* school.

One, *Mumei*, length is *2-shaku 3-sun 9-bu*. The *hamon* is *chôji-midare*. This was a commemorative gift from *Mitsumasa Hori*. According to *Mr. Nakazawa*, it is a *Shintô* by *Ikkanshi Tadayuki* from the *Kanbun* era. It was previously requisitioned by the prefecture as a candidate for a sword to be presented to the commander of the *Fukushima* garrison.

One, *Sôshû Tadahiro kogatana*, a *Shintô*. This was gifted to me by *Takeu Tsuchiya* as a weapon for self-defense just before I left for Europe. The *shirasaya* bears a poem handwritten by *Takeu* himself.




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), October 8th

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Jôshû-jû Fujiwara Kunishige*
*Keian gannen hachigatsu kichijitsu*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu (70.0cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

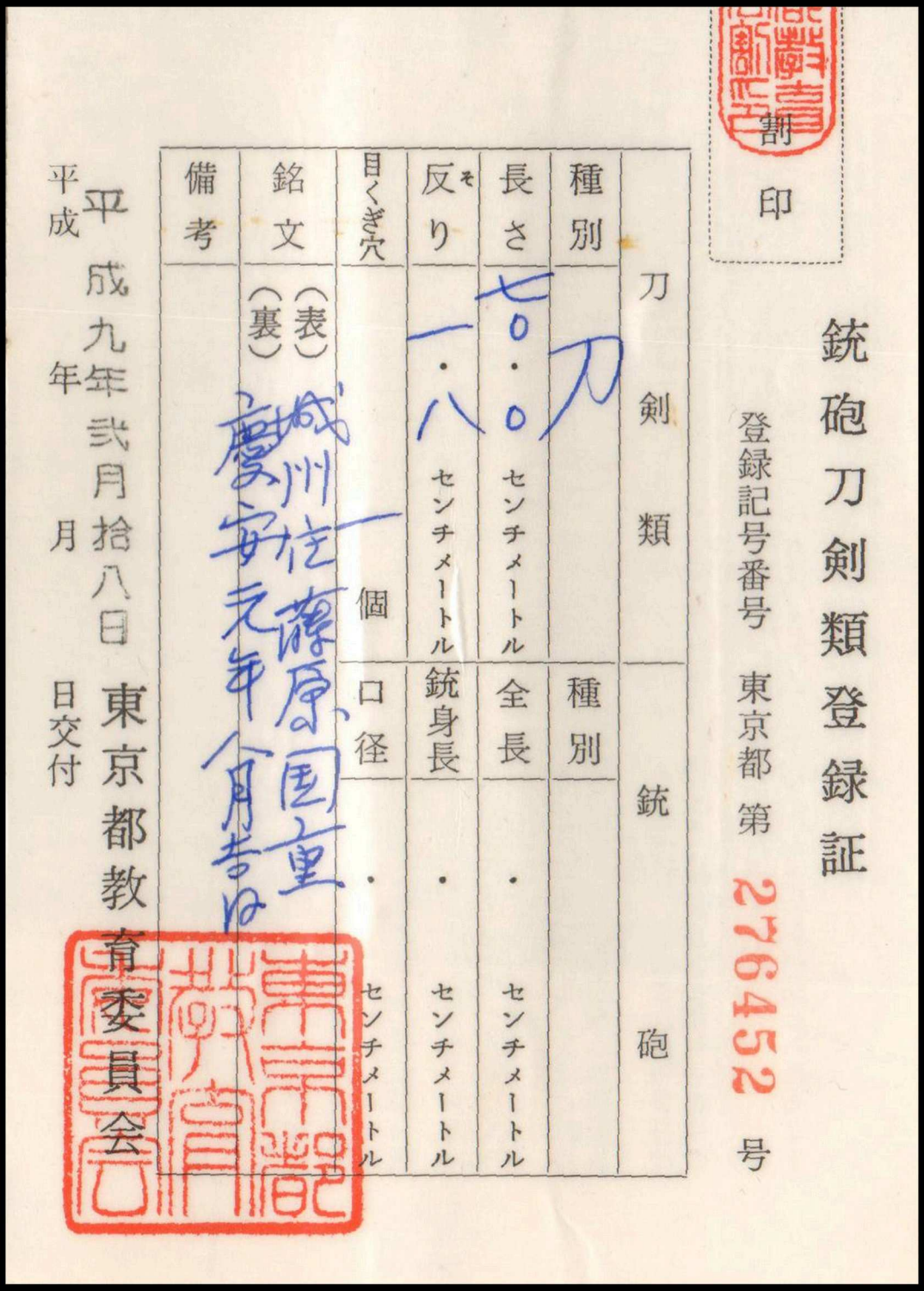



城州住藤原国重
*Jôshû-jû Fujiwara Kunishige*
Fujiwara Kunishige, a resident of Jôshû (Yamashiro) province

慶安元年八月吉日
*Keian gannen hachigatsu kichijitsu*
On a lucky day in the eighth month in the first year of Keian era (August 1648)

長貳尺三寸一分有之
*Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu kore ari*
Blade length 70.0 cm

令和八丙午年如月吉日誌之
*Reiwa hachi hinoe-uma doshi Kisaragi kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the second month in the eighth year of Reiwa period, the Year of the Horse (February 2026)



銃砲刀剣類登録証

登録記号番号 東京都 第 276452 号

割印

| 刀剣類 | | 銃砲 |
|---|---|---|
| 種別 | | 種別 |
| 長さ | 七〇・〇 センチメートル | 全長 ・ センチメートル |
| 反り | 一・八 センチメートル | 銃身長 ・ センチメートル |
| 目くぎ穴 | 一 個 | 口径 ・ センチメートル |
| 銘文 | (表) 城州住藤原国重<br>(裏) 慶安元年八月吉日 | |
| 備考 | | |

平成九年弐月拾八日 東京都教育委員会

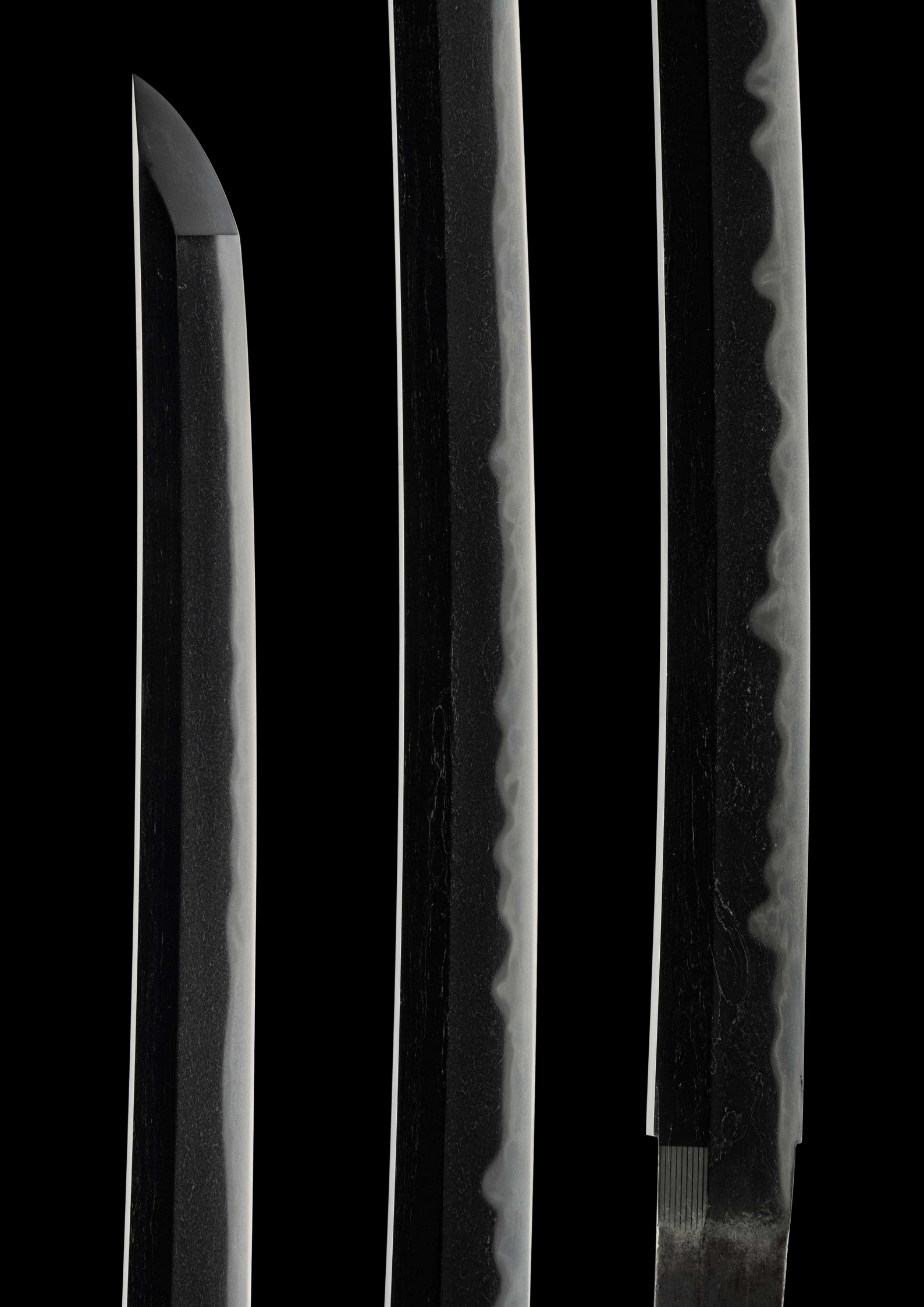
平成 月 日交付

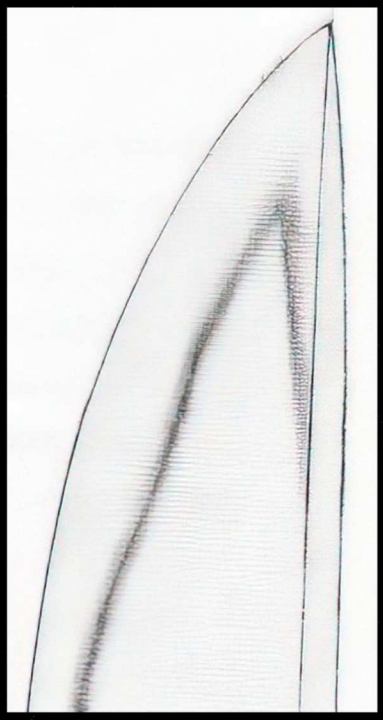
This is the *torokusho* (registration card) for the *Jôshû Kunishige katana*.
Official registration in Tokyo, 1997.

The timeline tells the story:
Confiscated by Allied forces in November 1945, taken to the United States. Fifty-two years later returns to Japan in 1997. Two years later, it was submitted to the NBTHK for appraisal and awarded Tokubetsu Hozon certification.

Now, the sword is about to embark onto its next journey.
Who will proudly carry the torch?



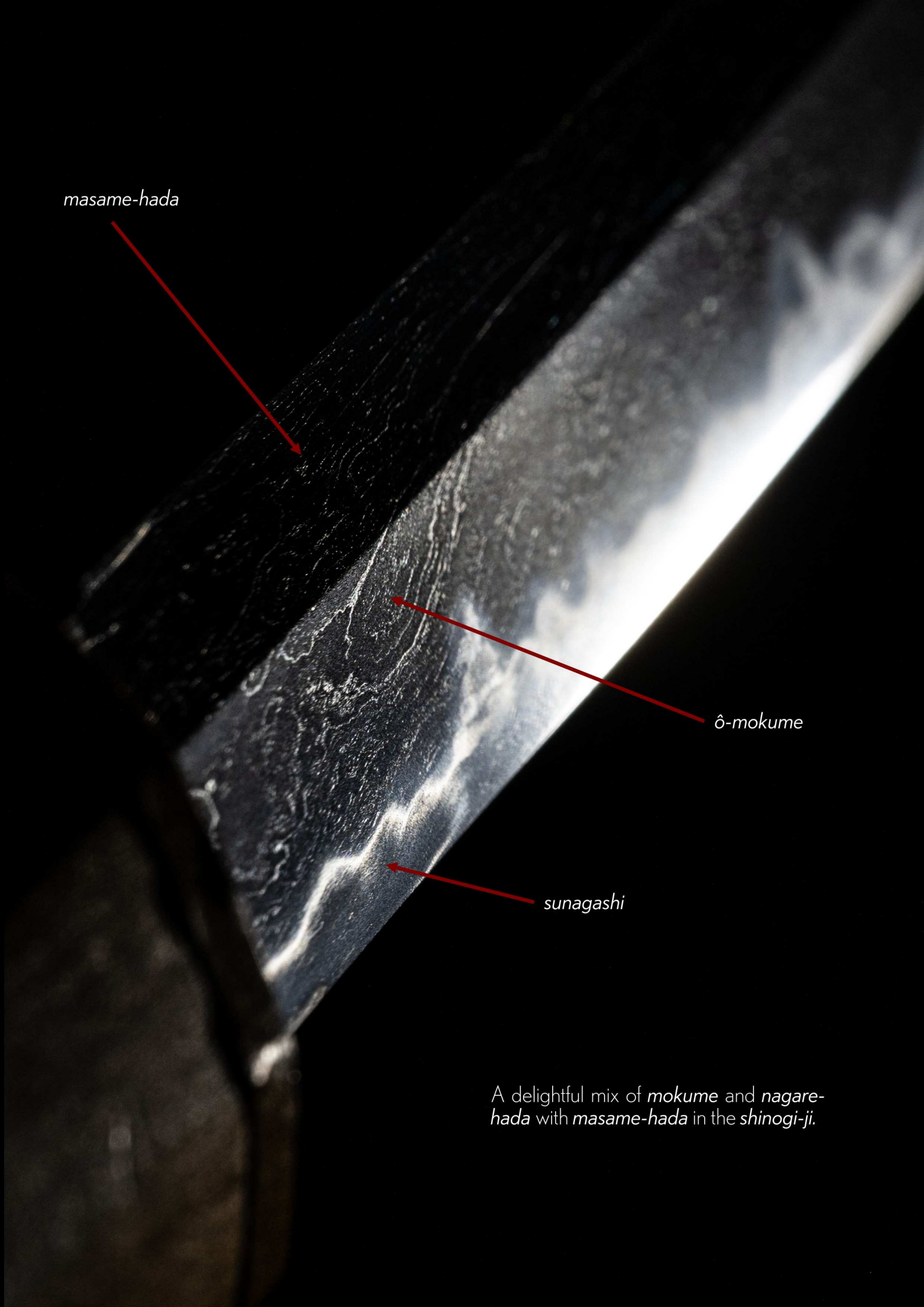




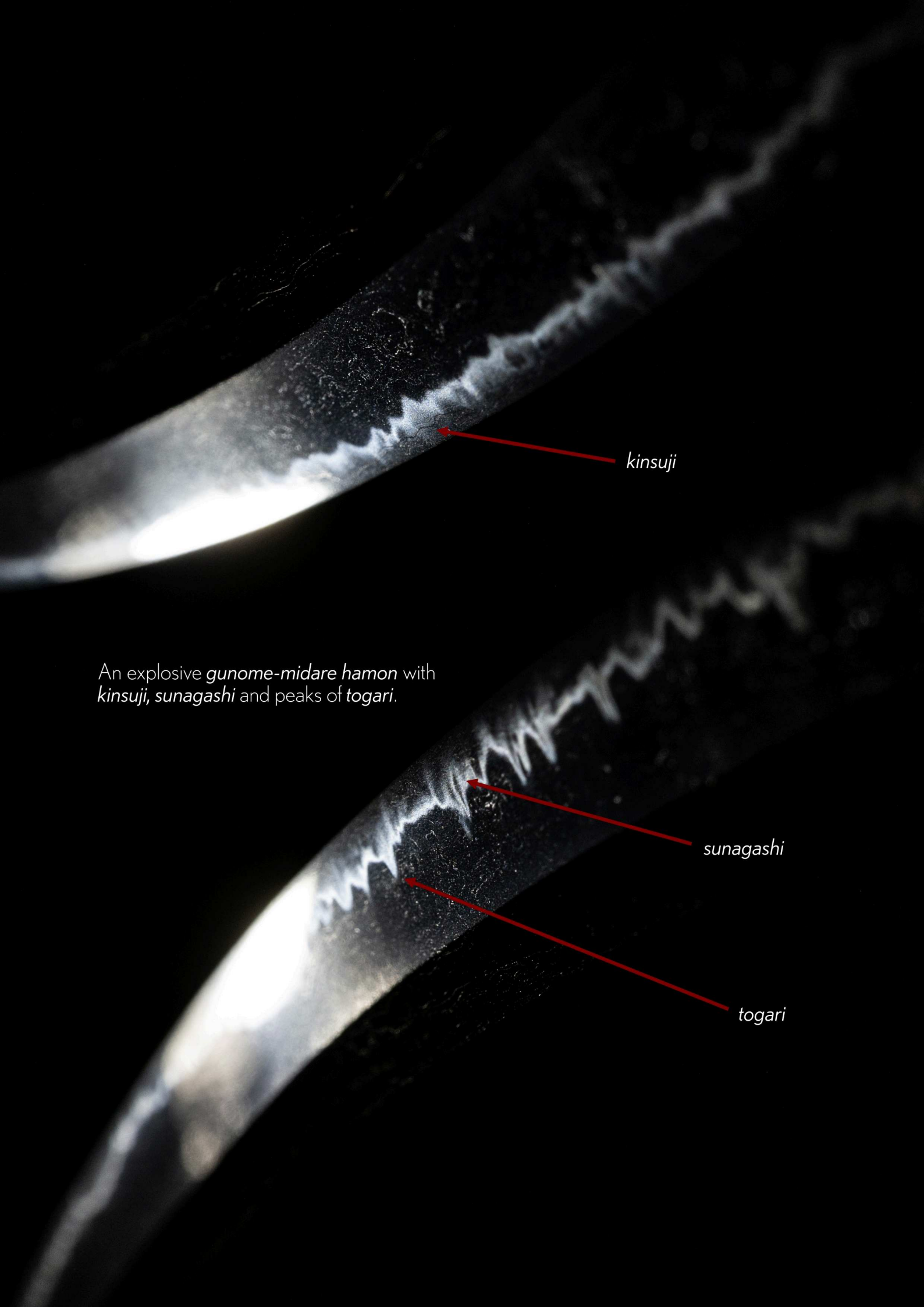
*Mishina-bôshi*
*source: Markus Sesko*

*Mishina bôshi*
Slight ***hakikake*** (brushed), and the ***kaeri*** (return) turns back toward the ***mune*** (spine) rather than running straight.

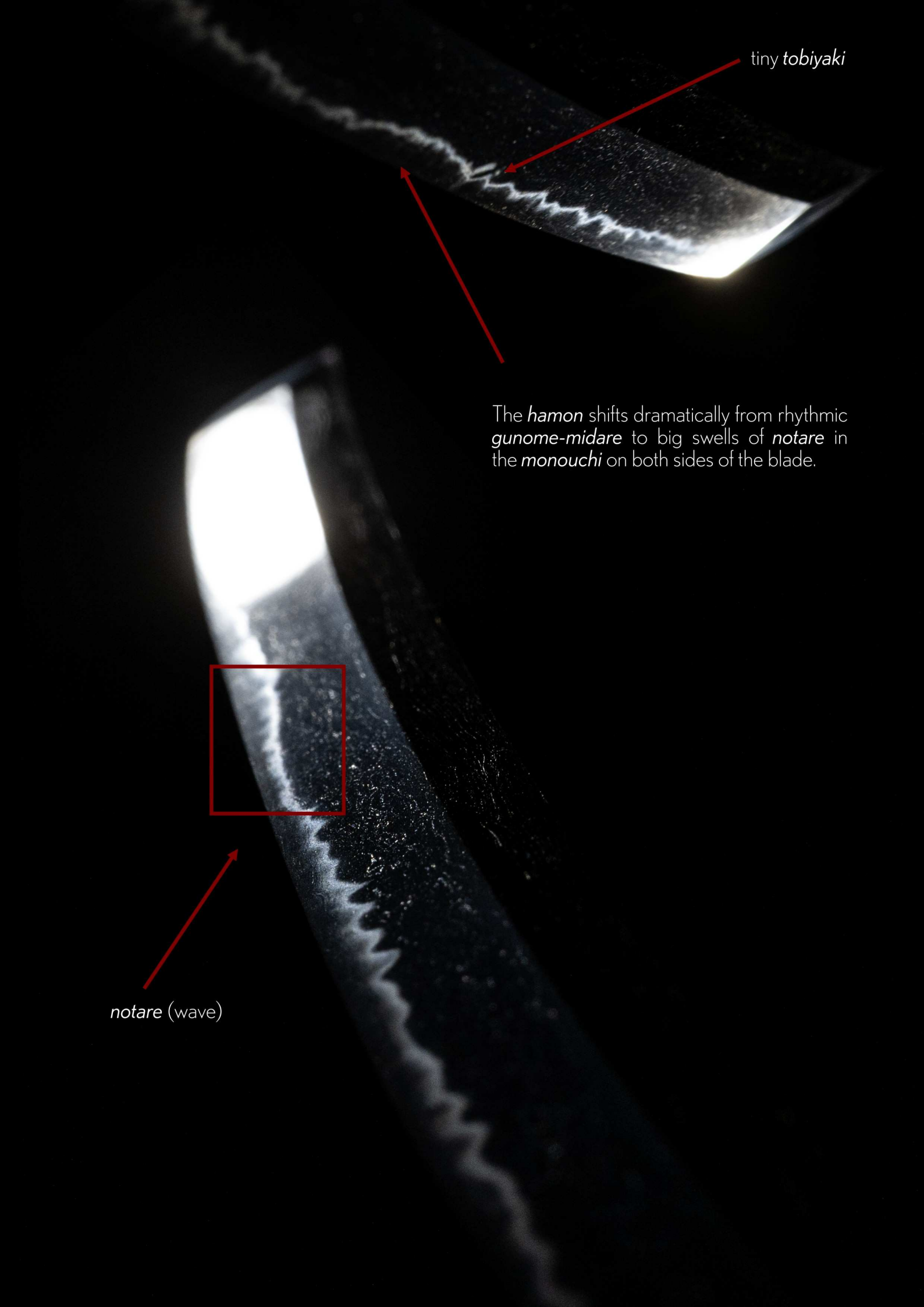





A delightful mix of ***mokume*** and ***nagare-hada*** with ***masame-hada*** in the ***shinogi-ji.***



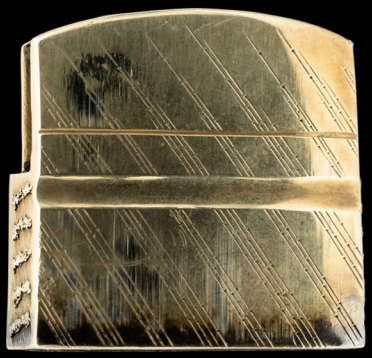

An explosive ***gunome-midare hamon*** with ***kinsuji, sunagashi*** and peaks of ***togari***.


tiny *tobiyaki*
The *hamon* shifts dramatically from rhythmic *gunome-midare* to big swells of *notare* in the *monouchi* on both sides of the blade.
*notare* (wave)




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

*bamboo strips*



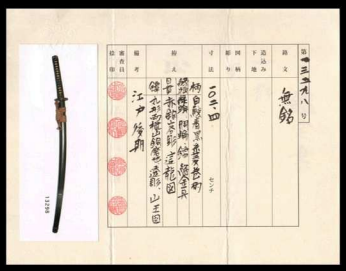
gold *habaki* with
copper ground


城州住国重
城 (Jô)
州 (shû)
住 (jû)
国 (Kuni)
重 (shige)

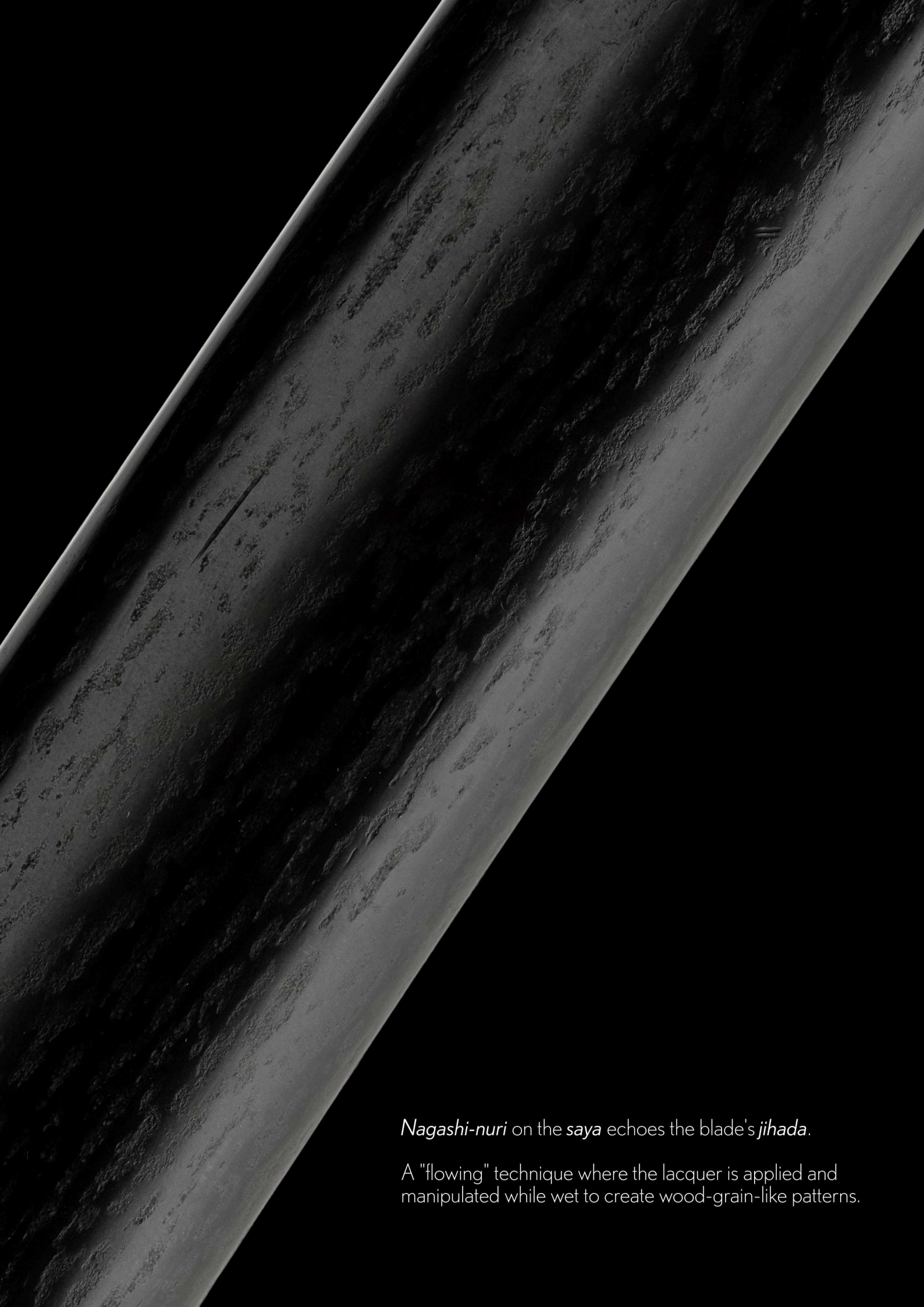
*Kuro-nagashi-nuri saya*
*handachi-fû-koshirae*
*(黒流塗鞘半太刀風拵)*

*Handachi-style koshirae lacquered*
*in black with flowing texture*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*



*Nagashi-nuri* on the *saya* echoes the blade's *jihada*.

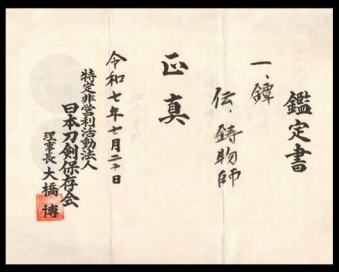
A "flowing" technique where the lacquer is applied and manipulated while wet to create wood-grain-like patterns.

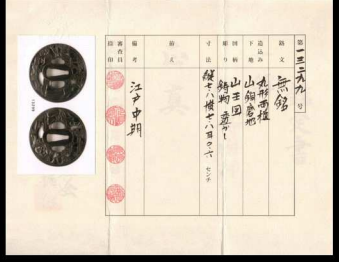



This fascinating polished *yamagane* copper *tsuba* depicts a *Sannô* figure - a monkey regarded as a divine messenger. But rather than veneration, we see subjugation.

The male figure wears *Heian*-period attire, pointing to a legend from the *Konjaku Monogatari-shû*, a late Heian collection of tales. The story: a monstrous monkey demanded the sacrifice of young girls until a hunter cornered and killed it. Then the demands stopped.

The tsuba captures humanity's resolve to punish an evil deity. The rugged, austere finish - no gilding, no decorative flourishes - lets the triumph speak for itself.



Monkey-hunting scenes as portrayed in ***ukiyo-e*** prints









(reverse)



The ***tsuka*** is late Edo period work - white ***samekawa*** with black silk in classic ***hishi-maki*** style.



The black ***shakudô menuki*** depict dragons - a motif prized since ancient times for its sacred power and associations with victory and prosperity.





*kojiri*



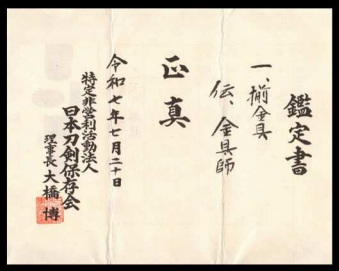
*fuchi*



*kashira*

*Handachi soroi-kanagu*
with arabesque pattern

A terrific matching set of ***handachi*** fittings attributed to ***Kanagu-shi***, an artisan who catered to the ***samurai*** class in the Edo period.



鑑定書

一、拵金具

伝、金具師

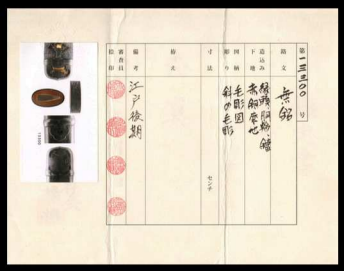
正真

令和七年七月二十日

特定非営利活動法人

日本刀剣保存会

理事長 大橋 博





*dôrin*



*Koshirae bag* with gold chrysanthemums

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA468

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

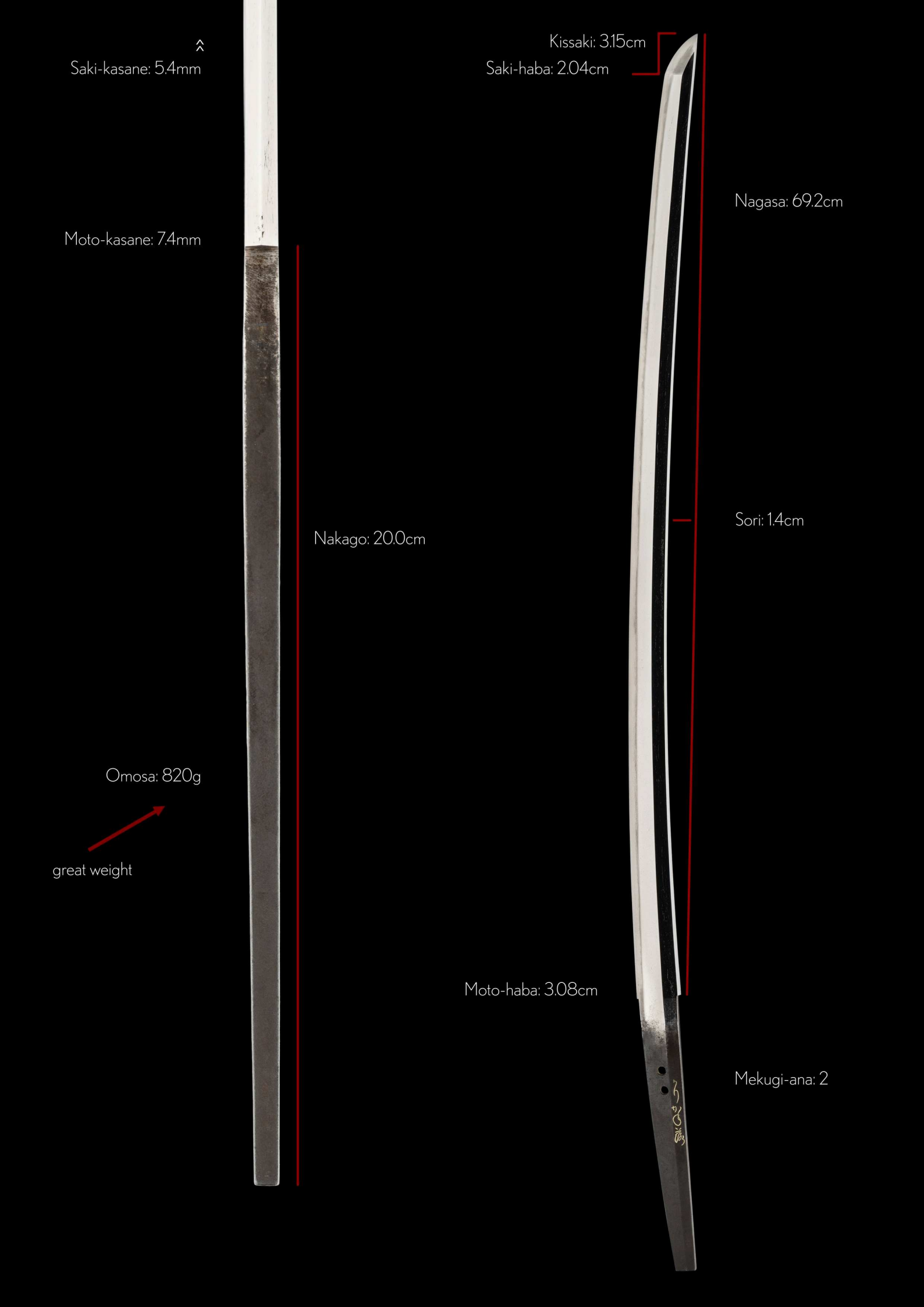
# A MORIHIRO 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

## UNSIGNED, KOTÔ LATE NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (1390~1394)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Chiyôzuru Morihiro*** (千代鶴守弘) |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 69.2cm **Sori:** 1.4cm **Moto-haba:** 3.08cm **Weight:** 820g |
| **Jihada:** | *Beautifully forged itame-hada and mokume-hada, dark jigane with ample chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Bright ko-gunome based on suguha, kinsuji, kaen-bôshi, sunagashi, ashi & nijuba* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificates #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Tanzan-sensei** (*Tanobe Michihiro*) |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# $25,000

This powerful and extra sharp katana has been attributed to ***Chiyozuru Morihiro***, a talented swordsmith who worked in *Echizen* during the late *Nambokuchô* period and into the *Oei* era of the *Muromachi* period. The blade displays a fine *koshi-zori* curvature and rich, dark *jigane* with abundant *chikei* and flows with *itame* and *mokume-hada*. Its bright *hamon* is based on *suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, abundant *ashi*, *sunagashi*, *kinsuji*, and areas of *nijuba*. *Kinzogan-mei* on the *nakago* confirms this blade severed a human body through the armpit region during a *tameshigiri* cutting test. *Kotô* period swords with cutting tests are exceptionally rare to collect. The handsome *koshirae* features a striped *senden-nuri saya* and a *tsuba* depicting the heroic *Minamoto Yorimasa*, plus splendid *fuchi-kashira* of the open sea - both crafted by *Munetoshi* of the famed *Nara* school.


Saki-kasane: 5.4mm
Moto-kasane: 7.4mm
Nakago: 20.0cm
Omosa: 820g
great weight
Kissaki: 3.15cm
Saki-haba: 2.04cm
Nagasa: 69.2cm
Sori: 1.4cm
Moto-haba: 3.08cm
Mekugi-ana: 2

The *Chiyozuru* school began with *Rai Kuniyasu* (来国安) of *Yamashiro* (*Kyôto*), a disciple of the renowned *Rai Kunitoshi* (来国俊). Around 1337, Kuniyasu travelled to *Echizen* searching for the ideal spring water to forge his swords. He found it in *Takefu* and established his forge there permanently. Upon settling in *Echizen*, *Kuniyasu* adopted the name *Chiyozuru* (lit. a 'thousand cranes') founding what became known as *Echizen Rai* (越前来).

This weighty, powerful and extra sharp katana has been attributed to *Chiyozuru Morihiro* (千代鶴守弘), a talented swordsmith who worked in *Echizen* during the late *Nanbokuchô* period and into the *Ôei* era (1394~1428) of the early Muromachi period. Morihiro is regarded as either the son or a disciple of *Rai Kuniyasu.* The name *Morihiro* was carried by several generations of smiths that contributed to sword development in *Echizen* during the *Muromachi* era.

The fine *koshi-zori* curvature dates this katana to the very late *Nanbokuchô* period (~1390). The NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate confirms this - as the NBTHK only awards *mumei* (unsigned) swords this level of certification when they can be dated prior to the Muromachi period.

The rich and dark *jihada* shows plenty of *chikei* and flows with *itame-hada* and *mokume*. The bright *hamon* is based on *suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, plenty of saw-tooth *ashi* (legs), *sunagashi*, *kinsuji*, areas of *nijuba* and a fabulous *kaen-bôshi* that sits confidently like a lit candle.

What gives this sword extra presence is the *hiragana* and *kanji kinzôgan* (gold inlay inscription) on the *nakago* that reads *karigane-otoshi* - recording that this katana severed a human body in one stroke through the armpit region during *tameshigiri* (test cutting). It is a rare opportunity to acquire a *kotô* period sword that has undergone a cutting test. The test itself was likely performed during the *shintô* period, circa mid-1600s.

The handsome *koshirae* features a black lacquered *saya* with a striped *senden-nuri* and a wonderful *tsuba* depicting the heroic *Minamoto Yoritomo* and a splendid *fuchi-kashira* of the open sea that were both crafted by *Munetoshi* of the highly respected *Nara* school. There is tremendous energy to be found in this katana, well-balanced in both sword and story.





Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
UJKA468 - A Morihiro ' Tameshigiri' Katana

uniquejapan.com/ujka468-video






Location: *Echizen province*
School name: *Chiyozuru*
Swordsmith: *Morihiro*

*ô-suriage-nakago* (altered tang)
*kiri-yasurime* (horizontal file marks)

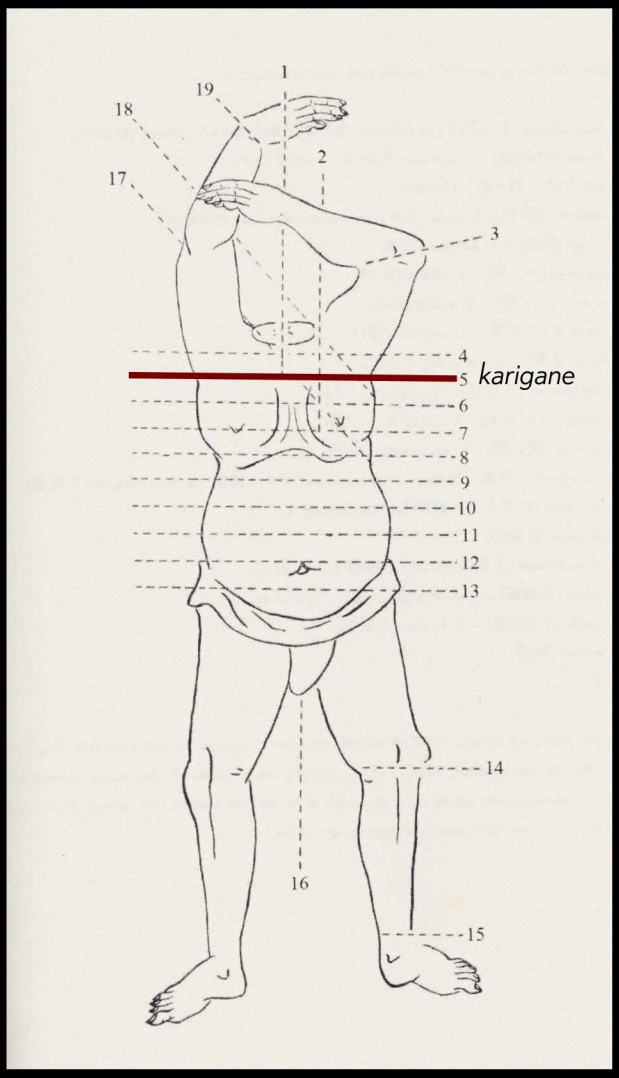
At the time of *ô-suriage*, the *nakago-jiri* was finished in a horizontal *kiri-jiri* form. This style is characteristic of blades shortened during the *Keichô* era (1596~1615), the period following the death of *Toyotomi Hideyoshi* when *Tokugawa Ieyasu* achieved the unification of the realm.

The shortening was tastefully executed, clean, well-balanced shape.

As seen in gold inlay, this katana has severed a human body in one stroke, attesting to the sharpness of the blade.

The ***tameshigiri*** term ***karigane*** refers to a cut through the armpit region - literally "the area where armpit hair grows."

While we don't know when the test was performed, it would likely have been during the ***shintô*** period, circa mid-1600s.






Cutting test on a dead prisoner's body

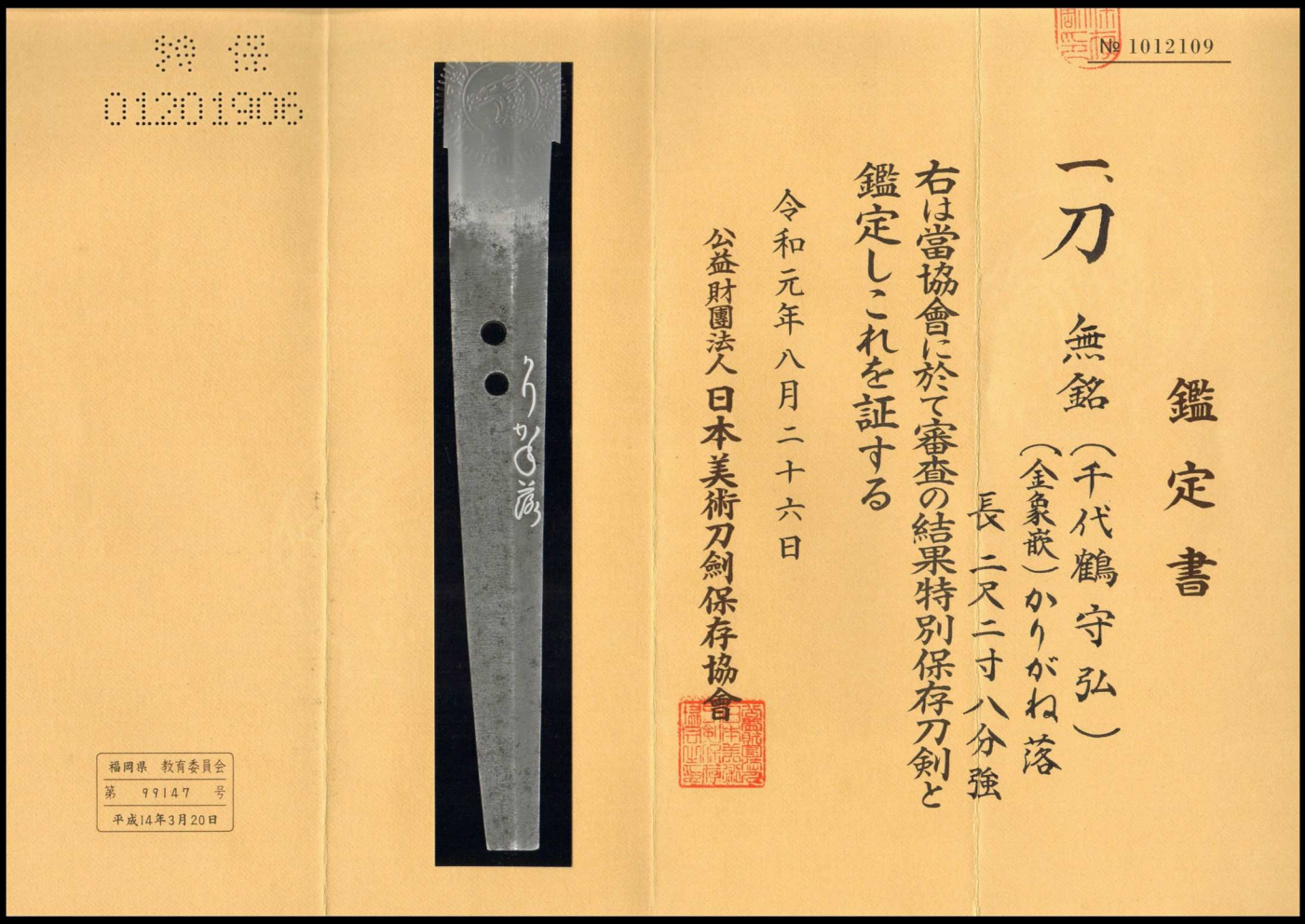


か (Ka)
り (ri)
が (ga)
ね (ne)
落 (otoshi)

(*ura*, reverse)



*Kotô* period swords, especially katana, with ***tameshigiri*** cutting tests are exceptionally rare. The cursive gold-inlay of ***hiragana*** and ***kanji*** characters has been beautifully inscribed.




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

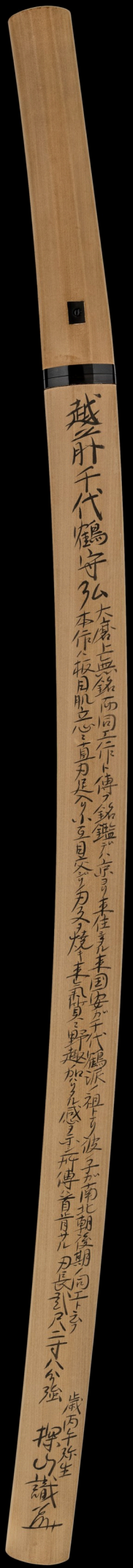
Issued in the 1st year of Reiwa (2019), August 26th

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Chiyozuru Morihiro*
*(Kinzôgan) karigane-otoshi*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 8-bu kyô (69.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




越前千代鶴守弘
*Echizen Chiyozuru Morihiro*
Chiyozuru Morihiro from Echizen Province

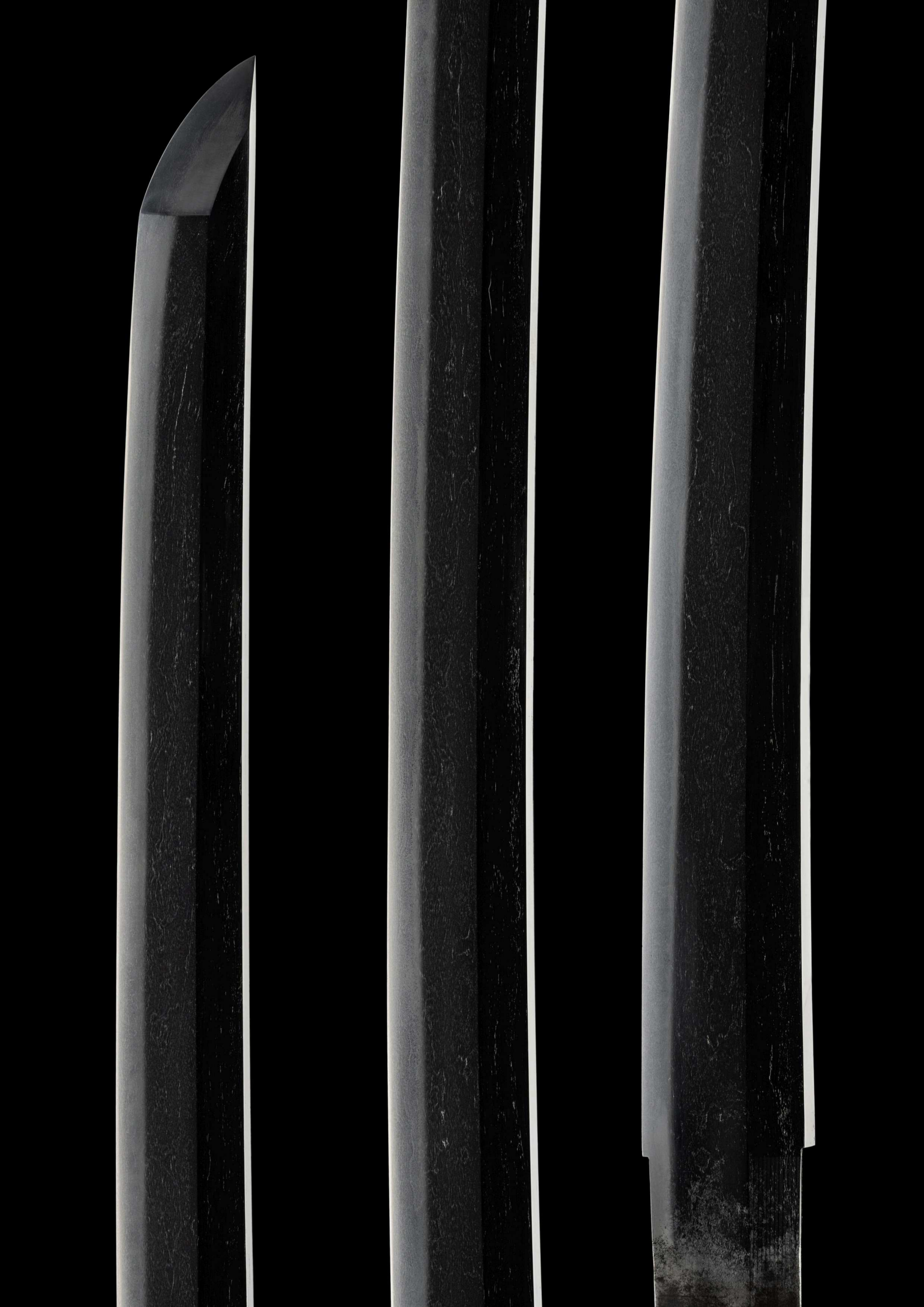
大磨上無銘而同工ノ作ト傳フ銘鑑デハ京ヨリ来住シタル来国安ガ千代鶴派ノ祖トナリ彼ノ子ガ南北朝後期ノ同工ト云フ本作ハ板目肌立心ニ直刃足入リ小互目交ジリノ刃文ヲ焼キ来気質ニ野趣ノ加ハリタル感ヲ示シ所傳ハ首肯サル

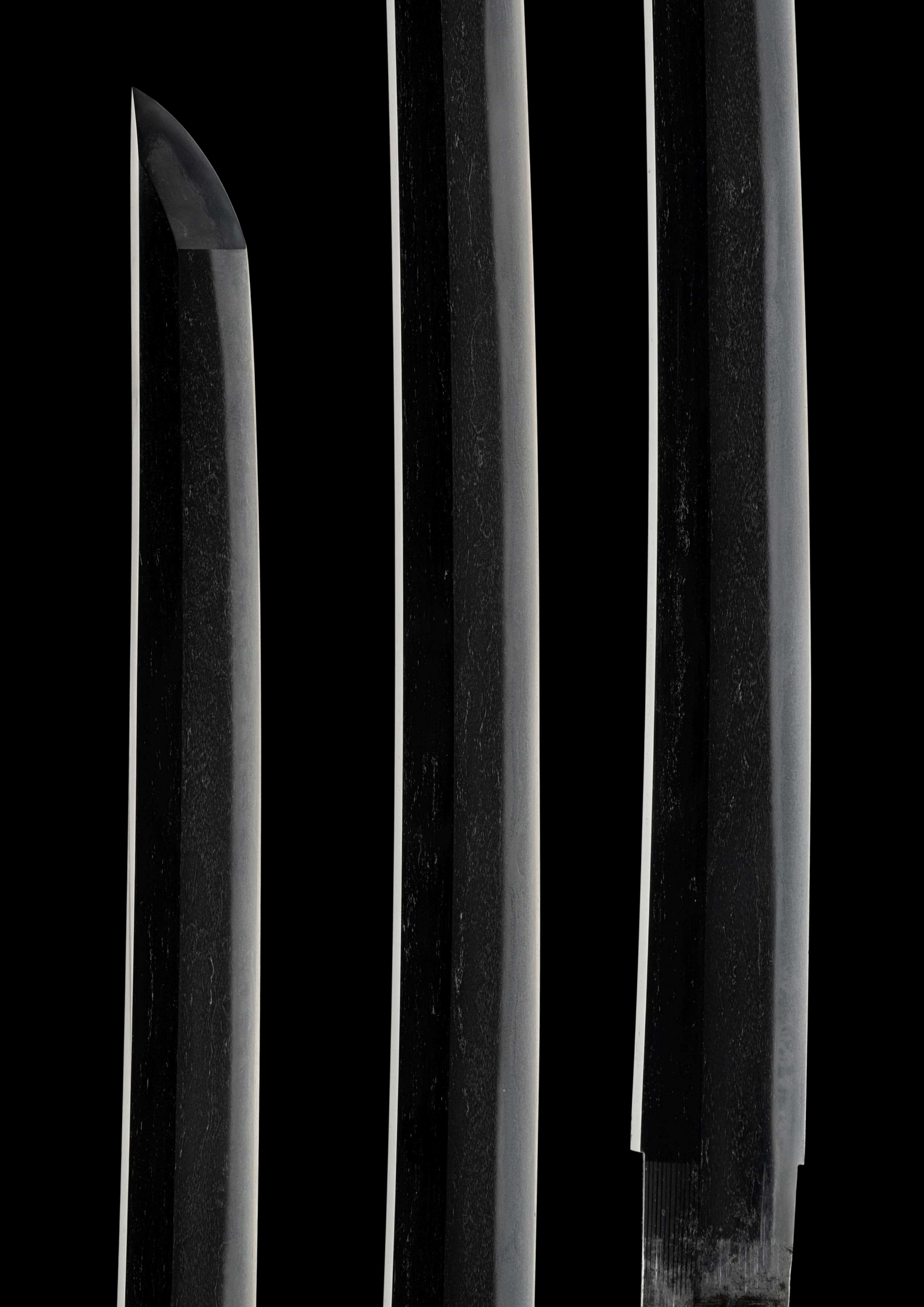
*Ô-suriage mumei ni shite dôkô no saku to tsutau meikan dewa Kyô yori raijû shitaru Rai Kuniyasu ga Chiyozuru-ha no so to nari kare no ko ga Nanbokuchô kôki no dôkô to iu honsaku wa itame-hada tachi-gokoro ni suguha ashi hairi ko-gunome majiri no hamon o yaki Rai kishitsu ni yashu no kuwawari taru kan o shimeshi shoden wa shukô saru.*

[The blade is] *ô-suriage mumei*, attributed to the swordsmith. According to historical records, the *Chiyozuru* school was founded by *Rai Kuniyasu*, who moved from *Kyoto*; *Morihiro* is said to be his son, active during the late *Nanbokuchô* period. The craftsmanship of this piece features a prominent *itame-hada* with a slightly standing quality. The *hamon* is *suguha* infused with *ashi* and mixed with *ko-gunome*. It exhibits the refined essence of the *Rai* school blended with a certain rustic vigor, making the attribution highly convincing.

刃長弐尺二寸八分強
*Nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 8-bu kyô*
Blade length ~ 69.2 cm

歳丙午弥生探山識（花押）
*Toshi hinoe-uma yayoi Tanzan shirusu + kaô*
Written by Tanzan [Tanobe Michihiro] in the third month in the Year of the Horse of this era (March 2026) + monogram







Thick ***nie*** that forms ***kaen*** (candle flame) ***bôshi.***

*kaen bôshi*


The *jihada* comprises of *mokume* (burl grain) mixed with *itame-hada*, plank grain.
textbook example of *kinsuji*


A dark, rather mysterious *jigane* (steel) that reflects the *Hokurikudô* region where this sword was made in *Echizen.*
*ashi*
The *hamon* is based on *suguha* with a tight *ko-midare* and brilliant saw-tooth *ashi* that extend to the cutting edge.



A bright hamon ripples along the blade like sunlight on the sea.

Rich *chikei* flows handsomely through the curved sword.



This katana displays ***nijûbu-ba*** on both sides of the sword - a unique trait where the hamon splits and runs somewhat parallel.


Claim your piece of samurai history.



*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



silver ***habaki*** with
rainfall carvings

*Kuro-ro sendan-nuri saya uchigatana-koshirae*
*(黒呂千段塗鞘打刀拵)*

*Uchigatana-koshirae lacquered in glossy black with stripes*

Crafted during the Modern era



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*



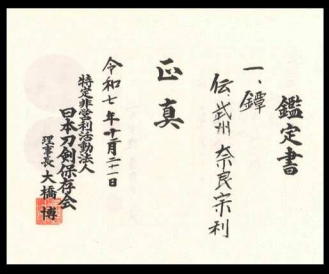
The *saya* is beautifully finished in *sendan-nuri*, a striped lacquer pattern.




This striking *tsuba* has been attributed to *Munetoshi*, fifth-generation master of the *Nara* school, working in the mid-Edo period. The figure on horseback playing a flute is *Minamoto Yorimasa* - a *samurai* whose failed rebellion changed the course of Japanese history.

In the late *Heian* period, resentment toward the powerful *Taira* clan was building within the imperial court. *Yorimasa* joined forces with Prince *Mochihito* to challenge their dominance, but their uprising was crushed. Yorimasa's defiance didn't die with him - it inspired *Minamoto Yoritomo* to take up the cause, sparking the *Genpei War* (1180-1185). The *Taira* fell, the *Kamakura* shogunate rose, and the *samurai* age truly began.

Even defeat can shape destiny.


鑑定書

一、鐔

伝 武州 奈良宗利

正真

令和七年十月二十一日

特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋 博


無銘

江戸中期 奈良派 五代

(reverse)







*Yorimasa and Hayata*



*Nue monster*

The figure on the reverse, carrying a ***tachi***, is thought to represent *Ino Hayata* (猪早太), who served *Yorimasa*. The two are famous for slaying the *Nue* (鵺), a legendary monster that terrorized the imperial court.

The motif captures something essential - two warriors who faced down a demon together, then dared to challenge an empire. Loyalty. Courage against impossible odds. The resolve to stand for what's right, even when defeat is certain.



The white ***samekawa*** (ray skin) beneath the wrap gives the ***tsuka*** a formal, refined presence. The ***tsuka-ito*** appears to be standard black - until you look closer. The cord is finer than usual, a subtle detail that rewards careful observation.



The ***menuki*** show a figure on a raft, navigating rough waves, and harnessing its power. The wrap deliberately obscures the design - a glimpse of hidden strength.





(Na) 奈

(ra) 良

(Mune) 宗

(toshi) 利



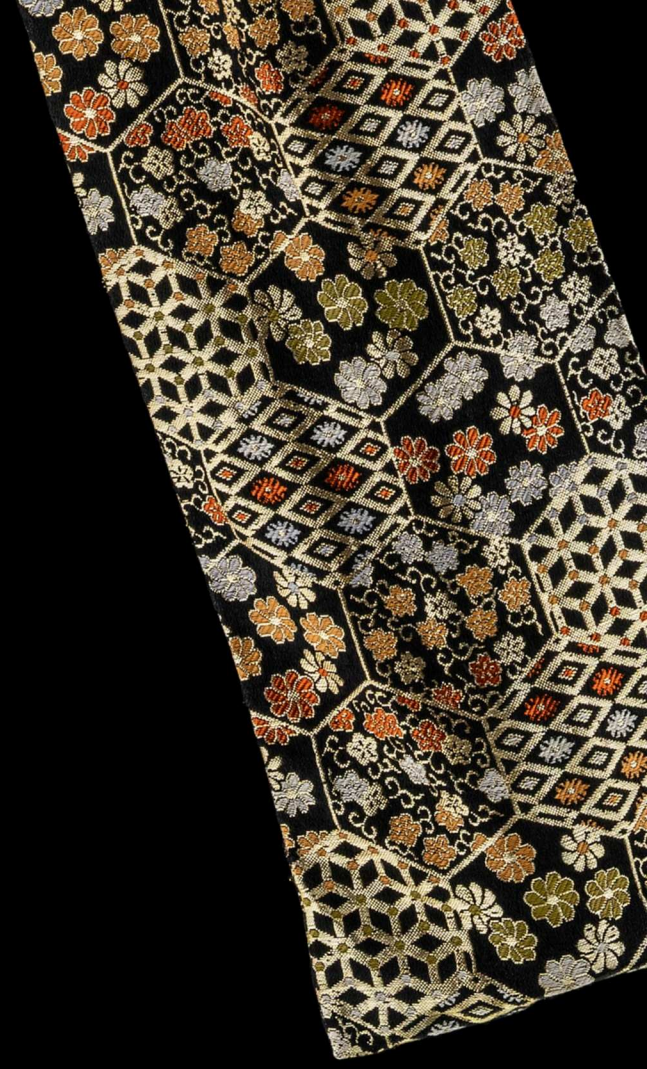


*Fuchi-kashira*
depicting a home by the seashore

This marvellously detailed *fuchi-kashira* is also by *Munetoshi* of the *Nara* school - a signed piece that brings further harmony to the ***koshirae***. The artwork shows a residence beyond pine trees along the seashore - as if we are viewing the scene from a distance.


*mei* (signature)
*come sail away...*





*koshirae bag* with iconic Japanese patterns

Every sword purchase includes a complimentary maintenance kit in a traditional Japanese bag: a large 40cm x 40cm cloth, ***mekugi-nuki***, and ***Fujishiro*** sword oil - trusted by the NBTHK.

You'll also receive a beautifully printed and bound copy of the sword's full catalogue description along with a sword stand. All sword shipments are securely packed and professionally managed from start to finish.

Every detail matters.





safe, extra large cloth for adding oil to the blade

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uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA505

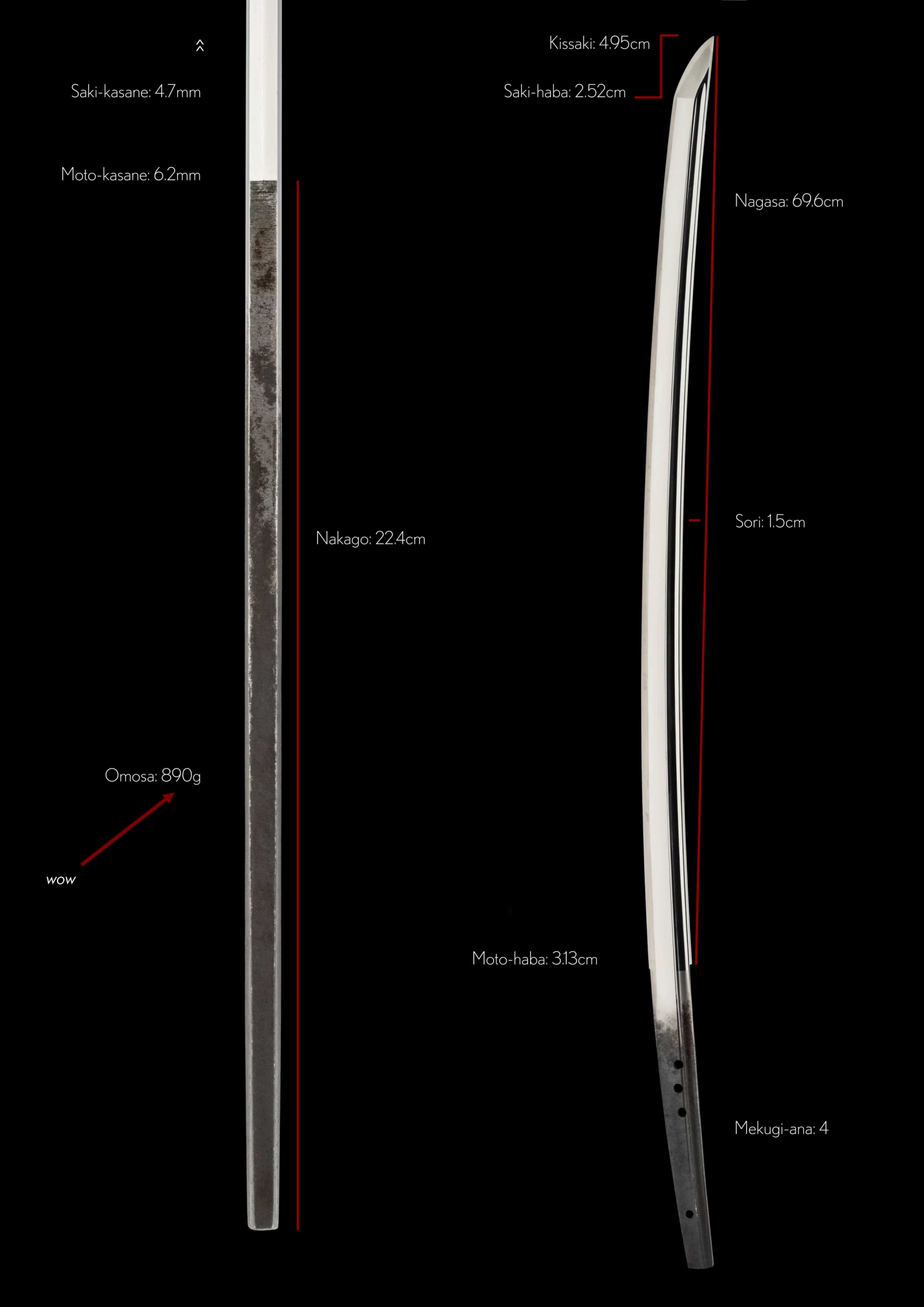
# A CHÛ-AOE KATANA

## UNSIGNED, NANBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (ENBUN-JÔJI ERAS: 1356~1368)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Aoe school*** (青江) |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 69.9cm (*ô-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.4cm **Moto-haba:** 3.13cm **Weight:** 890g (!) |
| **Jihada:** | *Itame mixed well with mokume, chirimen-hada, fine ji-nie, chikei, brilliant utsuri* |
| **Hamon:** | *Vibrant chû-suguha, ko-gunome, ko-notare, ashi, yô, saka-ashi, kinsuji, sunagashi* |
| **Certificate:** | **5th NBTHK Tokubetsu Jûyô Tôken** *(Especially Important Sword, awarded in 1976)* |
| **Provenance:** | November 2025 NBTHK Kantei session (study sword) |
| **Published:** | Documented in the December 2025 *Token Bijutsu* (No. 827) |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

This is a museum-quality ***Chû-Aoe katana*** awarded *Tokubetsu Jûyô* in December 1976 at only the 5th TJ session. It belongs to an elite group of just ten *ô-suriage mumei* Aoe blades that achieved TJ on merit alone, without needing provenance to make the case. In November 2025, the NBTHK selected it as a study sword for their monthly *kantei* session and nearly all participants correctly identified it as Aoe. The blade is remarkably healthy with wide *mihaba*, magnificent *ô-kissaki*, refined *chirimen-hada* with iconic *sumihada* spots, and precise *suguha hamon* with *saka-gunome*. Every signature Aoe characteristic present in textbook-perfect execution. The 1963 *torokusho* examiner couldn't resist noting 'Aoe' on the official paperwork - breaking protocol because the attribution was so obvious. If you want the definitive 14th-century *Nambokuchô Aoe* katana, this is it.


Saki-kasane: 4.7mm
Moto-kasane: 6.2mm
Omosa: 890g
wow
Nakago: 22.4cm
Kissaki: 4.95cm
Saki-haba: 2.52cm
Nagasa: 69.6cm
Sori: 1.5cm
Moto-haba: 3.13cm
Mekugi-ana: 4

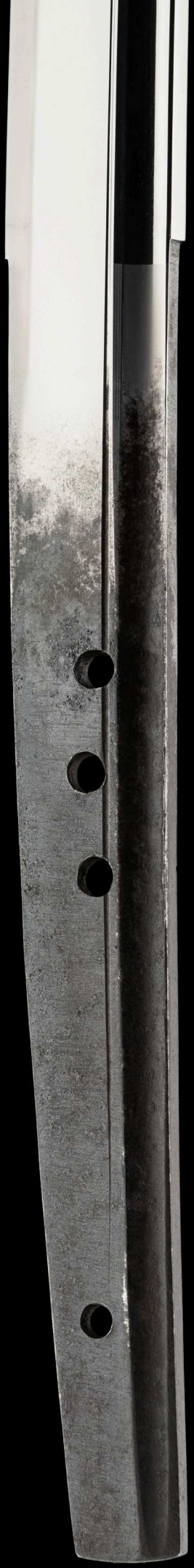
The *Aoe* (青江) , meaning "Blue River," rose to prominence in *Bitchû* Province during the late *Heian* period and flourished through the *Nanbokuchô* era. Located near the *Takahashi River* with access to exceptional iron ore, the region became a major sword production center alongside neighbouring *Bizen*. The *Aoe* smiths were both warriors and craftsmen, serving local clans like the *Uekami* - a dual identity that meant they understood intimately what samurai needed in combat.

As Japan's political landscape shifted during the *Nanbokuchô* period, *Aoe* craftsmanship evolved from elegant curves into robust, powerful forms suited for civil war. The mid-14th century *Enbun* and *Jôji* eras (1356-1368) marked their golden age. But the school's fortunes were tied to the Southern Court. When their patrons fell and the courts unified at century's end, the *Aoe* school vanished from production. Their legacy endured - the extraordinary quality achieved during this brief, intense period made *Aoe* blades among the most prized swords in Japanese history.

This blade represents *Chû-Aoe* at its absolute peak - textbook execution in every detail. Even the 1963 *torokusho* examiner couldn't help himself, breaking protocol to note '*Aoe*' on official paperwork. That instinct was validated in July 1976 when the sword passed *Jûyô Tôken* and was further elevated to *Tokubetsu Jûyô* just five months later in December that same year at only the 5th TJ session. Then in November 2025, the NBTHK selected this blade for their monthly *kantei* session, where only five swords are chosen as exemplary teaching tools. The result? Nearly all participants correctly identified it as *Aoe*. When everyone from beginners to veterans gets it right, you're looking at something extraordinary.

Only 10 *ô-suriage mumei* long swords attributed to *Aoe* have achieved TJ. This is one of them. It passed on merit alone - structure, quality, health - without needing provenance to make its case. The blade is remarkably healthy with a wide *mihaba* and a magnificent *ô-kissaki*. The *jigane* combines refined *ko-itame* and *mokume* with fine *ji-nie*. *Sumihada* spots appear in glorious fashion - the most iconic *Aoe* characteristic. The hamon flows in graceful *suguha* with slanting *gunome*, and beautiful *chôji-ashi* runs the length of the edge. Every box checked. Museum-quality preservation of a golden-age masterwork. If you want the definitive 14th-century *Nanbokuchô Aoe* katana, this is it.





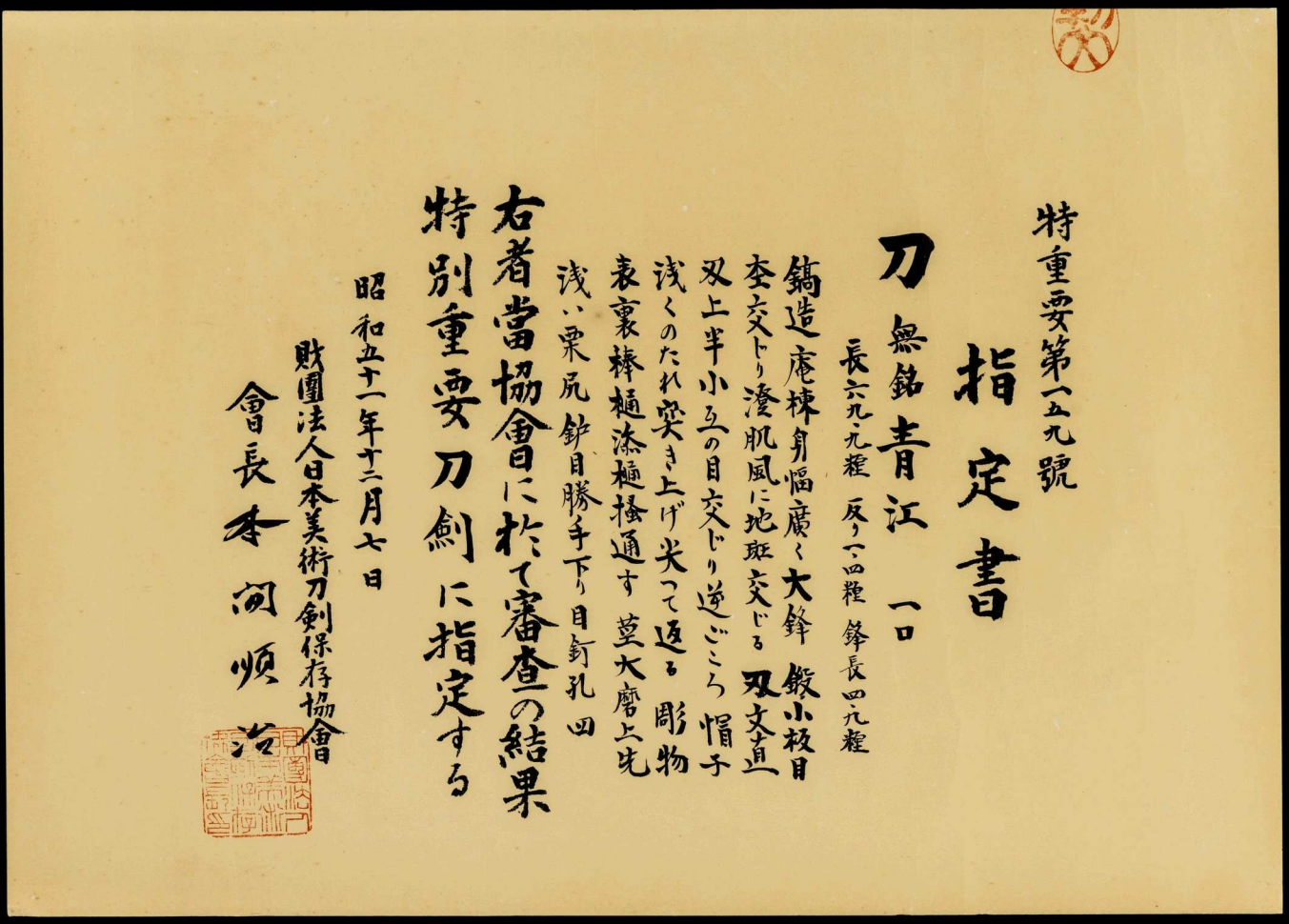
Location: *Bitchû province*
School name: *Aoe*

*ô-suriage nakago* (altered tang)
*katte-sagari-yasurime* (slanting file marks)




This blade features masterful carving of both a wide ***bo-hi*** and slender ***soe-bi***. The deep ***bo-hi*** runs the entire length of the blade, carved with highly practical intent - reducing weight while maintaining structural integrity for combat. In contrast, the ***soe-bi***, or accompanying groove, is a narrow line running parallel to the main groove, serving a more decorative purpose. Together, these elements represent perfect harmony between the functional demands of a weapon and the refined aesthetic sensibilities of the ***Aoe school***.

(***ura***, reverse)



特重要第一五九號

指定書

刀 無銘 青江 一口

長六九・九糎 反り一・四糎 鋒長四・九糎

鎬造庵棟身幅廣く大鋒 鍛小板目
杢交じり澄肌風に地斑交じる 刃文直
刃上半小互の目交じり逆ごころ 帽子
浅くのたれ突き上げ尖って返る 彫物
表裏棒樋添樋掻通す 莖大磨上先
浅い栗尻 鉾目勝手下り目釘孔四

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
特別重要刀劍に指定する

昭和五十一年十二月七日

財團法人日本美術刀劍保存協會
會長 本間順治

Tokubetsu-Jûyô Certificate No. 159
Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation
Katana, mumei: Aoe (青江)

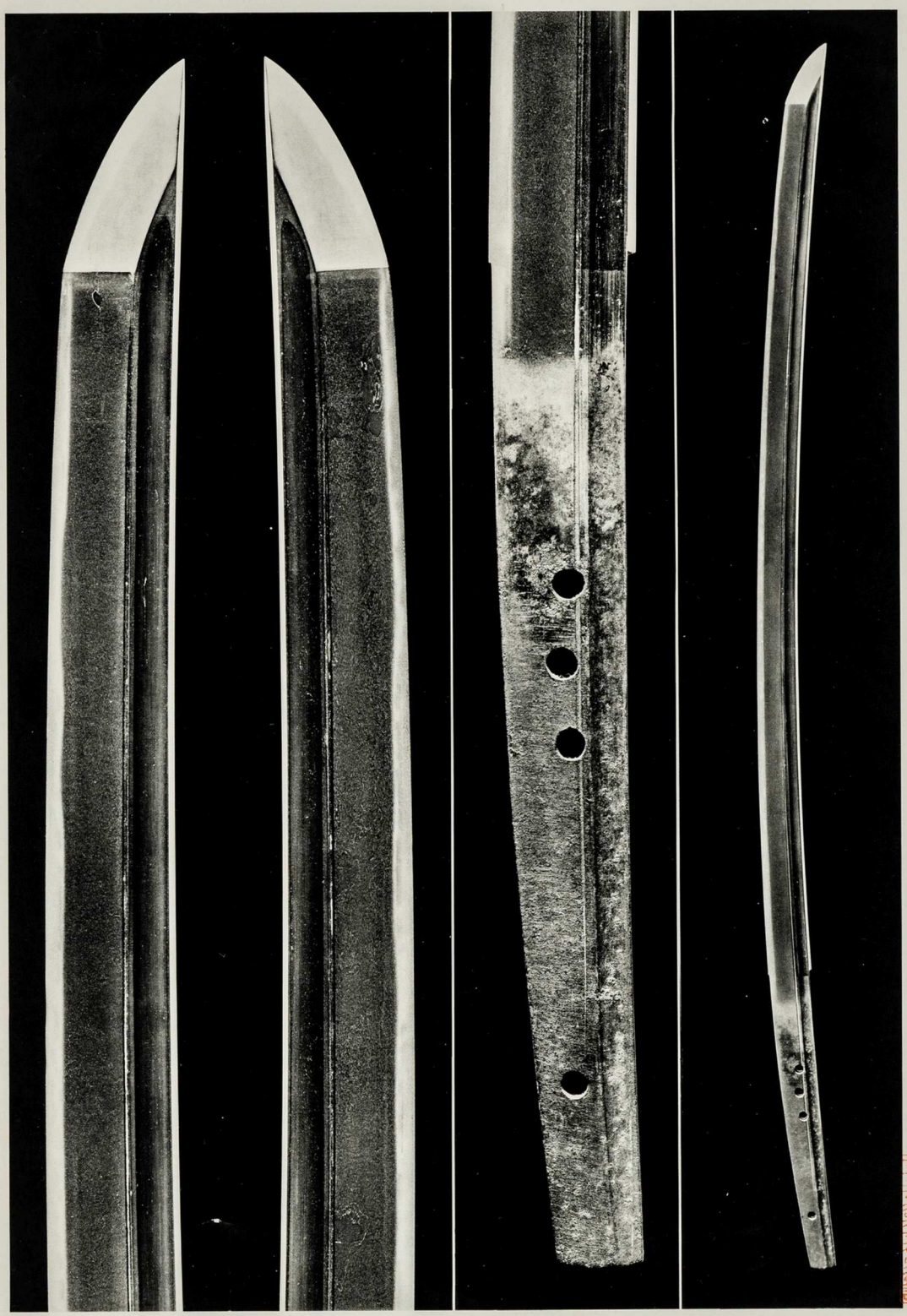
Measurements
nagasa 69.9 cm, sori 1.4 cm

Description
*Keijo: shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune,* wide *mihaba, ô-kissaki*
*Kitae: ko-itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *sumihada*-like *jifu* in places
*Hamon: suguha* along the upper half with *ko-gunome* that tends to slant
*Bôshi:* gently undulating *notare* with a late starting pointed and brief *kaeri*
*Horimono:* both sides with *bôhi* accompanied by *soe-bi* running through the tang
*Nakago: ô-suriage,* shallow *kurijiri, katte-sagari yasurime,* four *mekugi-ana*

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

December 7, 1976

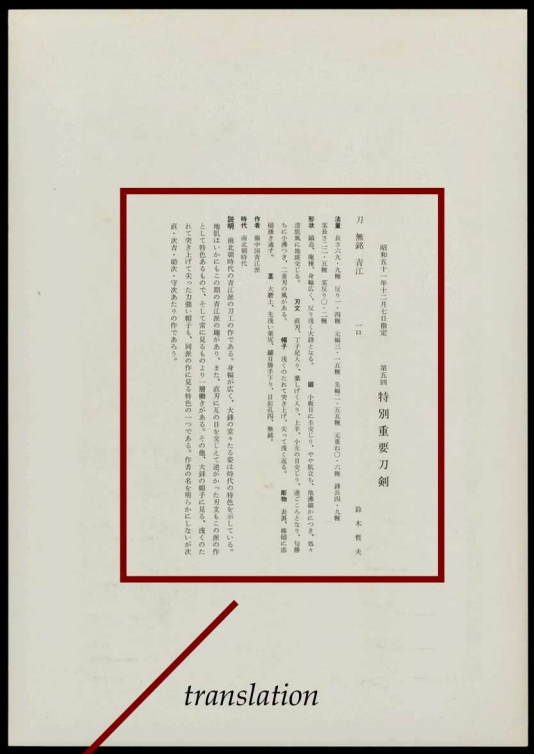
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK
[President] Honma Junji (本間順治)



刀　無銘　青江

NBTHK *Tokubetsu-Jûyô Tôken* cover photograph





刀　無銘　青江

昭和五十一年十二月七日指定　第五回　特別重要刀剣

一口　鈴木哲夫

translation




*Tokubetsu-Jûyô Tôken* at 5th *Tokubetsu-Jûyô Shinsa* from December 7, 1976

*Katana*, *mumei*: Aoe (青江)

**Measurements**
*Nagasa* 69.9 cm, *sori* 1.4 cm, *motohaba* 3.15 cm, *sakihaba* 2.55 cm, *moto-kasane* 0.6 cm, *kissaki-nagasa* 4.9 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 22.5 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.2 cm

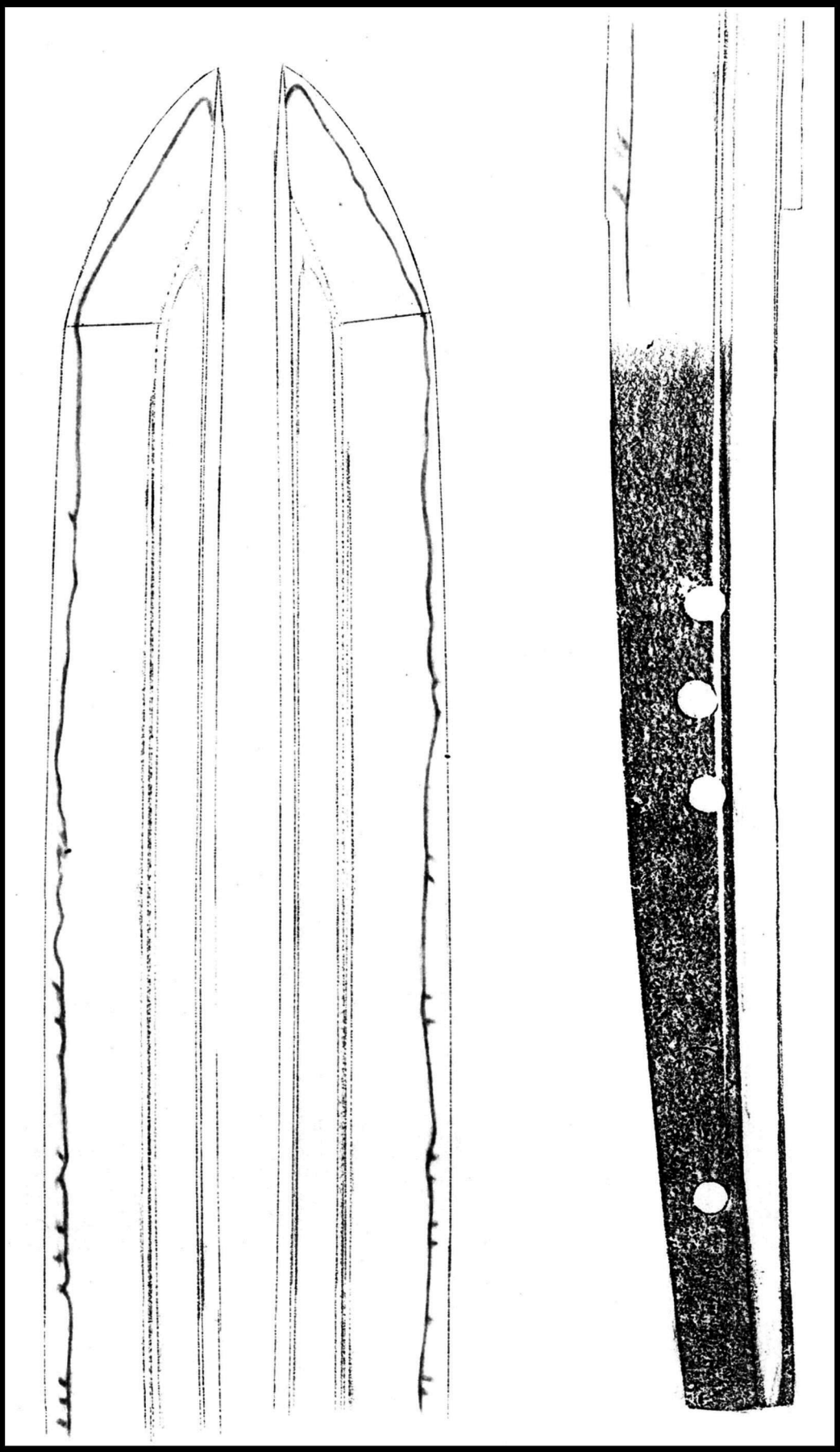
**Description**
*Keijô*: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, wide *mihaba*, shallow *sori*, *ô-kissaki*
*Kitae*: rather standing-out *ko-itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features fine *ji-nie* and *sumihada*-like *jifu* in places
*Hamon*: *suguha* in *nioi-deki* with *ko-nie* that is mixed with *chôji-ashi*, *nijûba*-like elements, and along the upper half with *ko-gunome* that tend to slant
*Bôshi*: gently undulating *notare* with a late starting pointed and brief *kaeri*
*Nakago*: *ô-suriage*, shallow *kurijiri*, *katte-sagari yasurime*, four *mekugi-ana*, *mumei*

**Artisan**
Aoe School from Bitchû province

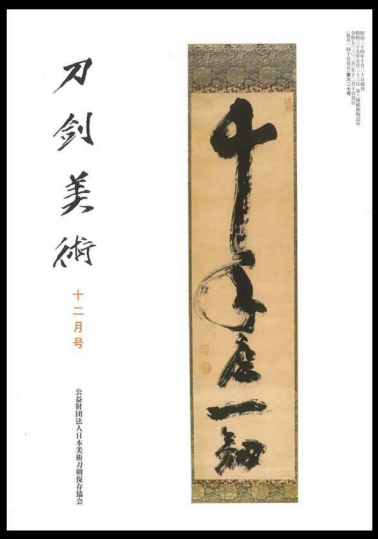
**Era**
Nanbokuchô period

**Summary**
This blade is a work of a *Nanbokuchô*-period smith from the Aoe（青江）School.

With its wide *mihaba*, *ô-kissaki*, and overall magnificent *sugata*, it reflects in terms of shape the characteristic features of the *Nanbokuchô* period. Also the *jihada* is typical for the Aoe School from said time period, as is the *hamon* in *suguha* mixed with *gunome*, whose elements tend to slant, although it shall be mentioned that the *ha* displays more activities than usually seen with then Aoe works. Looking at the *bôshi* of the *ô-kissaki*, it appears as gently undulating *notare* with a late starting and pointed *kaeri* in a powerful manner, which is typical for the school as well. Although the individual maker is unclear, masters like *Tsugunao* (次直), *Tsuguyoshi* (次吉), *Suketsugu* (助次), or *Moritsugu* (守次) appear to be appropriate candidates.



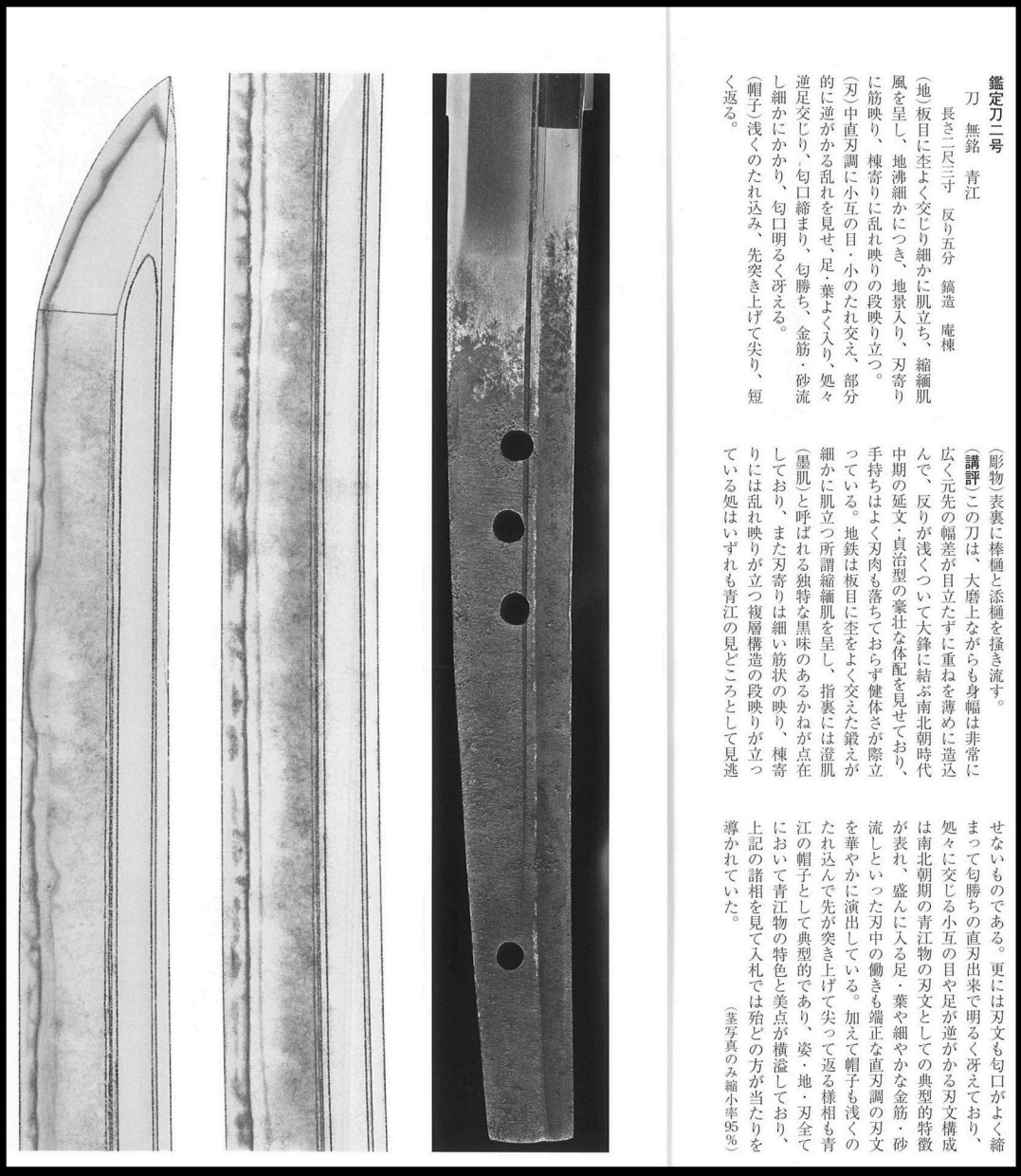
The katana was awarded ***Jûyô Tôken*** in the 24th session held on July 10, 1976. This is a copy of the original ***oshigata*** (tracing) for the sword. It did not stay ***Jûyô*** for long, however, as it was elevated to ***Tokubetsu Jûyô*** status just five months later in December 1976. Quite an achievement for such a strict competition.




*Token Bijutsu magazine*
*December 2025*



A typical ***kantei*** meeting



**鑑定刀二号**

刀　無銘　青江

長さ二尺三寸　反り五分　鎬造　庵棟

(地)板目に杢よく交じり細かに肌立ち、縮緬肌風を呈し、地沸細かにつき、地景入り、刃寄りに筋映り、棟寄りに乱れ映りの段映り立つ。(刃)中直刃調に小互の目・小のたれ交え、部分的に逆がかる乱れを見せ、足・葉よく入り、処々逆足交じり、匂口締まり、匂勝ち、金筋・砂流し細かにかかり、匂口明るく冴える。(帽子)浅くのたれ込み、先突き上げて尖り、短く返る。(彫物)表裏に棒樋と添樋を掻き流す。

(**講評**)この刀は、大磨上ながらも身幅は非常に広く元先の幅差が目立たずに重ねを薄めに造込んで、反りが浅くついて大鋒に結ぶ南北朝時代中期の延文・貞治型の豪壮な体配を見せており、手持ちはよく刃肉も落ちておらず健体さが際立っている。地鉄は板目に杢をよく交えた鍛えが細かに肌立つ所謂縮緬肌を呈し、指裏には澄肌(墨肌)と呼ばれる独特な黒味のあるかねが点在しており、また刃寄りは細い筋状の映り、棟寄りには乱れ映りが立つ複層構造の段映りが立っている処はいずれも青江の見どころとして見逃せないものである。更には刃文も匂口がよく締まって匂勝ちの直刃出来で明るく冴えており、処々に交じる小互の目や足が逆がかる刃文構成は南北朝期の青江物の刃文としての典型的特徴が表れ、盛んに入る足・葉や細やかな金筋・砂流しといった刃中の働きも端正な直刃調の刃文を華やかに演出している。加えて帽子も浅くのたれ込んで先が突き上げて尖って返る様相も青江の帽子として典型的であり、姿・地・刃全てにおいて青江物の特色と美点が横溢しており、上記の諸相を見て入札では殆どの方が当たりを導かれていた。

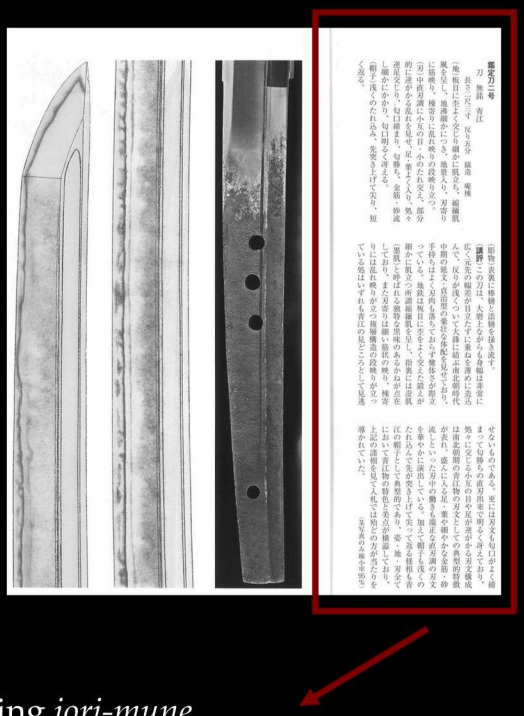
(茎写真のみ縮小率95%)

***Oshigata***, ***nakago*** and featured article. Translation follows.

The NBTHK holds monthly sword appreciation meetings where enthusiasts, from beginners to veterans, practice ***kantei*** (appraisal). Each month, generally five swords are selected for these sessions - blades the NBTHK deems exemplary teaching tools. This ***Aoe*** katana was chosen for the November 2025 meeting, with details documented in the December 2025 issue of **Token Bijutsu** (No. 827), the NBTHK's monthly journal.

***Kantei*** result summary:
"Its magnificent ***Enbun-Jôji*** style shape dates it clearly to the ***Nanbokuchô*** period. The ***sumihada***, ***utsuri***, and ***suguha*** tempering with ***saka-gunome*** (slanting patterns) are so definitive that nearly all participants correctly identified it as ***Aoe***. A masterpiece and quintessential example of the school's work."

The December 2025 **Token Bijutsu** issue (No. 827) accompanies the blade.



*Kanteitô 2-gô* (鑑定刀二号)
Appraised Sword No. 2

*Katana* (刀): *mumei Aoe* (無銘 青江)
Katana, unsigned Aoe school

*Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun* (長さ二尺三寸), *sori 5-bu* (反り五分)
*Shinogi-zukuri* (鎬造), *iori-mune* (庵棟)
Blade length 69.9 cm, curvature 1.4 cm, *shinogi-zukuri* featuring *iori-mune*

*Jigane*: *itame* mixed well with *mokume*. The *hada* is finely standing out, exhibiting a *chirimen-hada* (crepe-like texture). Fine *ji-nie* is present with *chikei*. A *suji-utsuri* (straight reflection) appears near the cutting edge, while a layered *midare-utsuri* appears toward the *mune*.

*Hamon*: based on *chû-suguha* mixed with small *gunome* and small *notare*. It exhibits wavy patterns that are partially inverted (slanting back toward the tang). The *ashi* and *yô* are well-defined throughout, with backward-sloping (*saka-ashi*) activities appearing in several places. The *nioiguchi* is tight and *nioi*-dominant. Fine *kinsuji* and *sunagashi* are present within the temper line, adding to its vibrant activity.

*Bôshi*: shallow *notare-komi*, pointed *togari* and thrust-up *tsukiage* tip and a short turnaround (*kaeri*).

*Horimono*: *bô-hi* and *soe-hi* on both sides, running into the tang.

[Commentary]
Although the blade is *ô-suriage*, it retains an exceptionally wide profile with minimal tapering from the base to the tip. The *kasane* (thickness) is relatively thin, and the shallow curvature culminates in a magnificent *ô-kissaki*. This silhouette embodies the grand and powerful *sugata* typical of the *Enbun-Jôji* style from the mid-*Nanbokuchô* period. In the hand, the sword feels remarkably well-balanced; the blade remains healthy, showing no loss of its original 'meat,' which underscores its superb state of preservation.

The *jigane* features a fine, standing grain of *itame* and *mokume*, creating the famous "*chirimen-hada*." On the *omote* side, one can see spots of "*sumihada*" (clear dark spots unique to *Aoe*). Furthermore, the complex "*dan-utsuri*" consisting of straight reflections near the edge and irregular reflections near the *mune* is a quintessential highlight of the *Aoe* school that should not be overlooked.

The *hamon* is a brilliantly clear, *nioi*-based *suguha* with a tight *nioiguchi*. The occasional small *gunome* and the inverted *ashi* elements are classic characteristics of *Aoe* workmanship from the *Nanbokucho* period. The active internal features, such as *ashi*, *yô*, *kinsuji*, and *sunagashi*, add a sense of elegance to the dignified straight temper line. The *bôshi*, which tapers to a sharp, high point, is also typical of *Aoe*. As the form, steel, and temper all overflow with the hallmarks of the school, most participants in the appraisal correctly identified it.

The *Nanbokuchô* period (1336-1392), literally "**Northern and Southern Courts**," originated from the failure of the *Kenmu Restoration* led by Emperor *Go-Daigo*. Following the collapse of the *Kamakura* shogunate, Go-Daigo's attempt to restore direct imperial rule alienated the warrior class, prompting *Ashikaga Takauji* to revolt. *Takauji* established the Muromachi shogunate in *Kyôto* and supported the **Northern Court**, while *Go-Daigo* fled to *Yoshino* to establish the **Southern Court**. This dual-monarchy system plunged Japan into over half a century of civil war, splitting powerful clans and provincial families across the nation.

The mid-14th century, specifically the *Enbun* and *Jôji* eras (1356–1368), represented a critical turning point. While the second shogun, *Ashikaga Yoshiakira*, worked to stabilize shogunate authority in *Kyôto*, the provinces remained in constant flux. Powerful military lords like the *Yamana* and *Hosokawa* clans frequently shifted allegiances between the two courts. Paradoxically, this era of chronic instability became the golden age of Japanese swordmaking. The sheer volume of surviving blades bearing *Enbun* and *Jôji* inscriptions far exceeds those of other periods - direct evidence of peak military demand fueled by nationwide combat.

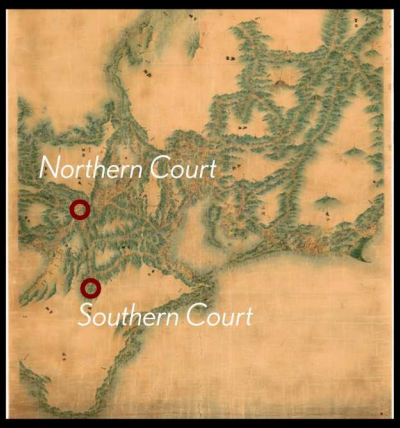
Based in *Bitchû* province, the *Aoe* school flourished during this production peak. Their success was deeply intertwined with the fortunes of local Southern Court loyalists, such as the *Uekami* clan of *Bizen*. As conflict spread to *Shikoku* and *Kyûshû* - marked by significant events like the **Battle of Chikugo River** (1359) - the *Aoe* smiths provided essential weaponry for the Southern Court's resistance.

However, the tide turned during the *Jôji* era. As *Ashikaga Yoshimitsu*, the third *shôgun*, consolidated power, the shogunate transitioned from fragile alliance to dominant central government. One by one, Southern Court strongholds were dismantled, and the provincial clans supporting them were either destroyed or forced to defect to the Northern Court.

While rival schools like the *Bizen Osafune* successfully adapted by forming ties with the new shogunate elite, the *Aoe* school remained tied to the fading Southern cause. With the collapse of their patronage and the eventual unification of the two courts at the end of the 14th century, the *Aoe* school rapidly declined and vanished from production. But their legacy endured - the extraordinary quality of their work during this brief, intense period ensured that Aoe blades became among the most sought-after swords in Japanese history. Today, surviving examples from this golden era of production are prized as rare windows into the height of *Nanbokuchô* craftsmanship.



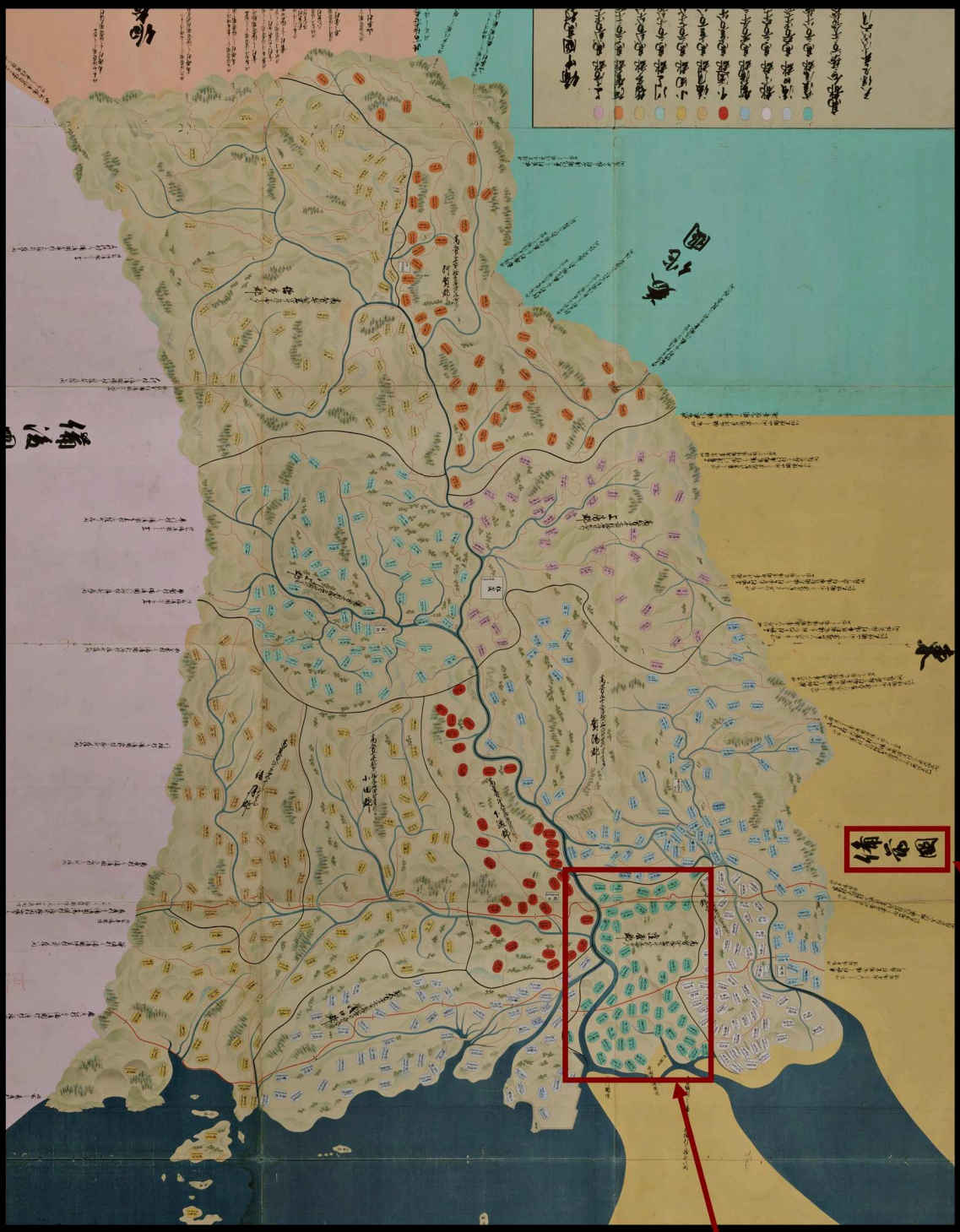
*Ashikaga Takauji*
(Northern Court)






*Emperor Go-Daigo*
(Southern Court)

Map of *Bitchû* province (1838)




*Aoe* (青江), meaning *"Blue River,"* wasn't a village but a colloquial name for the *Kubo no Shô* district of *Bitchû* Province. Located in close proximity to neighbouring *Bizen* Province, the area enabled frequent exchange of ideas and techniques between the regions, ***centered*** on their shared access to high-quality iron ore.

In modern-day *Aoe*, the *Aoe Shrine* still stands, where the guardian deity of the *Aoe* swordsmiths remains enshrined.



*Aoe Shrine*



We asked **Markus Sesko**, a highly respected author, translator, and expert researcher on Japanese swords (*nihontô*), for an overview and comparative study of Aoe swords at the highest levels.

**Here is an excerpt from his research:**

When it comes to quantities of unsigned Aoe works not attributed to an individual smith that hold the highest ranking statuses issued by the NBTHK and that hold designations by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, we are facing the following numbers for *Aoe* (as per November 2025):

3 blades have been designated as a *Jûyô-Bunkazai* (3 tachi)
15 blades have been designated as a *Jûyô-Bijutsuhin* (15 katana)
24 blades have passed *Tokubetsu-Jûyô* (23 katana, 1 wakizashi)
228 blades have passed *Jûyô* (5 tachi, 203 katana, 20 wakizashi)

**Summary:**

When it comes to the competitors of TJ5 [this sword] within the ranks of said 24 *Tokubetsu-Jûyô* blades, seven should be dismissed as they either come with *Daimyô* provenance (or other important historic figures). Another blade may be dismissed as potential direct competitor as it is accompanied by an early *Hon'ami* origami issued by *Hon'ami Kô'on* in *Meireki* three, evaluating it with 10 gold coins. To elaborate, early Edo period *Hon'ami origami* issued before the turn of the 18th century are referred to as *ko-origami*, lit. "early origami," and are particularly rare and valuable, also because these are regarded as most reliable in terms of their attributions of unsigned blades. Accordingly, the *existence* of a *ko-origami* is a significant contributing factor of a blade's importance and subsequent ranking.

This leaves 15 direct *Tokubetsu-Jûyô* competitors to TJ5 that passed this rank on their own merits, if you will, that is, as stand-alone important *ô-suriage mumei Aoe* works that are not Ko-Aoe and that are not attributed to an individual smith.

However, this list may be further narrowed down by excluding blades that do not date to the same period as TJ5, although also coming under the category *Aoe* and not *Ko-Aoe*. To be specific, 6 of the above mentioned 15 T*okubetsu-Jûyô* are dated from the end of the *Kamakura* to the early *Nanbokuchô* period, marking so the early stages of the typical Aoe style that then matured at they heydays of the *Nanbokuchô* period, to which TJ5 is dated. As a result, the final number of very direct *Tokubetsu-Jûyô* competitors to TJ5 arrives at 9.

Thus, TJ5 belongs to an elite group of only 10 *ô-suriage mumei* longs swords attributed to the **Aoe School** that passed *Tokubetsu-Jûyô* - the highest ranking of swords outside of designations by the Agency for Cultural Affairs - which passed on their own merits as stand-alone important works, without contributing factors like provenance, period appraisals, etc. This directly speaks to the outstanding structure, quality of workmanship, and overall health of the sword.







"Although the blade is *ô-suriage*, it retains an exceptionally wide profile [that] culminates in a magnificent *ô-kissaki*."

November 2025 NBTHK Kantei session



A small ***hada-ware*** appears between ***sumihada*** islands at the ***yokote*** - prominent in zoomed photographs but disappears in hand.

This is 14th century character. ***Nanbokuchô*** period smiths forged for war, not exhibition.



A shallow ***notare-komi***, pointed ***togari*** and ***tsukiage*** tip with a short ***kaeri***.



The *jigane* displays *chirimen-hada* - literally "crepe silk texture" - the most prized and distinctive characteristic of *Aoe* steel. This fine, three-dimensional grain pattern combines *ko-itame* and *mokume* in such tight, intricate formations that it resembles the subtle wrinkles of fine Japanese silk fabric.

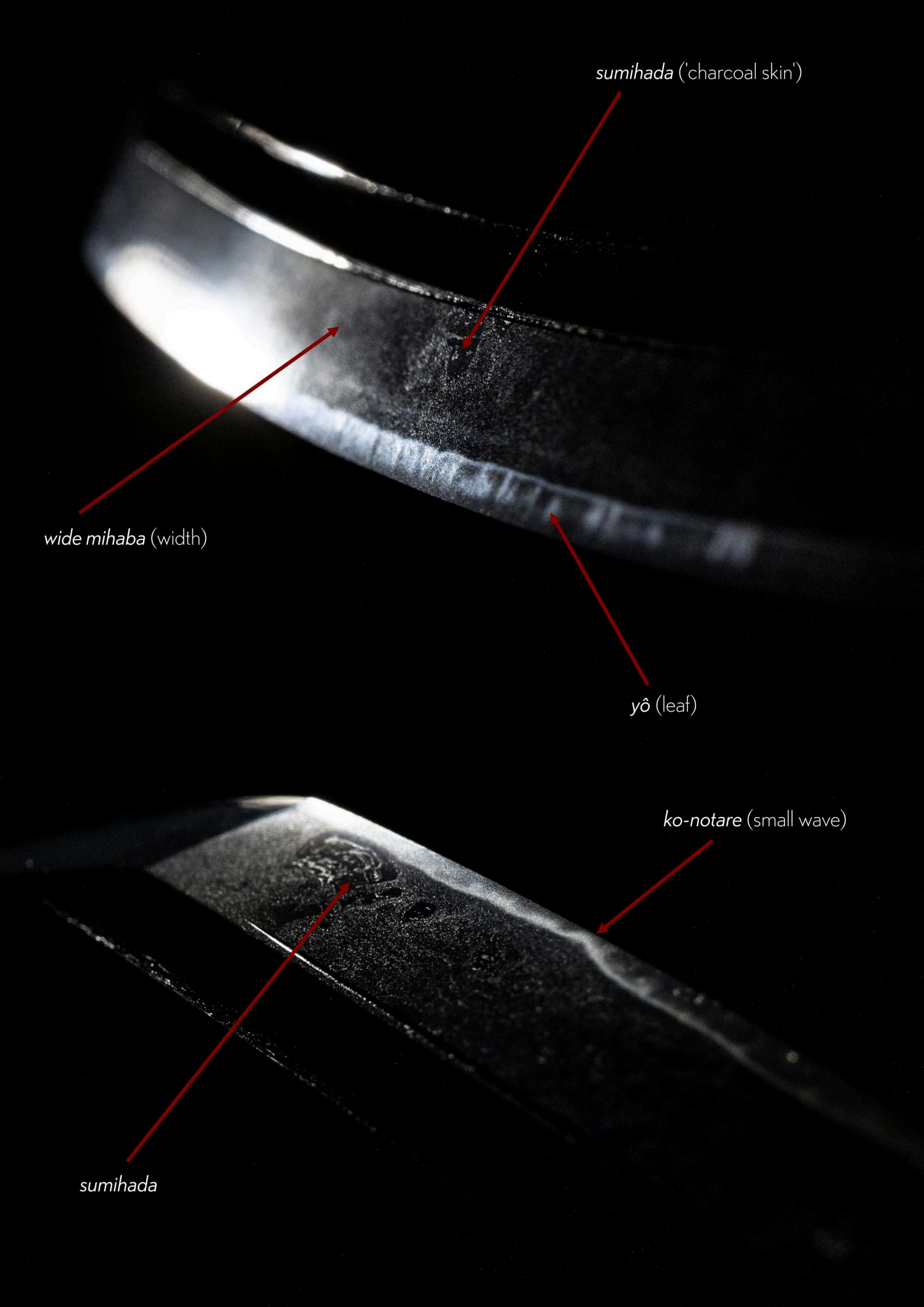
Under proper lighting, the surface comes alive with depth and movement. The effect is mesmerizing - a testament to *Bitchû*'s exceptional iron ore and the smith's mastery in forging.




sublime *ji-nie*
Precise lines form the *suguha hamon* punctuated by subtle peaks - a cool deliberate touch of *Aoe* character.




*Namazu-hada*, dark spots of ***nie*** crystals that resemble the skin of a catfish (***namazu***), a unique feature of the ***Aoe school***. Also known as ***sumihada***.


*sumihada* ('charcoal skin')
*wide mihaba* (width)
*yô* (leaf)
*ko-notare* (small wave)
*sumihada*



Section of spectacular ***chôji-ashi***, 'legs' that extend from the ***hamon*** in the form of clove blossom buds together with ***yô*** (falling 'leaves').

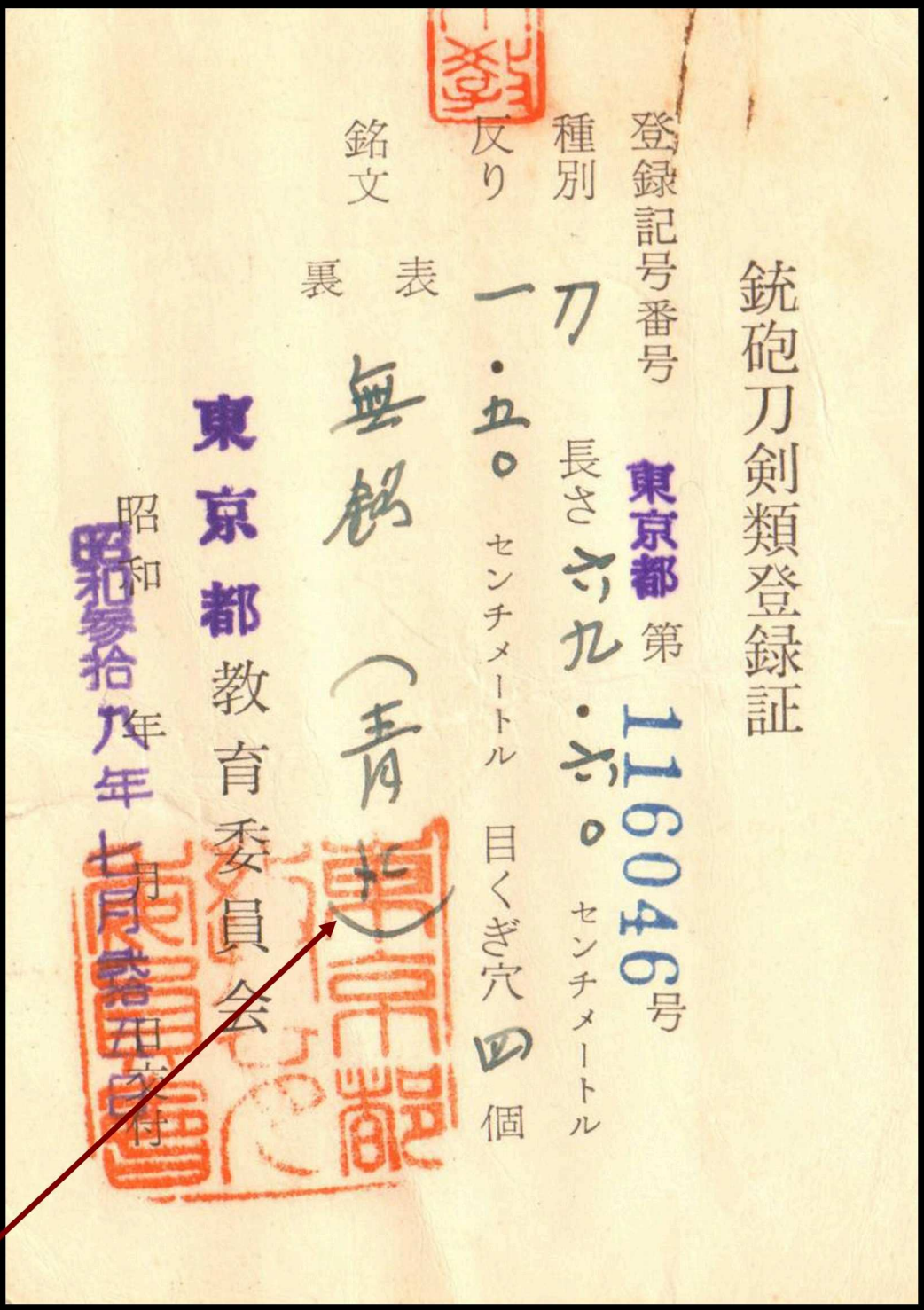


In the ***monouchi*** (upper cutting area),
the ***hamon*** slants into ***saka ko-gunome***.

*saka-ko-gunome*




Literally meaning "reflection", ***utsuri*** is a beautiful, misty reflection appearing in the upper portion of ***ji*** (body).




青江 (*Aoe*)

This is the original ***torokusho*** (registration card) for the ***Aoe*** katana, registered in the 38th year of Showa (1963).

Despite being unsigned, the ***torokusho*** includes an addendum noting '***Aoe***.' The examiner took one look at this blade and couldn't help himself - he had to write it down. The style screamed ***Aoe*** so loudly that leaving it blank would've felt wrong.

This kind of enthusiastic attribution on official paperwork is rare. When a government examiner breaks protocol to note attribution, you know the blade made an impression. Thirteen years later, the NBTHK would award it TJ status, confirming what that 1963 examiner already knew.



We will take this sword to *Tanobe-sensei* for **sayagaki** services.

*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold ***habaki*** with
copper ground

Your path to excellence.



## *Custom koshirae?*

While a sword of this calibre can certainly be acquired in ***shirasaya*** only, building a special custom koshirae will complete the story.

A gift to both the sword and future generations to cherish.

Past custom koshirae examples:

From left to right:

ujka373 - A Hankei Katana
NBTHK Tokubetsu Jûyô Tôken

ujka324 - A Yasusada Katana
NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon

ujka382 - A Yôsôzaemon Katana
NBTHK Jûyô Tôken

ujka462 - A Munetsugu Katana
NBTHK Jûyô Tôken



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ITEM# UJDI012

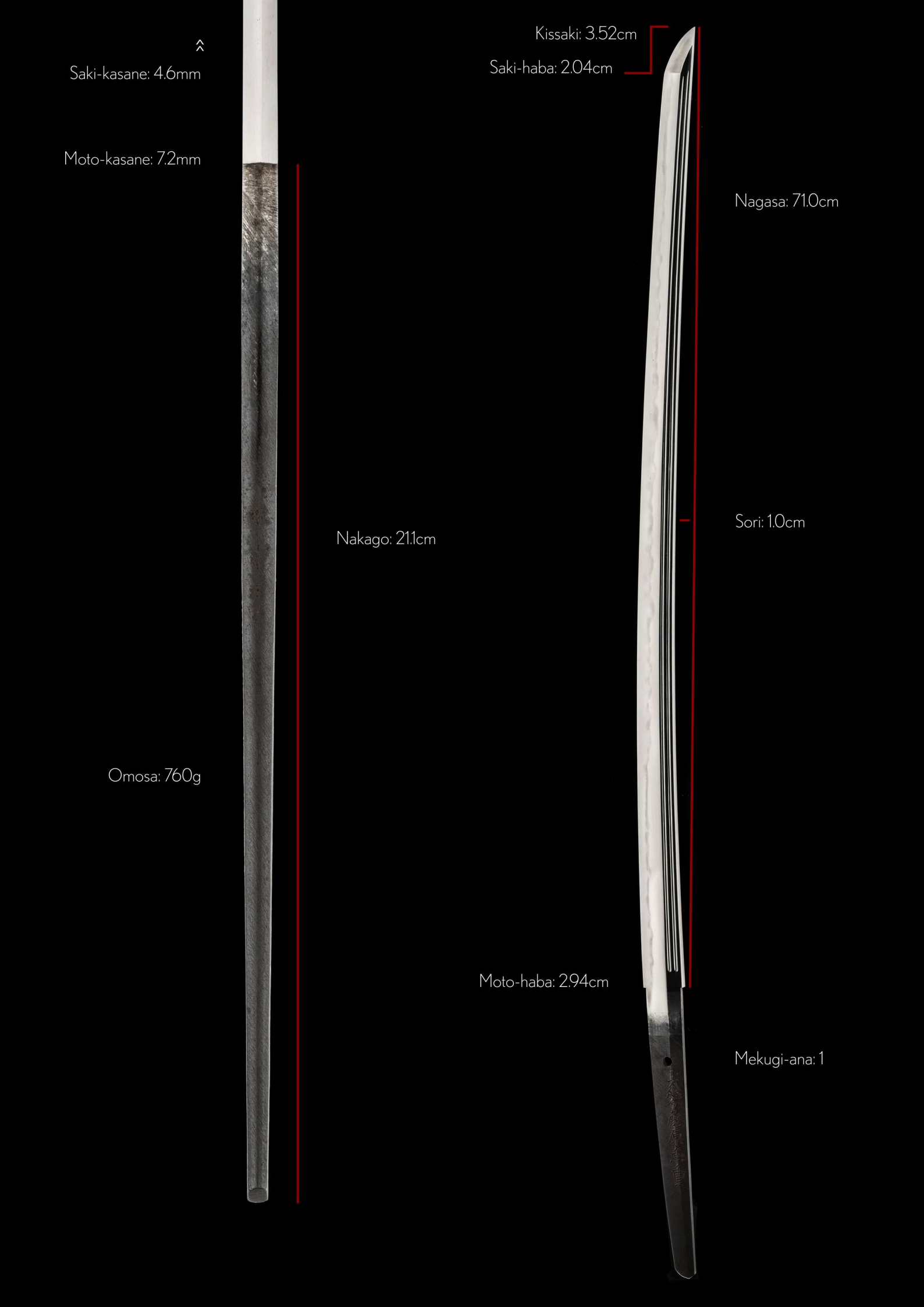
# A KANESHIGE 'TAMESHIGIRI' DAISHÔ

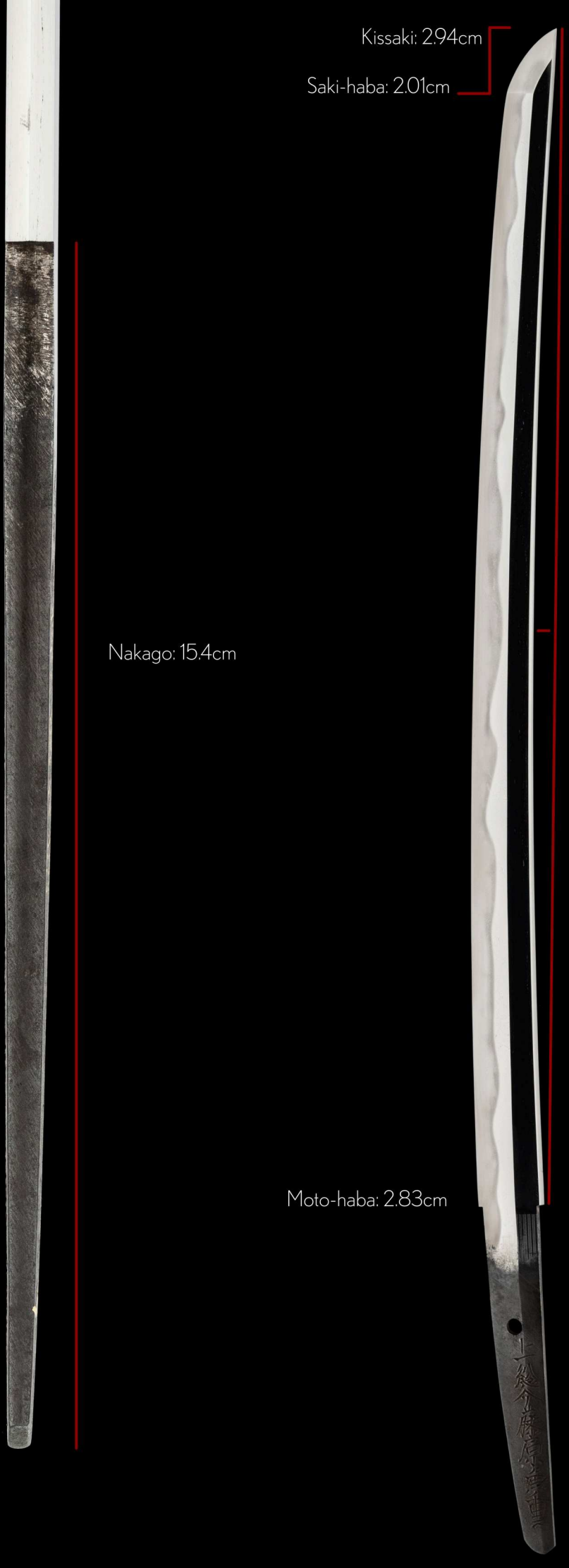
## SIGNED, TESTED & DATED (KANBUN ERA: MAY 1666 & AUGUST 1667)

**Swordsmith:** ***Kazusa no Suke Fujiwara Kaneshige*** *(上総介藤原兼重)*
**Measurements (k):** **Length:** 71.0cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 1.0cm **Moto-haba:** 2.94cm **Weight:** 760g
**Measurements (w):** **Length:** 52.8cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 0.7cm **Moto-haba:** 2.83cm **Weight:** 530g
**Jihada:** *Expertly forged mokume, itame, nagare-hada with shining ji-nie and plentiful chikei*
**Hamon:** *Beaming gunome-midare with deep nioiguchi, togari, kinsuji, sunagashi & inazuma*
**Certificate #1-2:** **2 x NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(both swords Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
**Fujishiro rank:** **Jô-saku** *(a superior smith)*
**Sharpness:** **Ryô-wazamonô** (*maker of very sharp swords*)
**Included:** Shirasaya, koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

# SOLD *(daishô koshirae in production)*

Here is an exceptionally rare *daishô* by ***Kazusa no Suke Kaneshige*** - ***both blades*** *tameshigiri* tested severing through two bodies with results recorded in gold *kinzôgan* by *Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide* just fifteen months apart. Born *Tsuji Suke'emon*, *Kaneshige* was active during the *Kanbun* era and ranks among the foremost swordsmiths of the early *shintô* period. Both the katana and wakizashi showcase his signature approach, which resembles that of grandmaster *Kotetsu*. The *jigane* shows tight *itame-hada* covered in bright *ji-nie* with a thick *nioiguchi* that form a wavy *gunome-midare hamon* - gleaming like freshly fallen snow. The swords come with mismatched koshirae that don't quite rise to the occasion. You have two paths: claim them as they stand, or commission Unique Japan to build an authentic custom *daishô* using museum-quality antique fittings worthy of these extraordinary blades. Either way, Unique Japan will arrange *sayagaki* from *Tanobe-sensei*.


Saki-kasane: 4.6mm
Moto-kasane: 7.2mm
Nakago: 21.1cm
Omosa: 760g
Kissaki: 3.52cm
Saki-haba: 2.04cm
Nagasa: 71.0cm
Sori: 1.0cm
Moto-haba: 2.94cm
Mekugi-ana: 1


Kissaki: 2.94cm
Saki-haba: 2.01cm
Saki-kasane: 4.7mm
Moto-kasane: 6.4mm
Nagasa: 52.8cm
Nakago: 15.4cm
Sori: 0.7cm
Omosa: 530g
Moto-haba: 2.83cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

Here is an exceptionally rare *daishô* by *Kazusa no Suke Kaneshige* (総介兼重) - both blades *tameshigiri* tested by the same swordsman just over one year apart.

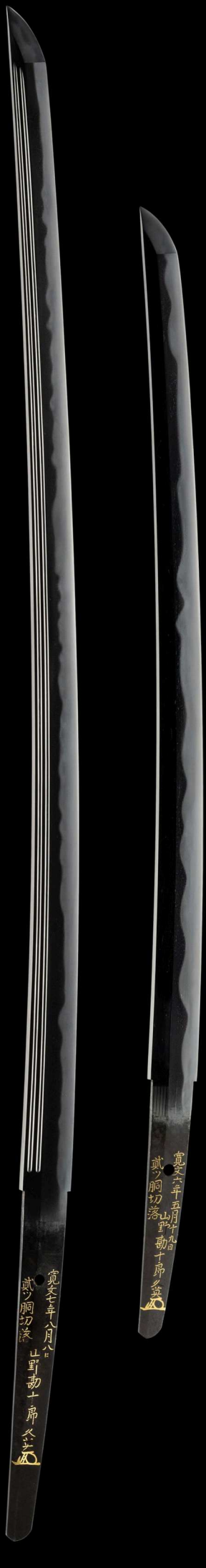
Born *Tsuji Suke'emon* (辻助右衛門), *Kaneshige* was active during the *Kanbun* era (1661-1673) and is believed to be the son of the first-generation *Izumi no Kami Kaneshige* (和泉守兼重). Both served the *Tôdô* (藤堂) family before moving to *Edo*, where Kaneshige forged swords for samurai clientele. Kaneshige collaborated with major Edo smiths including the third-generation *Yasutsugu* (康継) and *Hôjôji Masateru* (法城寺正照), and ranks among the foremost swordsmiths of the early *shintô* period.

*Kaneshige* is ranked *jô-saku* (superior) and *ryô-wazamono* for the terrific cutting ability of his swords. Both the katana and wakizashi showcase his signature approach, which resembles that of grandmaster *Kotetsu*. The *jigane* shows tight *itame-hada* covered in bright *ji-nie.* But what sets these apart from many other *shintô* period swords is the thick *nioiguchi* that form a wavy *gunome-midare hamon* - gleaming like freshly fallen snow.

Note the long *futatsu-bi* (double grooves) running the length of the katana - they bring serious character to the blade.

Remarkably, both blades bear *kinzôgan* by *Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide* (山野勘十郎久英), one of Edo's most prominent official testers. The wakizashi was tested on May 19th 1666 and the katana on August 8th 1667 - each cleanly severing two bodies in one stroke. Testing fees ran approximately 10 *ryo* per test, equivalent to roughly $10,000 USD today. That a patron commissioned both tests from the same hand within fifteen months suggests wealth, discernment, and deliberate intent to create a matched set of proven blades.

The swords come with mismatched koshirae that don't quite rise to the occasion. You have two paths: claim them as they stand, or commission Unique Japan to build an authentic custom *daishô* using museum-quality antique fittings worthy of these extraordinary blades - launching the *daishô f*urther into the *nihontô* stratosphere. Either way, Unique Japan will arrange *sayagaki* from *Tanobe-sensei*.





Location: *Edo, Musashi province*
Title: *Kazusa no Suke* (Lord of Kazusa province)
Family name: *Fujiwara*
Swordsmith: *Kaneshige* (second generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*keshô-tsuki sujikai-yasurime*
(slanting file marks with horizontal decoration)

*keshô*
Decorative file marks enhance its visual appeal.

上 (Kazu)

総 (sa, no)

介 (Suke)

藤 (Fuji)

原 (wara)

兼 (Kane)

重 (shige)

*Mei* the force be with you.
The signatures on both blades look nearly identical. Amazing.

*Kanbun rokunen gogatsu jûkunichi, futatsu-dô kiriotoshi Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide + kaô*

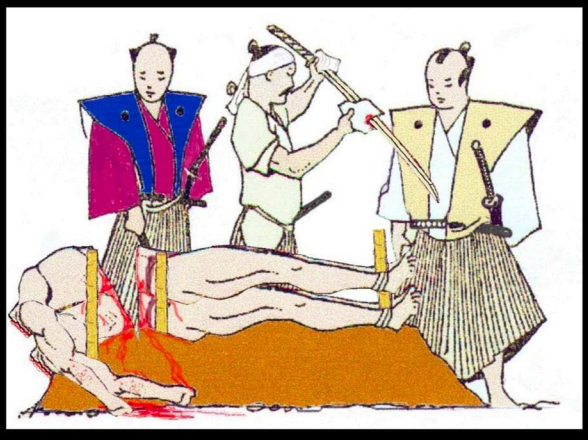
On the nineteenth day in the fifth month in the sixth year of ***Kanbun*** era (May 19th, 1666), ***Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide*** severed through two human bodies [with a single stroke using this sword].

+ signed with his personal monogram

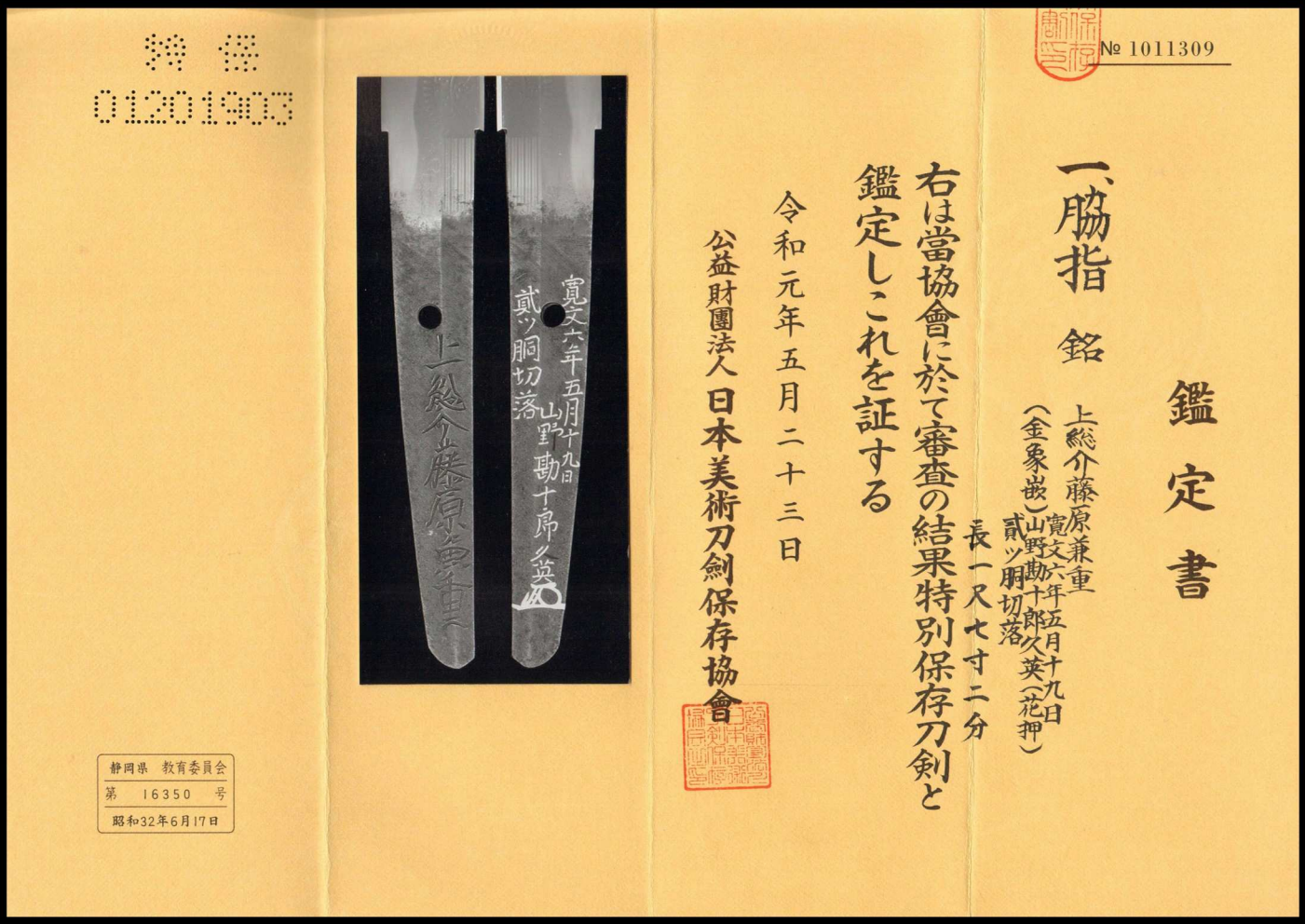



(Futa) 貳
(tsu) ツ
(dô) 胴
(kiri) 切
(otoshi) 落
(Yama) 山
(no) 野
(Kan) 勘
(jû) 十
(rô) 郎
(Hisa) 久
(hide) 英
kaô

寛 (Kan)
文 (bun)
六 (roku)
年 (nen)
五 (go)
月 (gatsu)
十 (jû)
九 (ku)
日 (nichi)



*A successful two-body cutting test*




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 1st year of Reiwa (2019), May 23rd

One, Wakizashi

*Mei* (signature)
*Kazusa no Suke Fujiwara Kaneshige*
*(Kinzôgan) Kanbun rokunen gogatsu jûkunichi*
*Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide (kaô)*
*Futatsu-dô kiriotoshi*

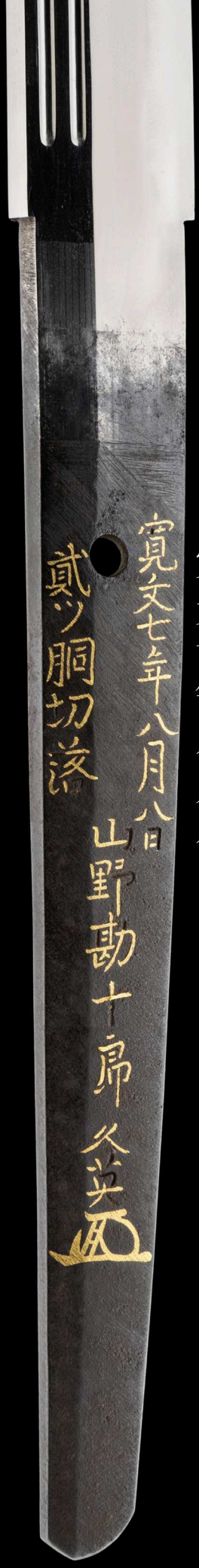
*Nagasa* (length)
1-shaku 7-sun 2-bu (52.1cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

*Kanbun nananen hachigatsu yôka, futatsu-dô kiriotoshi Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide + kaô*

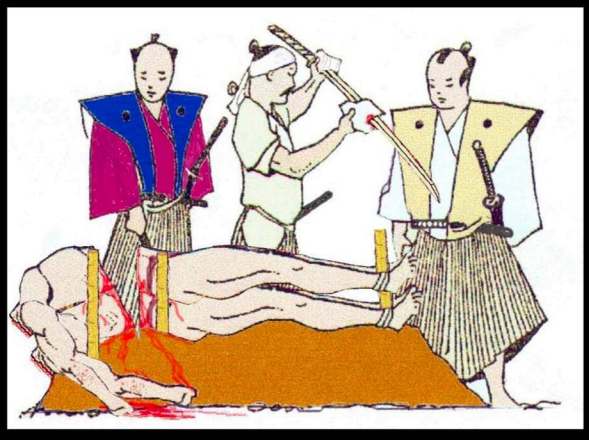
On the eighth day of the eighth month during the seventh year of ***Kanbun*** era (August 8th, 1667), ***Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide*** severed through two human bodies [with a single stroke using this sword].

+ signed with his personal monogram



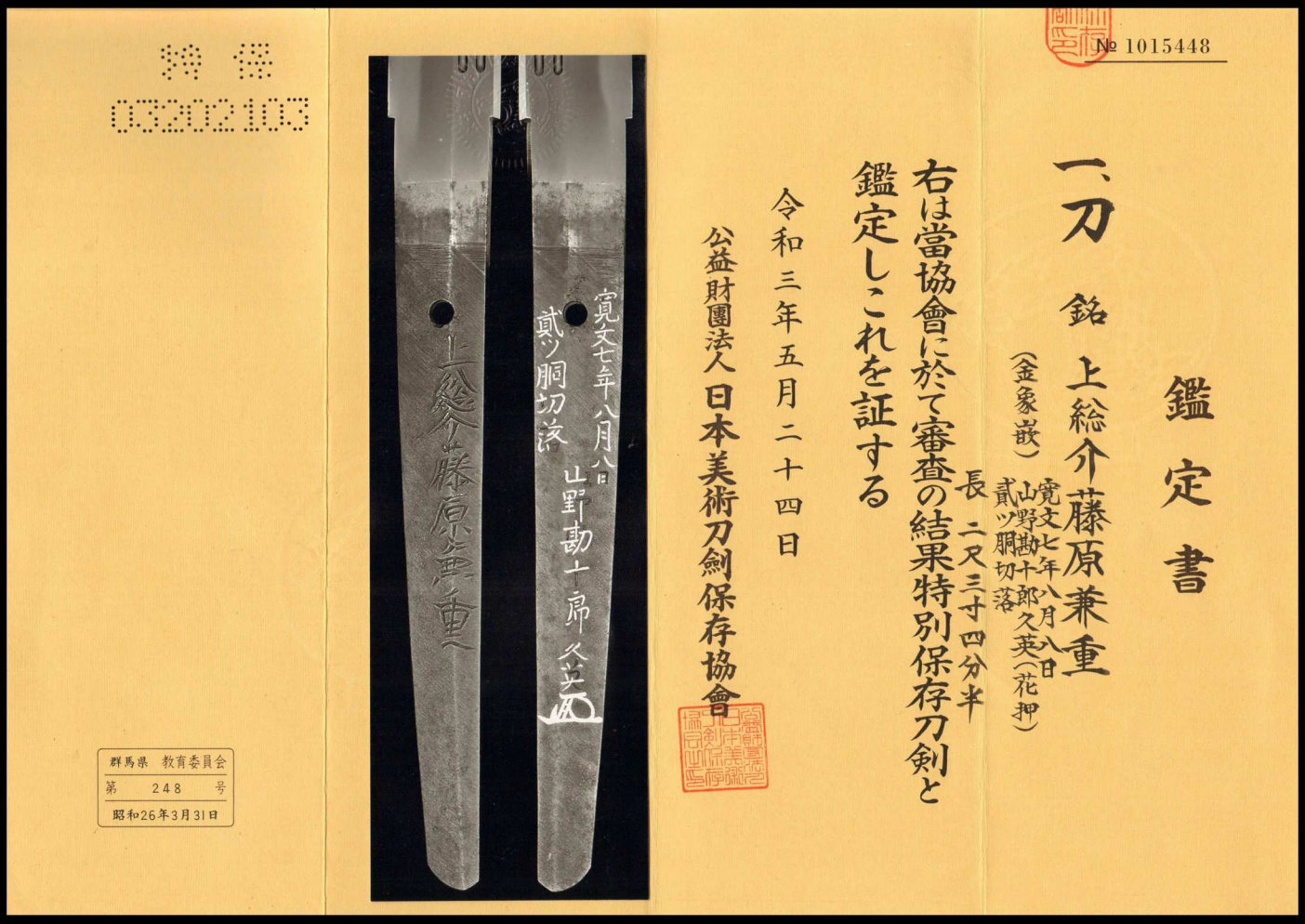

寛 (Kan)
文 (bun)
七 (nana)
年 (nen)
八 (hachi)
月 (gatsu)
八 (yô)
日 (ka)

(Futa) 貳
(tsu) ツ
(dô) 胴
(kiri) 切
(otoshi) 落
(Yama) 山
(no) 野
(Kan) 勘
(jû) 十
(rô) 郎
(Hisa) 久
(hide) 英
*kaô*



*A successful two-body cutting test*

(***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 3rd year of Reiwa (2022), May 24th

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Kazusa no Suke Fujiwara Kaneshige*
*(Kinzôgan) Kanbun nananen hachigatsu yôka*
*Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide (kaô)*
*Futatsu-dô kiriotoshi*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 4-bu han (71.0cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

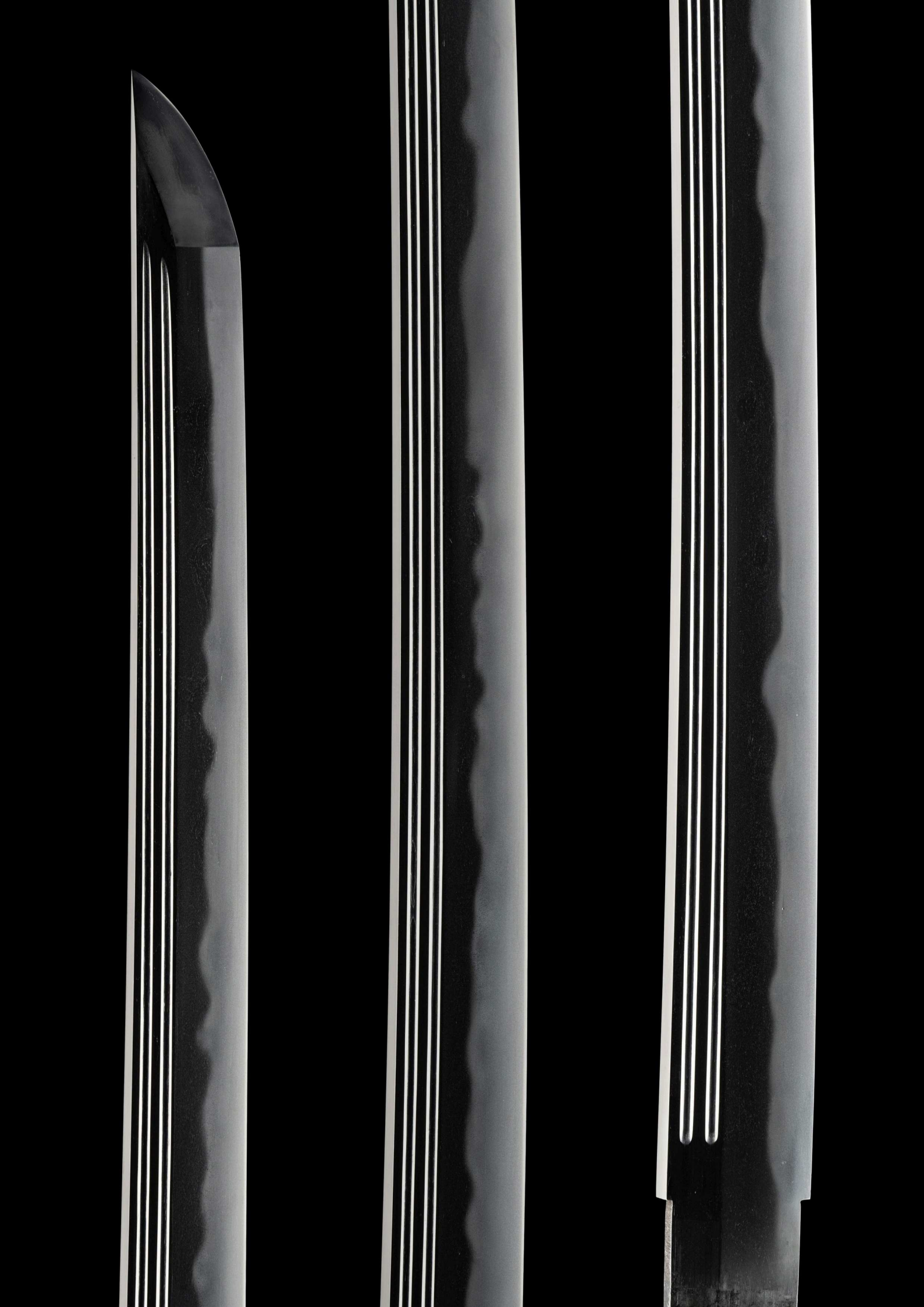
Pieces of pure gold fragments naturally dislodge from the ***kanji*** characters on the ***nakago*** over time - a characteristic that the NBTHK expects to see when authenticating the blades.

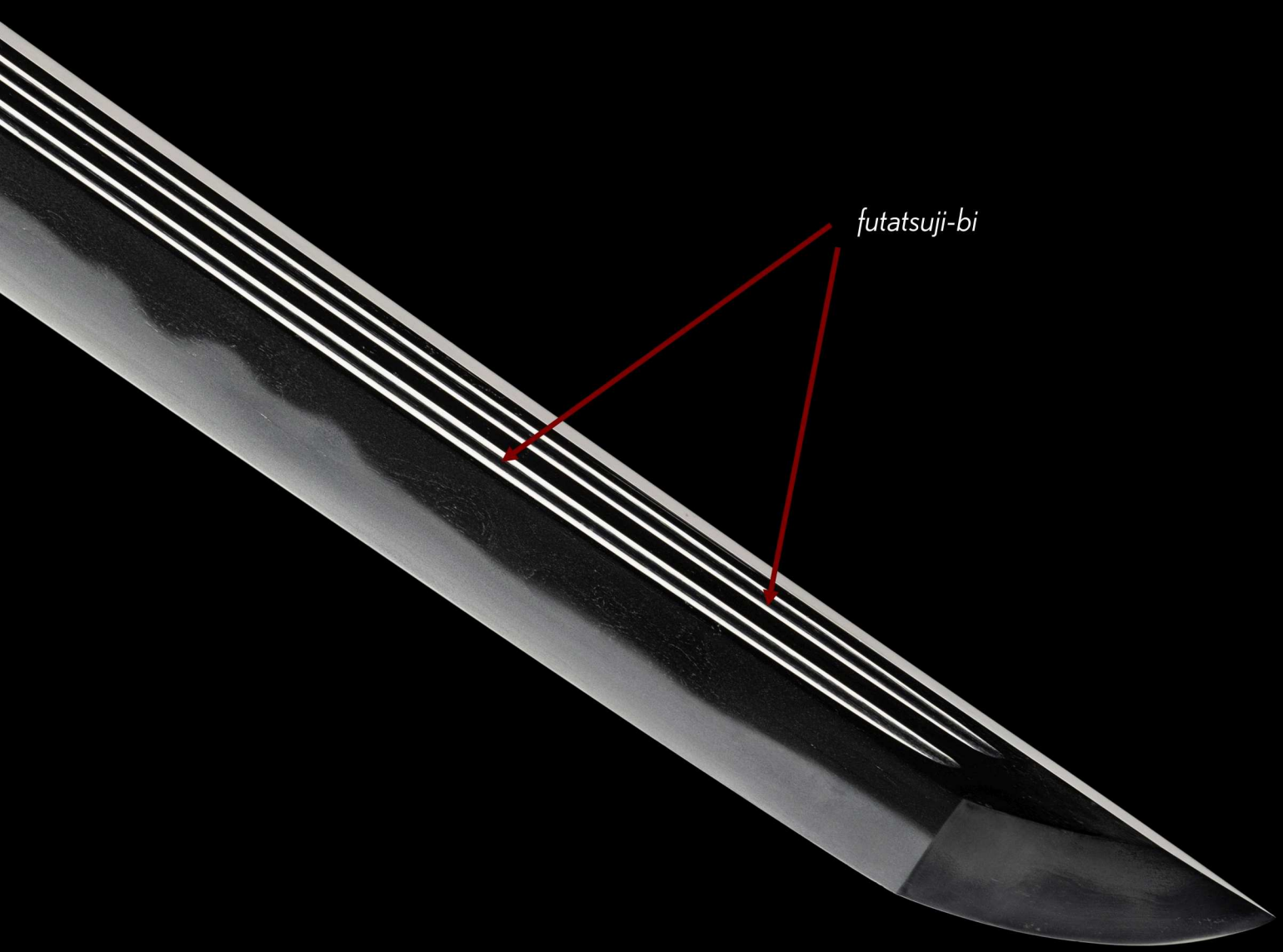
*Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide* (山野勘十郎久英) was the son of *Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa* (山野加右衛門永久), the first in the *Edo* period to hold ***tameshigiri*** (test-cutting) as a formal profession. Both father and son were renowned masters of ***tameshigiri***, with *Hisahide* also serving as an executioner, carrying out official beheadings.

Although the *Yamano* family's overall influence faded, their style of test-cutting was passed down through later generations. Eventually the *Yamada* family took prominence, and leading member *Yamada Asaemon* (山田浅右衛門) became an official ***otameshi-goyônin*** (government-appointed sword tester and executioner), conducting numerous official test cuttings under the shogunate.



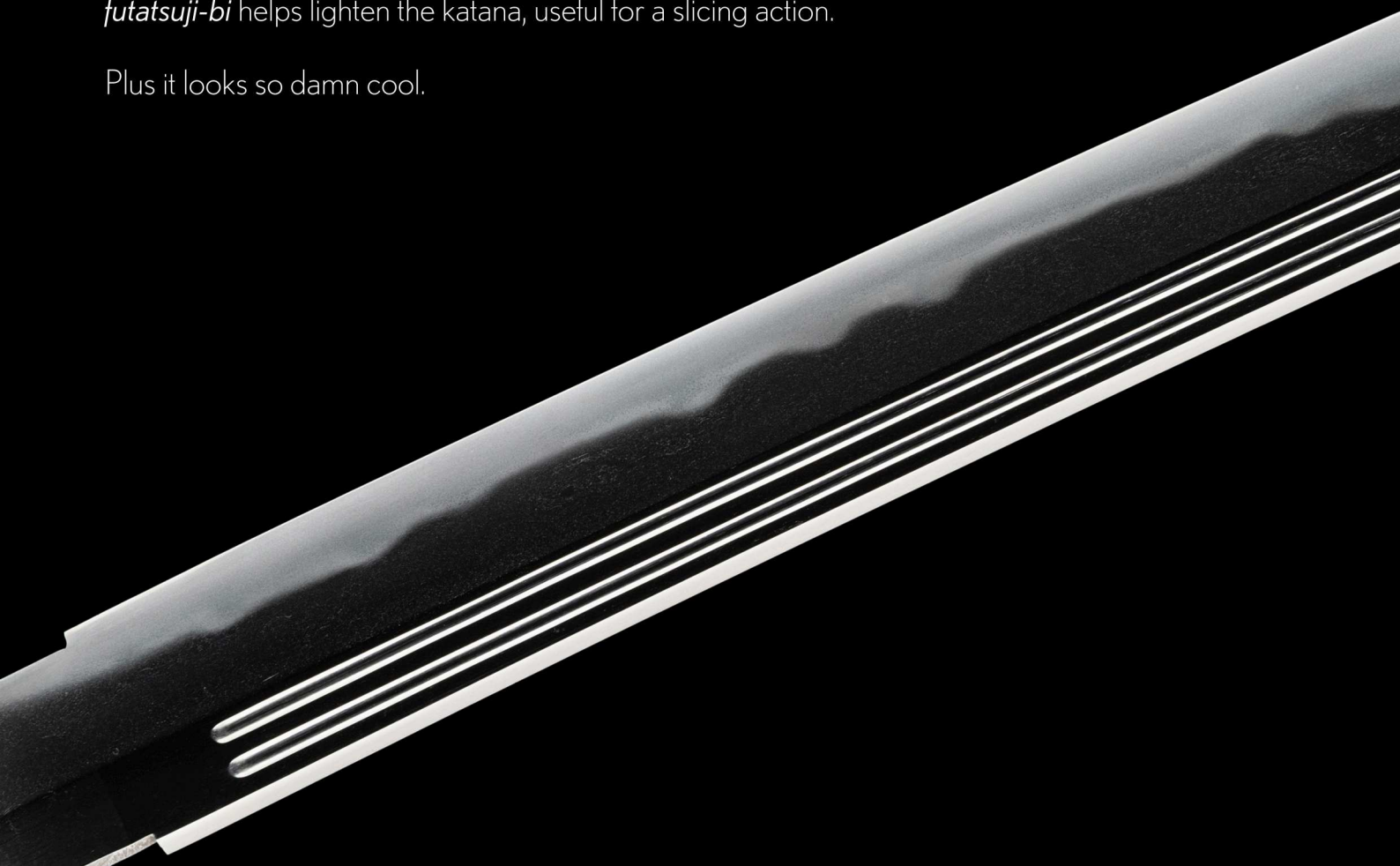







Two superbly carved full-length parallel grooves known as *futatsuji-bi* helps lighten the katana, useful for a slicing action.

Plus it looks so damn cool.






A splendid ***gunome-midare hamon*** in ***nie-deki*** with a deep ***nioguchi*** (crystals that form the hamon) along with long ***ashi*** (legs) that extend to the sharp cutting edge.




(katana)




This blade just ***looks*** sharp. Kaneshige is ranked ***ryô-wazamono*** for the famed cutting ability of his swords.

(katana)

Consistency matters.

Whether the ***hamon*** is thick or thin, wavy or straight, look for consistency in the ***nioguchi***. If you see a clean flowing rythym, then the ***jigane*** (steel) is strong and solid. The hamon is direct reflection on the quality of the forging. Here we have clear example of superior worksmanship.




(katana)

By 1666, Japan had settled into a new rhythm. The 25-year-old shogun *Tokugawa Ietsuna* ruled from Edo Castle, but power resided with his senior advisors, particularly the shrewd *Sakai Tadakiyo*. The violent convulsions of civil war had ended decades earlier when *Tokugawa Ieyasu* crushed his rivals at Osaka Castle in 1615. Now Japan was frozen in time - isolated from the world by *sakoku* policies, locked into rigid social hierarchies, growing wealthy through internal trade. The *Kanbun* era (1661-1673) marked a transition from the martial energy of the early Tokugawa shoguns to the settled bureaucracy of the middle period. The capital Edo was still rebuilding from the catastrophic *Meireki* fire of 1657 that killed over 100,000 people and reduced three-quarters of the city to ash. In this rebuilt metropolis, sword testing had become an essential service for wealthy samurai who needed proof that their blades would perform when called upon.

The *Kanbun* era saw an explosion of *tameshigiri* testing. With peace came prosperity, and with prosperity came the means to commission fine swords and pay exorbitant fees to have them tested. Only official government testers - the *Otameshi Goyo* - held the legal right to test blades on human bodies. The process was clinical and ritualized. Executed criminals, their heads already severed, were stacked in configurations dictated by the client. A vertical cut through the torso was *tatsudo*. Two bodies stacked horizontally, as tested on these blades, was *futatsu-do*. The difficulty of such cuts required exceptional skill - the blade had to maintain its angle through flesh, bone, and organs without deflection. A failed cut damaged both sword and reputation. The tests were expensive, roughly 10 *ryo* per test in contemporary prices - the equivalent of $10,000 USD today. The results were inscribed in gold inlay on the *nakago*, transforming the blade from mere weapon into certified instrument of war. These *kinzôgan* inscriptions by famous testers like *Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide* dramatically increased a sword's value, compensating the wealthy owner for the substantial testing fees.



*Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide* was the second generation in Japan's most prominent family of sword testers. His father, *Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa*, pioneered the profession and reputedly tested over 6,000 bodies during his career - an astounding figure that speaks to both the volume of executions in Edo and the demand for tested blades. *Kaemon Nagahisa* was so affected by the weight of his work that he rebuilt a temple in honour of the souls he had tested upon. His son Kanjuro inherited both the position and the psychological burden. By 1666, *Kanjurô* would have been in his prime testing years - mature enough to command top fees, skilled enough to handle the most challenging cuts. The succession of tests on this daishô set reveal his consistency: in May 1666 he tested the katana, cleanly severing two bodies. Fifteen months later in September 1667, he tested the wakizashi and again achieved the same result - two bodies, clean cuts. That both blades were forged by the same smith, *Kazusa no Suke Kaneshige*, and tested by the same hand within such a narrow window is extraordinarily rare.

To test a full *daishô* required double the expense and double the corpses. That both tests were performed by the same tester adds another layer of rarity - clients typically used whatever official tester was available. But here we see deliberate continuity: same smith, same tester, tests conducted just over a year apart. This wasn't random - this was planned. A samurai of significant means and taste assembled this set with precision, ensuring every element matched. The result is a time capsule from the *Kanbun* era, capturing a moment when Japan's new stability allowed warrior culture to focus on refinement rather than survival.








The wakizashi also features a ***gunome-midare hamon*** that is even thicker in ***nioguchi*** and undulates wider than the katana. Still, the hamon is consistent - the mark of a champion. Note the long ***ashi***, a trait that ***Kaneshige*** shares with grandmaster ***Kotetsu***, both of whom studied under ***shodai*** (1st gen) Kaneshige.

(wakizashi)


A crooked line of *nie* crystals that forms in the *hamon* is known as *inazuma* (bolt of lightning).
*inazuma*
(wakizashi)




The ***jihada*** is a beautiful mixture of a flowing ***nagare-hada*** and wood grain ***mokume***.

(wakizashi)

*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbards)

*Tanobe-sensei sayagaki* opportunity



*wakizashi*



*katana*

*Nijû-habaki x 2*

Two excellent swords forged by *Nidai Kaneshige* with nearly identical signatures and hamon patterns, identical two-body cutting tests performed by the same tester (*Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide*) just fifteen months apart.

The swords come with their own sets of koshirae, but as the swords were acquired separately, the mountings are mismatched and rather mediocre. The new caretaker faces a choice: claim the blades as they stand, or commission Unique Japan to build a fully matched *daishô* using quality antique fittings.

Custom *daishô koshirae* runs approximately $15,000 depending on the fittings selected and lacquerwork complexity. Production takes 18 months on average as all work is handcrafted in Japan by leading craftsmen. Payments are staged throughout. The result: a fully matching *tameshigiri daishô* of exceptional rarity.

Either path, Unique Japan will arrange *sayagaki* from *Tanobe-sensei* for both blades.

Examples of a past *daishô koshirae* projects produced by Unique Japan (we've built many over the years).



dragonfly-themed *daishô*



formal black-lacquered *daishô*



*Katana koshirae*

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
certification can be acquired
if requested by new owner



*katana tsuba* with a chrysanthemum-inspired design





*Menuki* feature an ***ukai*** (cormorant fishing) theme.

The cormorant works tirelessly alongside the fisherman, each fulfilling their role - a partnership embodying loyalty, persistence, and humble commitment to purpose.





*silver vines set upon iron, fine juxtaposition.*



*Fuchi-kashira (on katana koshirae)*
depicting clematis

Clematis symbolizes graceful strength and refined resilience.

It represents a balance of elegance and durability, and sometimes conveys themes of connection or loyalty through its climbing vines.




*Wakizashi koshirae*

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
certification can be acquired
if requested by new owner





*wakizashi tsuba* with a carved motif of wild horses and a stream







*mekugi-ana*

*mei* (signature)

*Menuki* on *wakizashi koshirae* is in the unique form of a *nakago*.
The gold inlaid signature is difficult to decipher.







*Fuchi-kashira (on wakizashi koshirae)*
depicting surging waves and dotted ***nanako***

As Japan is an island nation, waves are a recurring motif in Japanese art, symbolizing the forces of nature, the flow of life, and the strength to endure adversity.

In sword fittings, such waves often evoke the fierce spirit of the warrior – undaunted, fluid, and resilient in the face of chaos.



*Kozuka* (utility knife)

Fastened into a special notch built inside the ***saya*** (scabbard) and drawn through the slotted space of the ***tsuba***.



The ***kozuka*** bears the inscription "***Yamato Rikiô***" alongside a chrysanthemum crest. "***Yamato***" is an ancient name for Japan, while "***Rikiô***" signifies strength or power.

This piece likely symbolizes the enduring strength of the Japanese nation during a time of growing interaction with the outside world.






黒 (Kuro)
田 (da)
山 (Yama)
城 (shiro, no)
守 (Kami)
信 (Nobu)
利 (toshi)

Chrysanthemum crest

大 (Ya)

和 (mato)

力 (Riki)

王 (ô)


Two blades, one legacy.



*Recently Completed Custom Daishô Koshirae*
*A Shikkake Daishô* (ujdi010 from Catalogue 39)

Gorgeous theme of ocean, seashells, lobsters and crabs.

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA489

# A SHODAI TADATSUNA KATANA

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (MANJI ERA: 1658~1661)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Awataguchi Ômi no Kami Tadatsuna*** *(粟田口近江守 忠綱)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 71.2cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 0.9cm **Moto-haba:** 2.97cm **Weight:** 825g |
| **Jihada:** | *Beautifully forged dense ko-itame nashiji-hada and plentiful chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gorgeous gunome-chôji-midare, Ôsaka-yakidashi, sunagashi, ashi & kinsuji* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificates #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*) |
| **Sharpness**: | **Wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of sharp swords*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki** and **tsunagi-gaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

Born in 1609, ***Shodai Tadatsuna*** began his career in *Kyôto*, before relocating to *Ôsaka* during the *Keian* era. Admired for his high level of craftsmanship as well as his reputation for sharpness, this superb katana reflects the precise forging skills of the famed *Awataguchi* name. A mesmerizing *gunome-chôji-midare* showcases impressively long lines of *kinsuji* and beautiful brushed *sunagashi*. The elegant Edo period *koshirae* features a rich-red lacquered *saya*, a marvellous gold-laden *tsuba* attributed to armourer *Myôchin Munehisa* and meaningful set of lotus-designed menuki. This is a splendid *shintô* period katana that was signed with great pride by a true leader of his time.



Saki-kasane: 4.8mm

Moto-kasane: 7.6mm

Nakago: 21.3cm

Omosa: 825g



Kissaki: 3.06cm

Saki-haba: 1.94cm

Nagasa: 71.2cm

Sori: 0.9cm

Moto-haba: 2.97cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

*Awataguchi Ômi no Kami Tadatsuna* (粟田口近江守忠綱), first generation, was a pivotal figure in the formative period of *Ôsaka-Shintô*. Born in 1609 in *Himeji* of *Harima* Province, he began his career in *Kyôto*, where he absorbed the refined traditions of the capital before relocating to *Ôsaka* during the *Keian* era (1648-1652). He saw himself as a successor to the medieval *Awataguchi* lineage, a claim reflected in signatures such as "*Awataguchi Fujiwara Tadatsuna* (粟田口藤原忠綱)," and later received the titles *Ômi Daijô* and *Ômi no Kami*. Admired for his high level of craftsmanship as well as his reputation for sharpness, Tadatsuna is ranked *jô-saku* (superior) and is widely regarded as one of the smiths who defined the elegant and technically precise *Ôsaka* aesthetic of the 17th century.

The *Tadatsuna* lineage was later carried forward by his sons, especially the renowned second-generation *Tadatsuna*, known as *Ikkanshi* (一竿子), who expanded the family's *chôji* style into even more elaborate and spirited forms during the *Genroku* era (1688~1704).

This formidable and marvellously healthy katana displays an exquisitely packed *ko-itame* whose *nashi-ji* surface is animated by thick *ji-nie*, reflecting the the *Awataguchi* name. The sword is so densely forged that it weighs an impressive 825grams in bare blade alone. The *hamon* is a glorious *gunome-chôji-midare* in *ko-nie-deki*, with *ashi*, *sunagashi* and long lines of *kinsuji*. The sword also showcases classic *Ôsaka-yakidashi*, a hallmark of *Ôsaka-Shintô* production.

The sword is naturally accompanied by an NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate, confirming its authenticity and overall splendid workmanship.

The accompanying *koshirae* dates to the late *Edo* period, and carries a quiet understated samurai elegance with a *saya* that is finished in a deep, rich-red lacquer. Eye-catching gold accents appear throughout the fittings such as on the marvellous *tsuba* attributed to armourer *Myôchin Munehisa*. and lotus-designed *menuki.* A beautiful set of gold rimmed *fuchi-kashira* attributed to *Chikuzanken Motohisa* carries depictions of the imperial chrysanthemum - discreet, yet powerful. All told, this is a superbly made katana to cherish that signed with great pride by a true leader in his field.





Location: *Ôsaka, Settsu province*
School name: *Awataguchi*
Title name: *Ômi no Kami* (Lord of Ômi province)
Swordsmith: *Tadatsuna* (first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*ô-sujikai-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

粟 (Awa)

田 (ta)
口 (guchi)

近 (Ô)

江 (mi, no)

守 (Kami)

忠 (Tada)

綱 (tsuna)



*shodai*
(1st gen.)

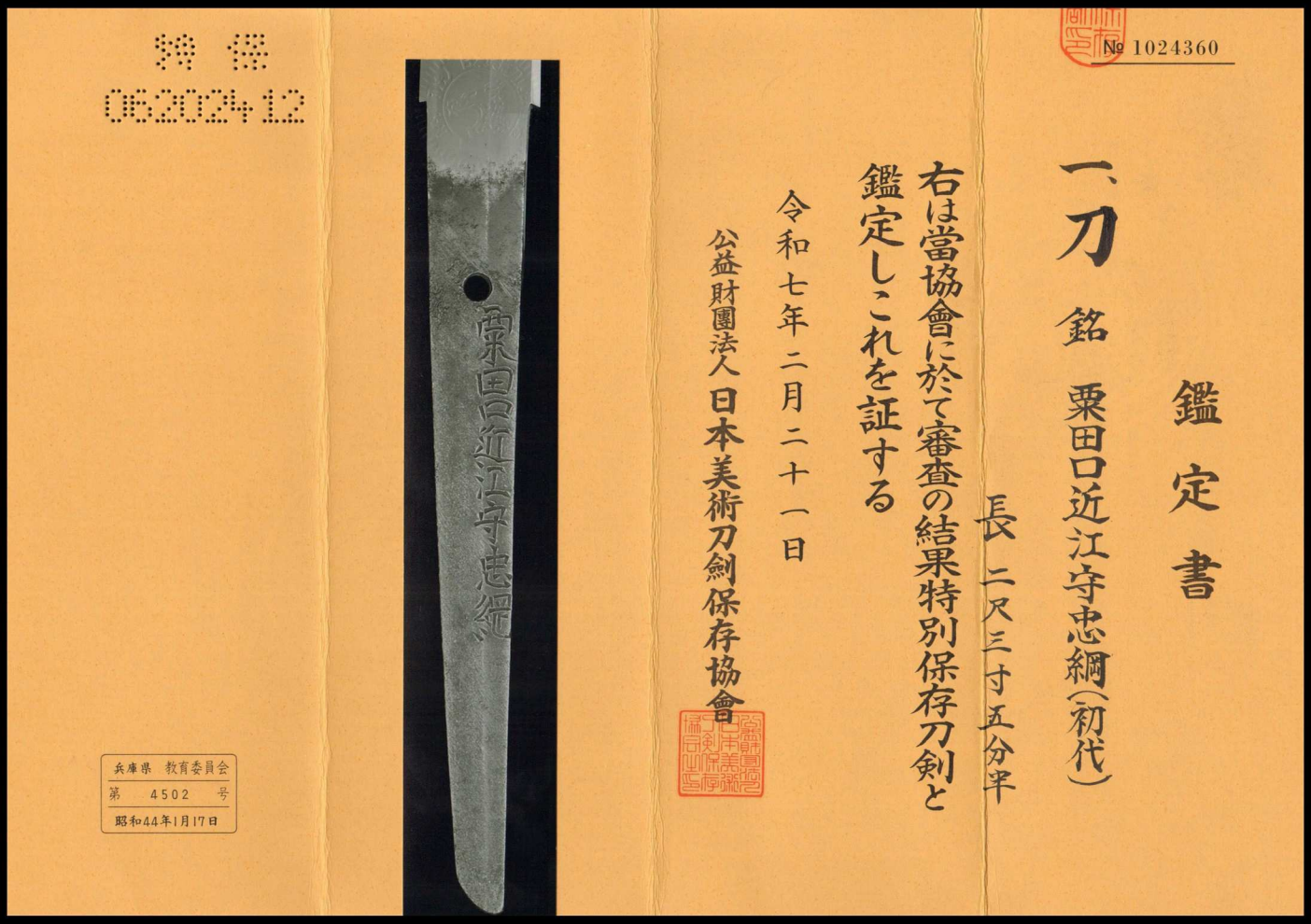
*nidai*
(2nd gen.)

The *nakago* terminates in a *ha-agari kurijiri*, a form in which the rounded tip rises toward the cutting-edge side. Both the first and second generations of the *Tadatsuna* lineage share this characteristic.



Top smiths sign in a top manner. Take a moment and admire the sheer number of chisel strokes hammered by ***shodai Tadatsuna*** just to form one ***kanji*** character. There are literally hundreds of individual punches to create this confident, well-rounded ***mei*** (signature).

Attention to detail matters. If you are proud of your work, sign with pride.




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 7th year of Reiwa (2025), February 21st

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Awataguchi Ômi no Kami Tadatsuna (shodai)*

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

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




粟田口近江守忠綱
*Awataguchi Ômi no Kami Tadatsuna*
Awataguchi Ômi no Kami Tadatsuna

初代作也
*Shodai saku nari*
Crafted by first generation Tadatsuna

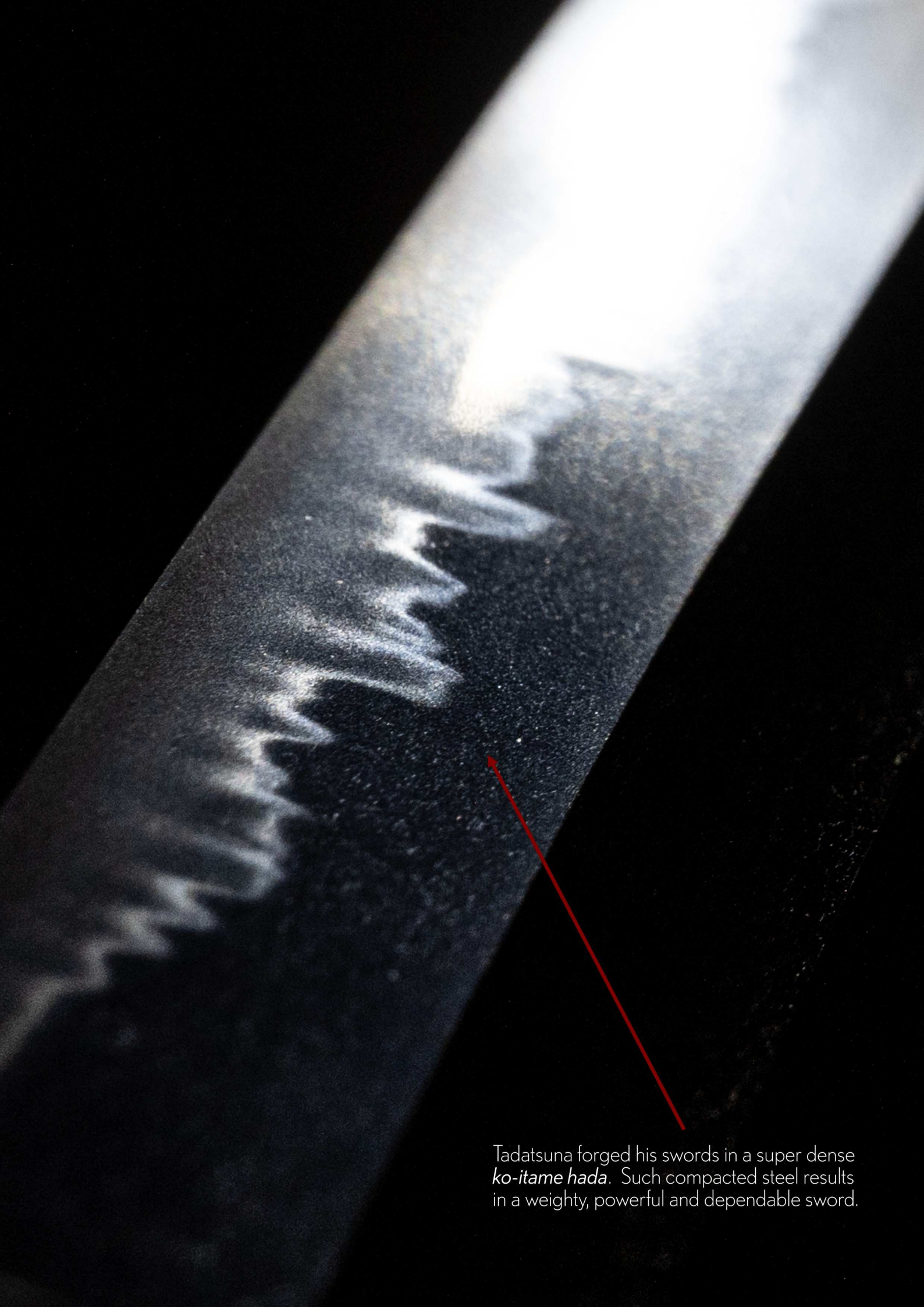
時代萬治頃
*Jidai Manji goro*
Around Manji period (1658~1661)

長貳尺参寸五分半有之
*Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun 5-bu han kore ari*
Blade length 71.2 cm

令和七乙巳年神無月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Kannazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the tenth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (October 2025)







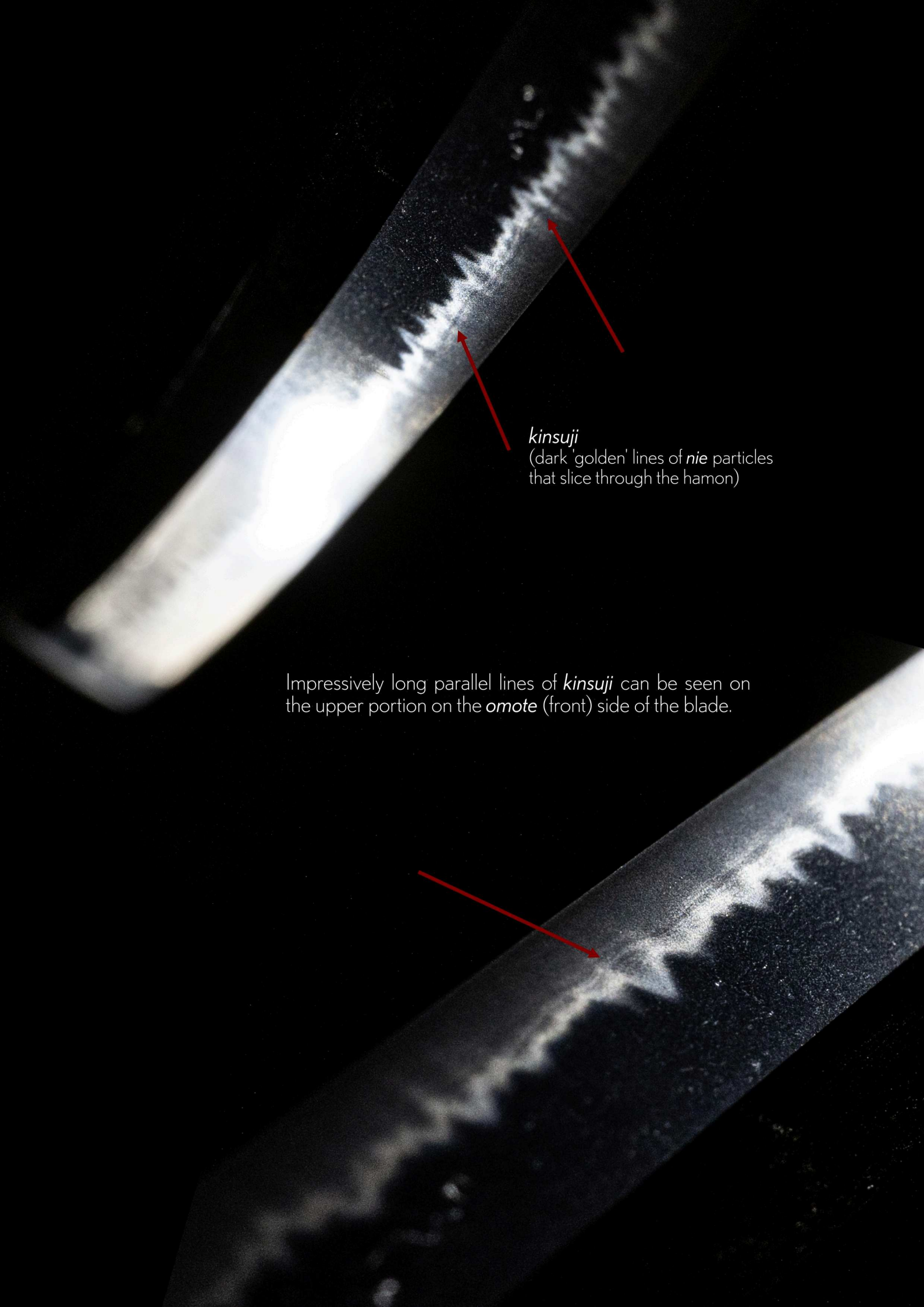
Tadatsuna forged his swords in a super dense *ko-itame hada*. Such compacted steel results in a weighty, powerful and dependable sword.



The ***katana*** features a classic ***Ôsaka-yakidashi*** - a distinctive feature of ***Osaka-Shintô*** blades, where the ***hamon*** begins to widen with a gentle ***notare*** before developing into a wavy ***chôji midare*** pattern.



The *chôji-midare hamon* dances across the steel in rhythmic clusters, vivid as a heartbeat.


*kinsuji*
(dark 'golden' lines of ***nie*** particles
that slice through the hamon)
Impressively long parallel lines of ***kinsuji*** can be seen on
the upper portion on the ***omote*** (front) side of the blade.



*Peak excellence.*

Superior *(jô-saku)* ranked swordsmith *Tadatsuna* was born in *Himeji* in *Harima* province. He initially worked in *Yamashiro* province *(Kyôto)* and later moved to *Ôsaka*, receiving the honourary title *Ômi no Daijô.* He was subsequently promoted to the title *Ômi no Kami*, which this sword is signed as. Dated signatures range from the sixth year of *Kan'ei* era (1629) to the year of his death in the fourth year of *Enpô* era (1676) when he died at the age of 67.






*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



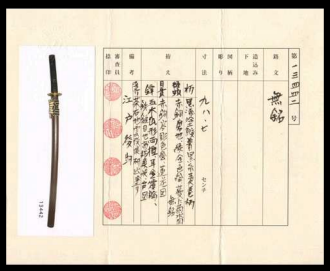
crisp gold *habaki* built on
a copper foundation



*Cha-tsurume-ji-nuri saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(茶蔓目地塗鞘打刀拵)

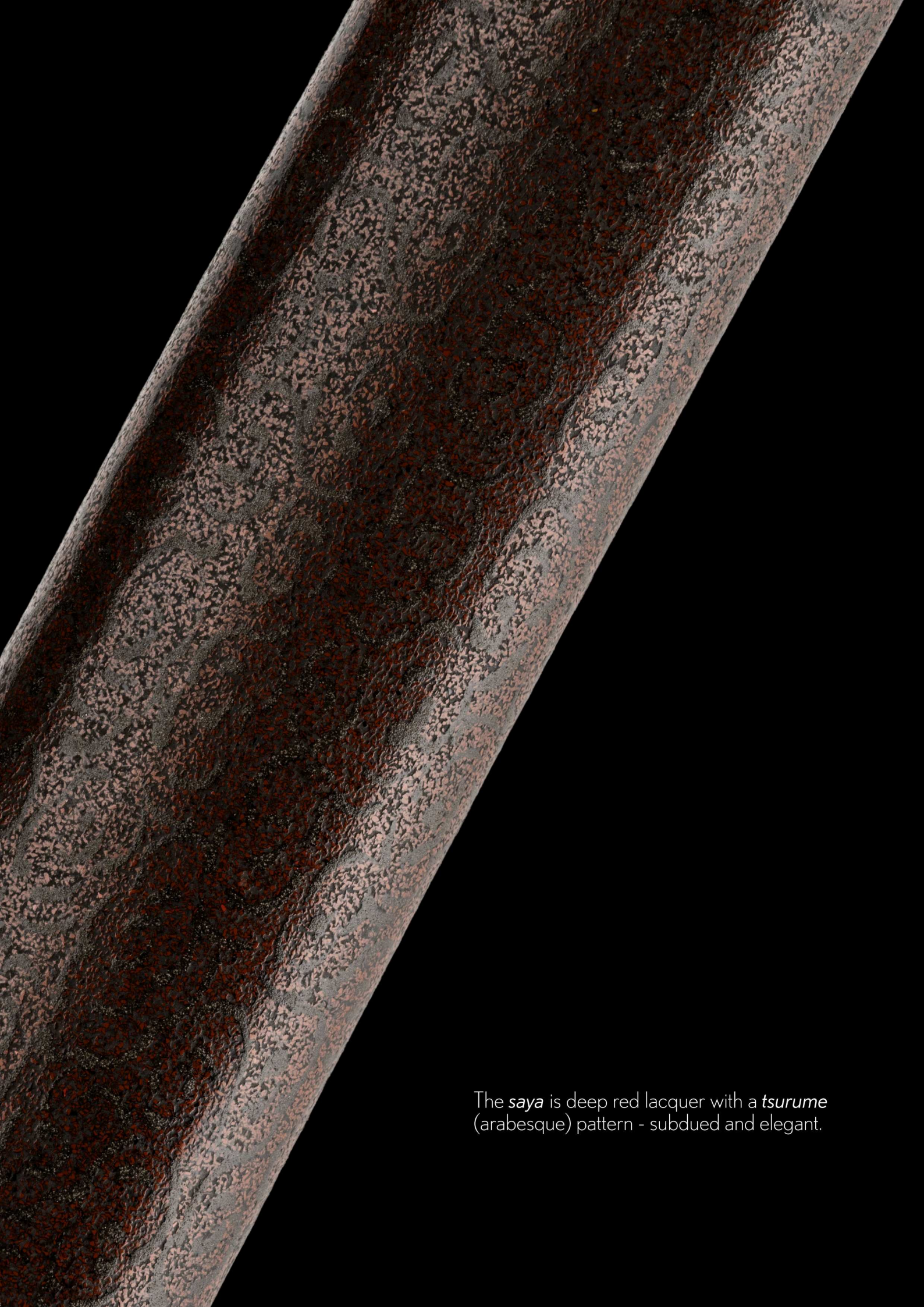
*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in brown with*
*ivy-like texture*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)

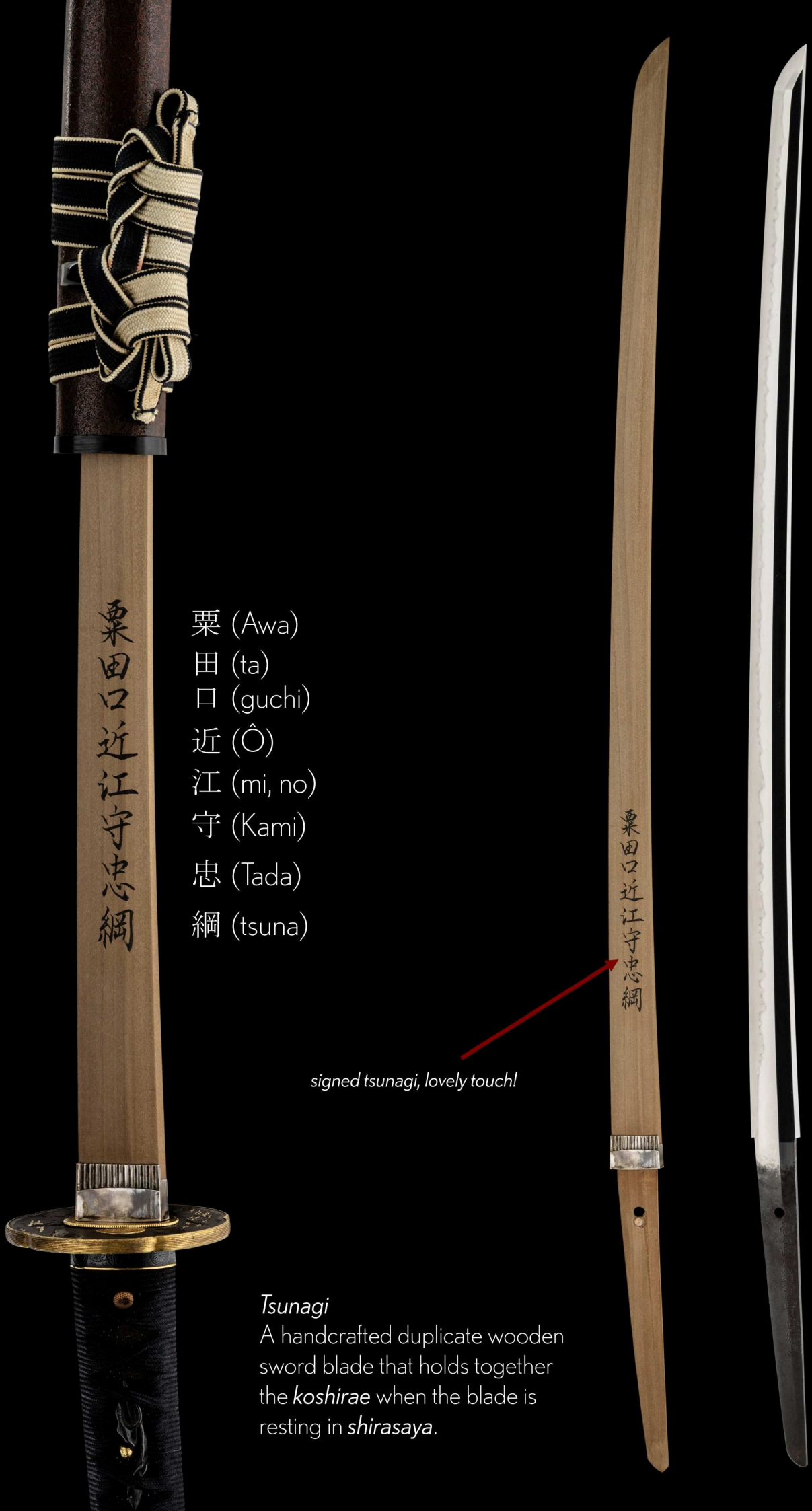


*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*





The *saya* is deep red lacquer with a *tsurume* (arabesque) pattern - subdued and elegant.




粟 (Awa)
田 (ta)
口 (guchi)
近 (Ô)
江 (mi, no)
守 (Kami)
忠 (Tada)
綱 (tsuna)

*signed tsunagi, lovely touch!*

*Tsunagi*
A handcrafted duplicate wooden sword blade that holds together the ***koshirae*** when the blade is resting in ***shirasaya***.



This beautiful *tsuba* has been attributed to the hand of *Myôchin Muneyoshi* (明珍宗義), crafted during the late Edo period, circa 1800. The *Myôchin* family was a lineage of armourers active from the *Kamakura* period through to the *Edo* period, long renowned for their skill in armour and metalwork. By the mid-*Edo* era, they expanded their activities to major castle towns across Japan and produced a wide range of sword fittings alongside their traditional armour work.

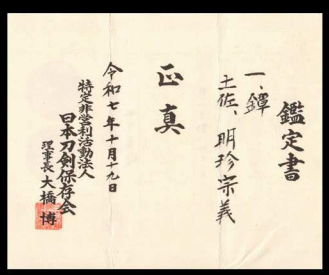
*Muneyoshi* was the son of *Sôei* (宗栄) and served with his father as an official craftsman of the *Yamauchi* (山内) clan. Under domain orders he traveled to *Edo* to study with *Akasaka Tadanori* (赤坂忠則), and he also received guidance from *Higo* metalworkers. These influences shaped a style that blended martial strength with artistic sensibility, earning him broad accolades.

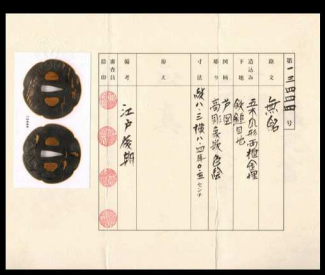
This particular *tsuba* was forged on a well-composed iron plate and features tall relief carvings of reeds with selective gold *zôgan* highlights. The *fukurin* (protective rim) has been fitted in layers of gold, and the *hitsu-ana* (holes for the *kogai* and *kozuka*) was further filled with gold, a subtle point of luxury that only a samurai with wealth would have been able to afford.

*attentive detail on the depicted reeds*

*gold layered design*

(reverse)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*





These lovely ***menuki*** represent lotus flowers, carved in ***shakudô*** and finished with subtle gold accents that are applied to the petals.  In Buddhist tradition, the lotus is revered as a flower that rises unsullied from muddy waters, embodying purity and spiritual awakening.





This *fuchigashira* has been attributed to *Chikuzanken Motohisa* (築山軒元寿), who served as a disciple of *Ôkawa Motosada* (大川元貞), the official metalworker of the *Mito* domain in *Hitachi* Province.

The work is executed on a *shakudô* ground and decorated with carved vines in *kebori*, forming the foundation for an elegant design of chrysanthemum motifs. The sophisticated composition reflects the elevated status (and taste) of the clientele, possibly a member of the imperial family. Like his master *Motosada*, *Motohisa* is believed to have produced fittings for high-ranking *samurai* and *daimyô* patrons.

The surface of the ***fuchi*** is engraved with the character "dai (大)."

It is likely that this ***fuchi-kashira*** was originally made as part of a matched ***daishô*** set, and that the craftsman marked it with this character as a practical notation to distinguish the katana from its ***shô*** (wakizashi).





*Koshirae* bag in jubilant pattern.

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uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA488

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

# A SHIKKAKE KATANA

## UNSIGNED, KOTÔ LATE KAMAKURA ~ NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (1288~1342)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Shikkake school*** (尻懸, attribution) |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 64.4cm (*o-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.1cm **Moto-haba:** 2.69cm **Weight:** 635g |
| **Jihada:** | *Textbook shikkake-hada displaying mokume-hada and flowing masame, chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Lovely ko-gunome with sunagashi, kinsuji, tobiyaki and plenty of ashi* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fk and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki** & **tsunagi-gaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Meiji koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# $12,000

The ***Shikkake*** school, one of the five classic traditions of *Yamato-den*, was based in the *Shikkake* area behind *Tôdai-ji* temple in *Nara*. The school produced fine swords primarily for temple protection and identifiable by their skilled, distinctive workmanship. This *katana* is *ô-suriage* blade that retains a clean, graceful presence. The *jihada* is a glorious example of *shikkake-hada* combining *mokume-hada* with clear straight-lined *masame-hada* in the *yakiba*. The hamon is bright and wavy *ko-gunome* interwoven with *ashi*, *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and *tobiyaki*. A beautiful set of *koshirae* centres around a gorgeous *saya* featuring luxurious *mokume*-style black and gold lacquer work that was inspired by the *jihada* of the sword. The *tsuba* is signed by *Chôshu Tomonori* and takes the form of a meaningful lotus flower and evokes a spiritual impermanence. Powerful gold cloud-dragon *menuki* embody both ferocity and protection, qualities revered by samurai warriors throughout Japan's history.

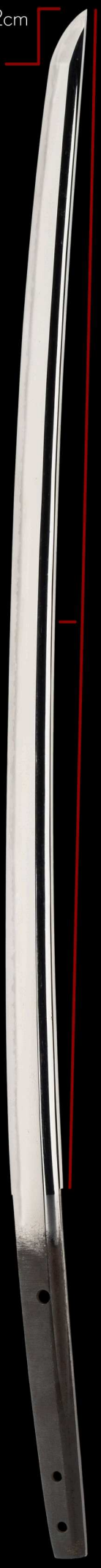


Saki-kasane: 3.5mm

Moto-kasane: 5.0mm

Omosa: 635g

Nakago: 19.1cm



Kissaki: 3.2cm

Saki-haba: 1.85cm

Nagasa: 64.4cm

Sori: 1.1cm

Moto-haba: 2.69cm

Mekugi-ana: 3

The *Shikkake* (尻懸) school, one of the five traditions of *Yamato-den* (大和伝), was active from the late *Kamakura* to the early *Nanbokuchô* period. Based in the *Shikkake* area behind *Tôdai-ji Temple* in *Nara*, the school was part of a group of temple-affiliated swordsmiths. While its founder is traditionally said to be *Norihiro* (則弘), no signed works by him are known to exist. His son *Norinaga* (則長) is regarded as the de facto originator of the *Shikkake* lineage. These smiths produced robust swords primarily for temple use rather than commercial distribution, and many of their extant blades are unsigned but identifiable by their distinctive workmanship.

This katana is a unsigned and *ô-suriage* blade that retains a clean, graceful silhouette suggestive of its original long length. The *jihada* is a glorious example of *shikkake-hada* combining primarily *mokume-hada* in the body of the sword with clear straight-lined *masame-hada* in the *yakiba* (hardened area) - especially prominent in the *kissaki.* The *hamon* is bright *ko-gunome* interwoven with *ashi*, *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and *tobiyaki*. This is classic *Yamato-den* workmanship of the *kotô* period, where the small details carry big impact. As such, the sword was rightfully awarded a *Tokubetsu Hozon* certificate from the NBTHK.

Its beautiful set of *koshirae* has been dated to the *Meiji* period (1876~1912) and centres around a gorgeous *saya* featuring luxurious *mokume*-style black and gold lacquerwork that echoes the steel grain of the sword. The stunning signed *tsuba* by *Chôshu Tomonori* is in the form of a lovely lotus flower and evokes a spiritual impermanence of all living matter. Powerful gold cloud-dragon *menuki* are a symbol of martial strength and divine power, embodying both ferocity and protection, qualities revered by samurai warriors throughout history.

Centuries-old and commanding. This *Shikkake* katana balances sophistication with martial presence.





Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
ujka488 - A Shikkake Katana

uniquejapan.com/ujka488-video

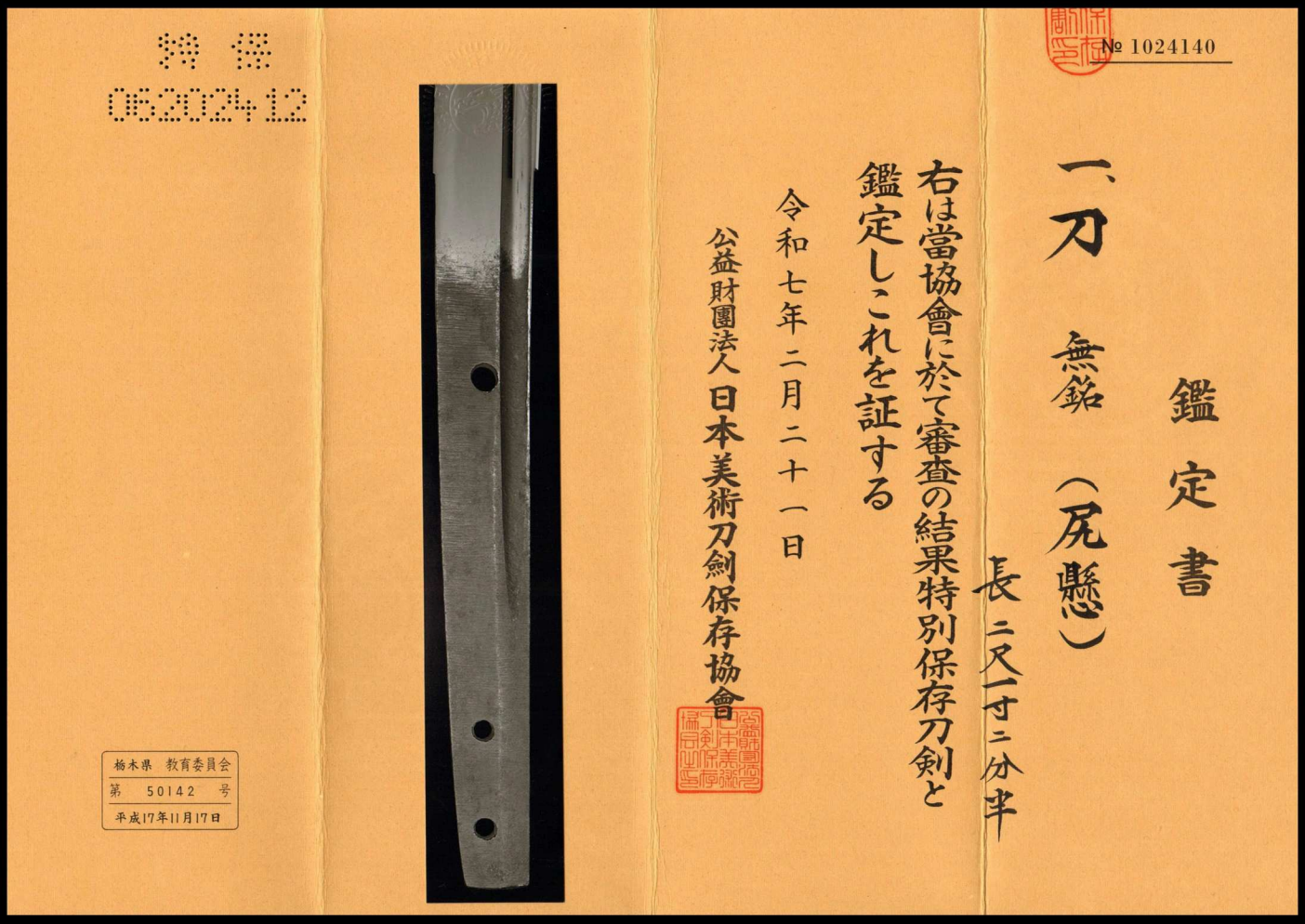




*nakago* (tang)

Location: *Yamato province*
School: *Shikkake*

*ô-suriage-nakago* (shortened tang)
*kiri-yasurime* (horizontal file marks)




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 7th year of Reiwa (2025), February 21st

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Shikkake*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 1-sun 2-bu han (64.4cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




和州尻懸
*Washû Shikkake*
Shikkake school from Yamato province

大磨上無銘也時代鎌倉後期乃至南北朝前期
*Ô-suriage mumei nari, jidai Kamakura kôki naishi Nanbokuchô zenki*
Ô-suriage, unsigned, from the late Kamakura to early Nanbokuchô period

長貳尺一寸二分半有之
*Nagasa 2-shaku 1-sun 2-bu han kore ari*
Blade length 64.4 cm

令和八丙午年如月吉日誌之
*Reiwa hachi hinoe-umadoshi Kisaragi kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the second month in the eighth year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Horse (February 2026)





The *hi* (groove) carved into the surface serve both practical and aesthetic purposes. Functionally, they help reduce the overall weight of the blade without sacrificing its structural integrity - allowing for improved handling and responsiveness while maintaining strength. Artistically, a groove adds a sense of rhythm, symmetry, and depth to the blade's visual design.

This sword features a wide ***bôhi***, a thick straight groove running along the blade.






The ***Shikkake*** school was known for a forging pattern that features ***masame*** (straight grain) in the ***hamon*** area with a ***mokume*** (burl grain) closer to the ***shinogi*** ridge line. This unique characteristic is showcased perfectly on this sword.




A bright ***ko-gunome*** with pointed ***ashi*** (legs) gives the hamon an imposing personality.




This image captures the ***Shikkake-hada*** brilliantly with large rounded ***mokume-hada*** near the ***shinogi*** and a straight ***masame*** along the ***habuchi*** (tempered edge).

There is a genuine ***kotô*** period feel to this katana. With its deep lines of ***kinsuji*** mixed with ***sunagashi, chikei*** and ***tobiyaki***, it's a sword that offers an invitation to the distant samurai past.





History flows like a river.
Harness that energy.




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



Beautiful gold *habaki*
with copper base



*Kin-mokume-nuri saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(金杢目塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in gold with*
*wood grain texture*

Crafted during the
Meiji period
(1868~1912)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*





The ***saya*** is black lacquer with a gold ***mokume*** pattern - swirling cycles suggesting reincarnation. A fitting design for a blade from the ***Shikkake*** school, whose smiths worked for temples.




無 (Mu)
銘 (mei)

尻 (Shi)
懸 (kkake)

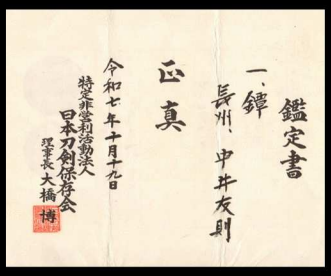



*Tsunagi*
A handcrafted duplicate wooden sword blade that holds together the ***koshirae*** when the blade is resting in ***shirasaya***.



This *tsuba* is the work of *Nakai Tomonori* (中井友則), a metalworker active in late *Edo*-period *Hagi*, *Chôshû* province. *Chôshû* was one of the regions in Japan with the highest concentration of *tsuba* artisans. While the most prominent school there descended from the *Umetada* lineage that had migrated from *Kyôto*, the *Nakai* family had already established itself as a distinguished line of *tsuba* makers prior to their arrival. Their style traces its roots to the *Shôami* tradition.

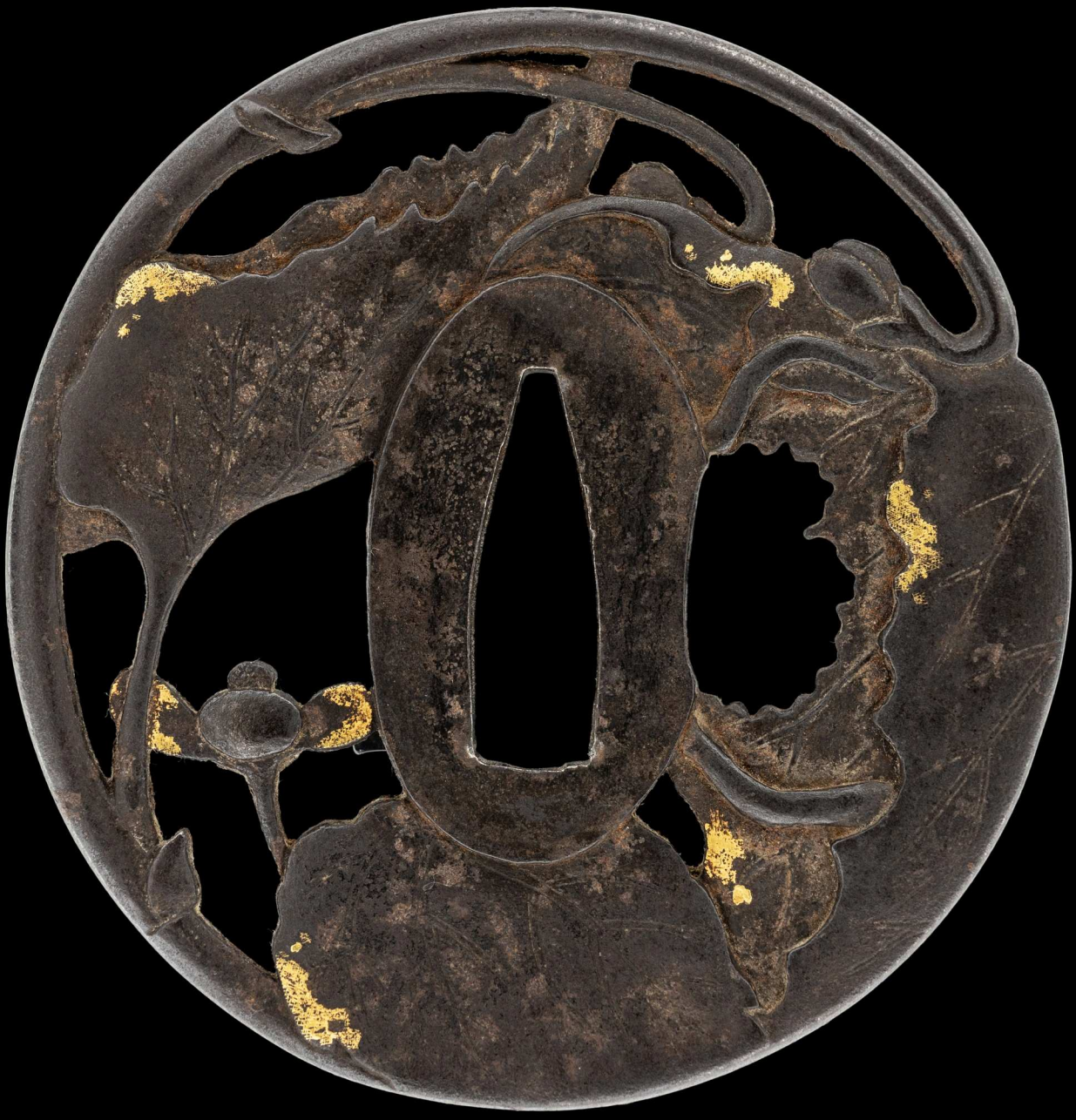
The motif is that of a lotus flower. Executed in masterful openwork with deep carving, even the *hitsu-ana* has been seamlessly integrated into the leaf design. The *tsuba* was originally adorned with extensive gold inlay, giving it a lavish appearance. Now, with only traces of the gold remaining, it exudes a quiet elegance that evokes the impermanence of all things.


鑑定書
一、鍔
長州、中井友則
正真
令和七年十月十九日
特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋 博



*Chôshû Hagi jû Nakai Tomonori saku*
crafted by ***Nakai Tomonori***, a resident of ***Hagi*** in ***Chôshû*** province





(reverse)



A mysteriousness resonates from the ***tsuka*** (hilt) with its ***samekawa*** (rayskin) lacquered in black, and further braided in a traditional black silk. A waxy look has developed on the silk through years of natural use by its former owner, possibly a former ***iaido*** practitioner.



A solid gold cloud dragon (***unryû) menuki*** emerges from the depths below. In Japanese iconography, the cloud dragon is often seen as a symbol of martial strength and divine power, embodying both ferocity and protection – qualities revered by warriors throughout history.







The *fuchi* and *kashira* were crafted by different artisans.

The *fuchi* has been attributed to the *Kusakari* (草刈) school of *Sendai*, known for its fine linear *hira-zôgan* inlay work, a hallmark of the school. Its motifs include a combination of two interlocking circles – known as the *wachigai-mon* – paired with pine needles. The *wachigai-mon* is a motif seen as far back as the *Heian* period on scrolls carrying Buddhist symbolism, said to represent the interlocking realms of wisdom and reason.

The *kashira* features a dynamic wave design with subtle touches of gold that harmonizes with the gold-lacquered *saya* (scabbard).



A katana that draws you in.





*Koshirae* bag with floral pattern.

# Certify, Restore, Sell & Create!

Unique Japan offers full-service support for Japanese swords and fittings.
All work is performed in Japan through our network of master craftsmen and women.

## Certification & Authentication

* NBTHK and NTHK-NPO ***shinsa*** submissions (swords and fittings)
* **Sayagaki** services with *Tanobe-sensei* and calligrapher *Nozomi-san*
* **Oshigata** (sword/hamon tracing on a scroll with a large choice of background)

## Restoration & Maintenance

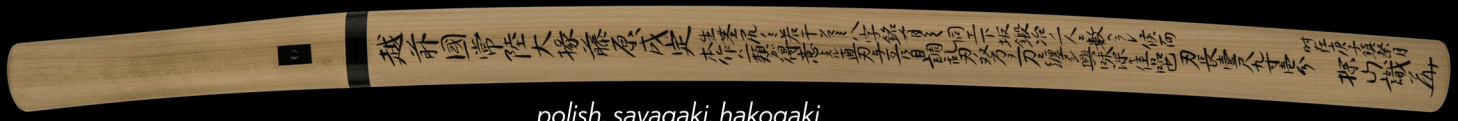
* Professional polishing (standard to ***Jûyô***-level quality)
* **Shirasaya** making (standard to premium with horn fittings)
* **Habaki** fabrication (gold, silver, copper in any design)
* **Koshirae** restoration (tightening, scabbard repair, lacquer refinishing)
* **Tsuka-maki** (silk or leather in any colour, weave, or braid)
* **Otoshi** presentation boxes for your beautiful ***tsuba, menuki, fuch-kashira***, etc.

## Custom Work & Storage

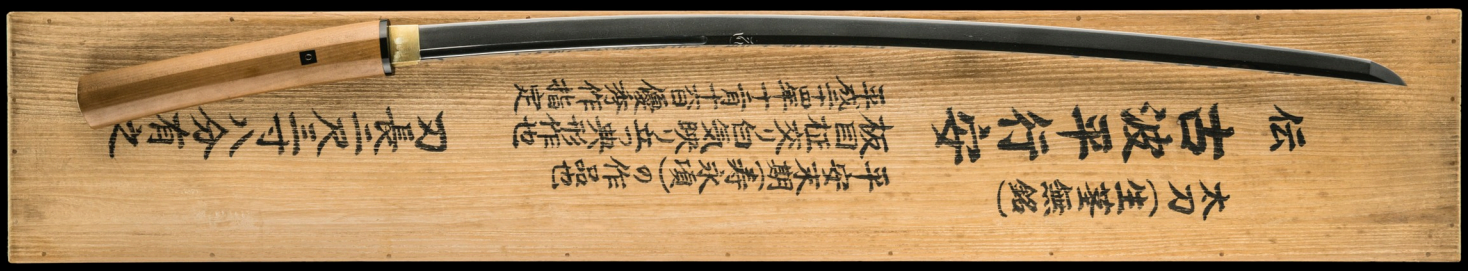
* Museum-quality custom koshirae projects
* Presentation boxes ***(otoshi)*** for ***tsuba, menuki, fuchi-kashira, mitokoromono, etc.***
* Storage boxes with ***hakogaki*** (humidification options available)

## Consignment Sales

* Sell your swords through Unique Japan (qualifying conditions apply)

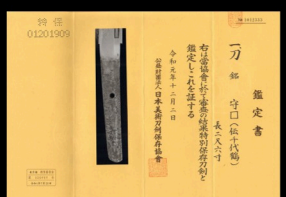


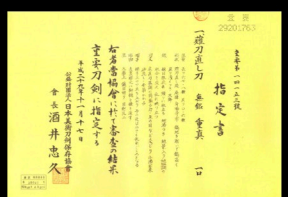
*polish, sayagaki, hakogaki*

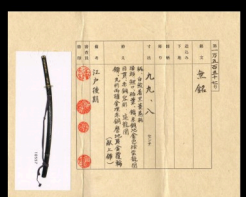




*tsuka-maki*

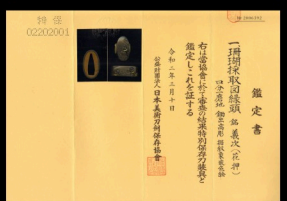


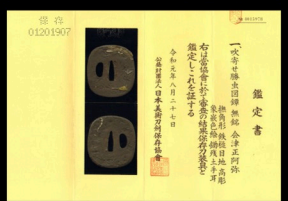


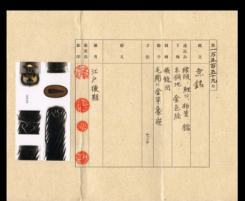




*habaki* creations



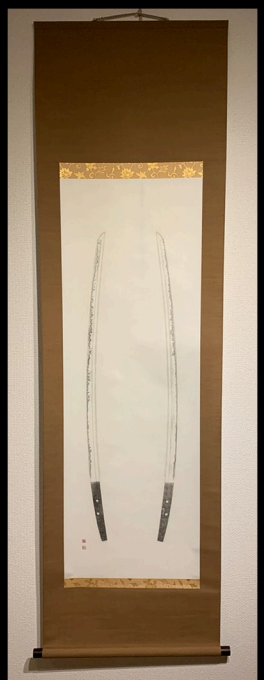




All NBTHK and NTHK-NPO Shinsa authentication services

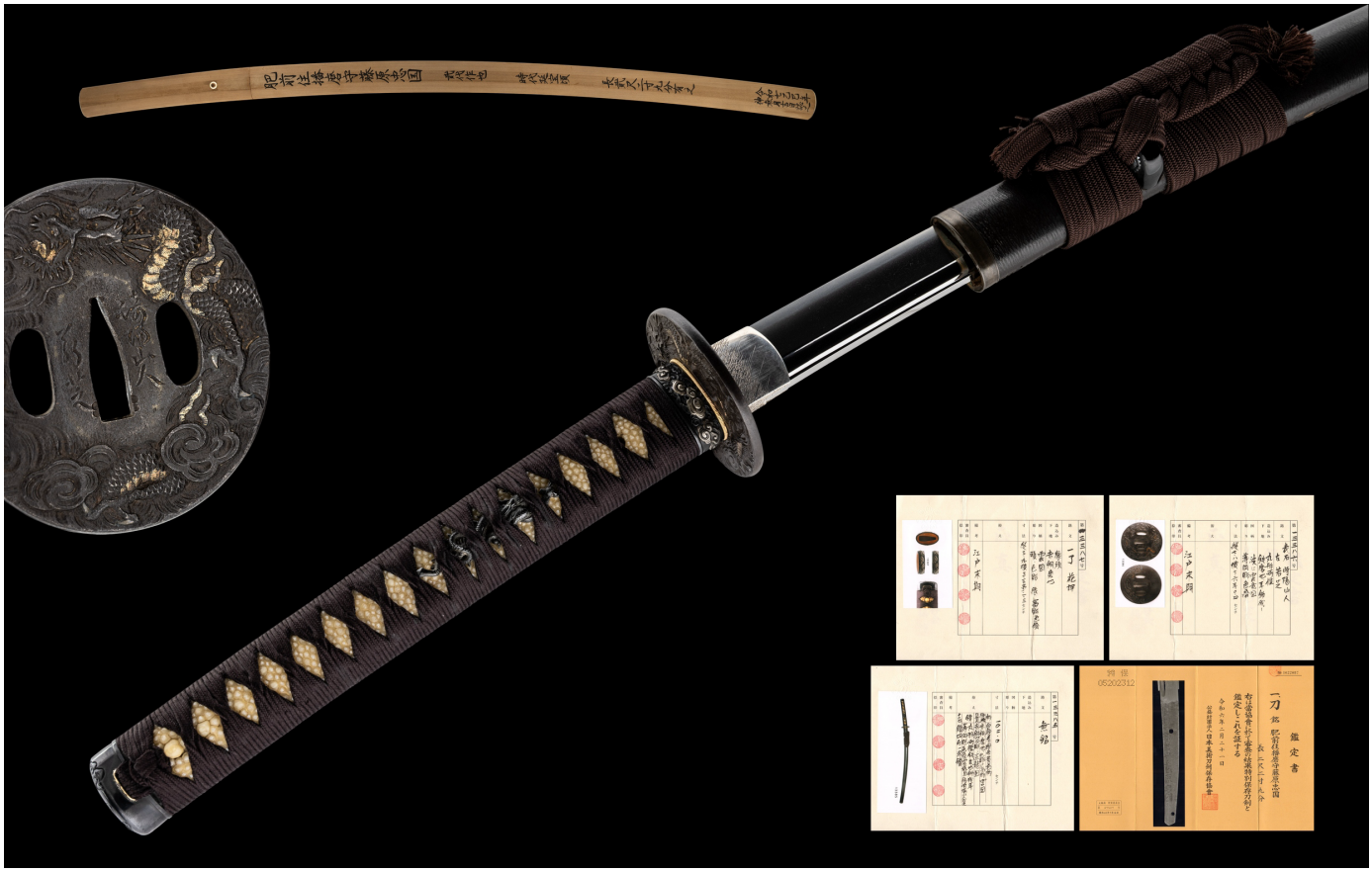


*otoshi* boxes



*oshigata* scrolls

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA490

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

# A NIDAI TADAKUNI KATANA

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ EDO PERIOD (ENPÔ ERA: 1673~1681)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Hizen-jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni*** *(肥前住播磨守藤原忠国)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 69.6cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 2.0cm **Moto-haba:** 2.99cm **Weight:** 655g |
| **Jihada:** | *Splendid konuka-hada with wonderful ji-nie and plenty of chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Brilliant chû-suguha with ko-midare, kinsuji in ko-nie deki* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*) |
| **Sharpness**: | **Wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of sharp swords*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki** & **tsunagi-gaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo period dragon koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# $11,500

This is a terrific katana by second generation ***Tadakuni***, a *jô-saku* and *wazamono* ranked swordsmith that simply made quality swords for the samurai class. The blade features gorgeous, well-forged *Hizen konuka-hada*, a bright beautiful *suguha hamon* and everything is housed in a handsome late Edo-period dragon-themed koshirae. The *Enpô* era has a reputation for having had some of the finest swords crafted within this time frame and this blade is no exception. Other notable smiths from *Enpô* include *Sukehiro* and *Kotetsu*. If you have not started a Japanese sword collection yet, this curvy katana with loads of certificates is an ideal piece to kick start your *nihontô* journey.


Saki-kasane: 4.0mm
Moto-kasane: 6.4mm
Kissaki: 3.18cm
Saki-haba: 1.89cm
Nagasa: 69.6cm
Nakago: 20.3cm
Sori: 2.0cm
Omosa: 655g
Moto-haba: 2.99cm
Mekugi-ana: 2

Second-generation *Nidai Harima no Kami Tadakuni* (播磨守忠国) inherited more than just his father's name - he inherited a legacy. His father, the first *Tadakuni*, had established their line as one of the respected smiths serving the *Ogi* branch of the *Nabeshima* clan in *Saga*. With roots reaching back to maestro *Hizen Tadayoshi*, young Tadakuni came of age during the *Enpô* and *Genroku* eras (1673~1704), when the refined *Hizen* aesthetic was being perfected sword after sword.

Nidai Tadakuni blades earned their reputation as prestigious gifts exchanged between domains. The rankings speak for themselves: *wazamono* for cutting ability, *shintô jô-saku* for craftsmanship.

This curvy, elegant katana reflects the splendid quality of swords crafted during the *Enpô* era. It features a well-crafted *bô-hi* (groove) that quickens the katana for any potential duel. The *jigane* has been expertly forged with fine lines of *chikei* resulting in a *ko-itame hada* scattered with minute *ji-nie*. This is the famous *konuka-hada* texture, literally "rice-bran skin," that makes Hizen steel shimmer like silk under the light.

The hamon flows with serene confidence: *chû-suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, the *nioi* rich and deep, with pockets of *ko-nie*. Subtle lines of *kinsuji* emerge in the bright hamon as tiny gifts when admiring the sword under the light. The *nakago* remains *ubu* (unaltered), with a small additional *mekugi-ana* as reinforcement, possibly for a past cutting test(s).

The *koshirae* amplifies the sword's quiet strength through a unified theme of clouds and dragons - classic symbols of power and transcendence. Their swirling forms in understated relief, while the *saya* reveals something special: layers of *aogai-mijin* (powdered mother-of-pearl) applied over a textured *ishime* (stone) ground. It catches the eye like dragon scales catching the light.





Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
ujka490 - A Nidai Tadakuni Katana

uniquejapan.com/ujka490-video



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

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

(Hi) 肥

(zan) 前

(jû) 住

(hari) 播

(ma, no) 磨

(Kami) 守

(Fuji) 藤

(wara) 原

(Tada) 忠

(kuni) 國



The tang end (*nakago-jiri*) is shaped in a rounded "*kurijiri*" style, slightly rising toward the cutting edge (*ha*), a traditional form known as *ha-agari kurijiri*.

(*ura*, reverse)

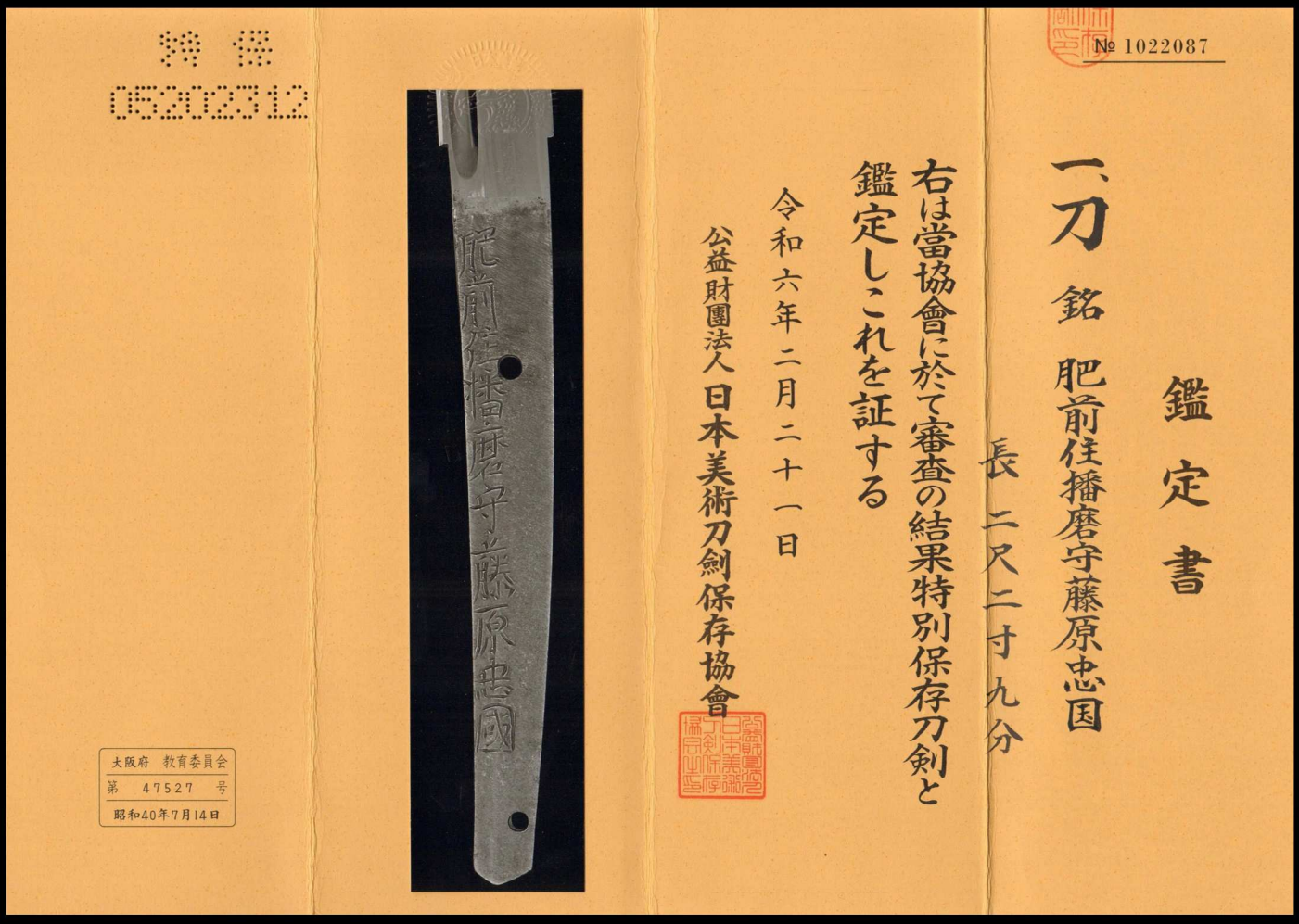


Near the tang end, a small and discreet additional ***mekugi-ana*** has been made, often referred to as a "reserved" or "subtle" placement.

Such holes were typically added to strengthen the mounting during actual use rather than for display, a feature frequently found on blades intended for ***tameshigiri*** (test cutting).

Although this sword bears no cutting inscription, the presence of this modest reinforcement suggests that it was forged with genuine practicality in mind – a weapon conceived to perform, not merely to impress.

*hikae* (spare) *mekugi-ana*




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 6th year of Reiwa (2024), February 21st

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Hizen-jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu (69.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




肥前住播磨守藤原忠国
*Hizen jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni*
Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni, a resident of Hizen province

貳代作也
*Nidai saku nari*
Crafted by the second generation

時代延宝頃
*Jidai Enpô goro*
Around Enpô period (1673~1681)

長貳尺二寸九分有之
*Nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu kore ari*
Blade length 69.6 cm

令和七乙巳年神無月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Kannazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the tenth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (October 2025)

## The Enpô Era (1673-1681): The Calm Before Cultural Explosion

The *Enpô* era began in September 1673, triggered by a great fire in *Kyôto* and other disasters - the Japanese tradition of changing era names to mark calamitous events and hopefully reverse the bad fortune. The name itself meant "Prolonged Wealth," an optimistic declaration at a moment when prosperity was just beginning to take hold. Japan was 70 years into *Tokugawa* rule. The violence of the *Sengoku-jidai* was a distant memory. The borders had been sealed for over 30 years. The *sankin-kôtai* system was draining *daimyô* resources and keeping them loyal. And for the first time in Japanese history, ordinary townspeople - *chônin* merchants and artisans - had enough wealth to pursue education and culture previously reserved for samurai.

*Shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna* ruled through most of *Enpô*, but he was weak and indecisive, relying almost entirely on advisors. When he died suddenly in 1680 at age 38, a succession crisis erupted. Should the shogunate pass to imperial blood rather than Tokugawa? One advisor even suggested breaking 200 years of warrior rule and returning power to the emperor's sons. But *Hotta Masatoshi*, *Ietsuna*'s most brilliant *councillor*, pushed for *Tsunayoshi* - *Ietsuna*'s younger brother and the fourth son of the *Tokugawa Iemitsu*. In 1681, just as *Enpô* ended, *Tsunayoshi* became the fifth shogun. He would preside over the *Genroku* era (1688-1704), the absolute cultural peak of the Edo period.

## Swords Forged in Gathering Prosperity

This katana from *Nidai Harima no Kami Tadakuni* was forged during *Enpô*, that transitional moment when Japan's long peace was finally translating into real prosperity. The economy was expanding. Cities were growing. The merchant class was rising. And swordsmiths were responding - not to the demands of constant warfare, but to a new market of wealthy patrons who valued beauty, refinement, and technical perfection. The *Hizen* school where Tadakuni worked had roots back to grandmaster *Tadayoshi*, and by *Enpô* they were perfecting that distinctive aesthetic: graceful curvature, bright nie-work, the famous *konuka-hada* texture that made the steel glow like silk.

*Enpô*-era blades caught that perfect moment - still crafted with the technical discipline inherited from generations of war, but increasingly focused on aesthetic achievement.



*Tokugawa Ietsuna* (September 7, 1641 – June 4, 1680)
Fourth shogun of the Tokugawa dynasty of Japan who was in office from 1651 to 1680. He was the eldest son of *Tokugawa Iemitsu*.







The ***kissaki*** drifts through the shadows - silent steel lit only by intention...




These beautiful brushed lines of ***kinsuji*** appear like little gifts from swordsmith Tadakuni. A gentle smile and nod of appreciation is all that is required when admiring the sword under the light.




*Hizen-to* (swords of Hizen province) enjoy a fine reputation for the pure 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 literally shines with gorgeous swirls of ***chikei*** 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 ***nioiguchi***. Therefore, we can refer to the ***hamon*** as being in ***nie-deki***, comprising mostly of tiny nie crystals which is consistent with the Hizen tradition.




*nijûbu-ba*
area of the hamon where it splits and runs somewhat parallel.

Often seen on ***kotô*** period swords forged in the *Yamato* tradition, Tadakuni was clearly inspired to reproduce this subtle quality.

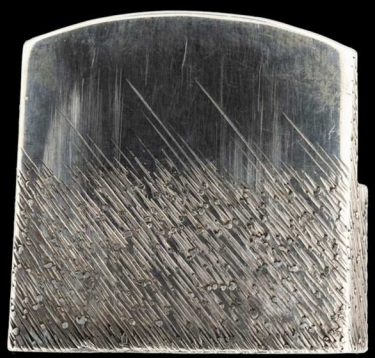


This image captures the quiet confidence of this katana. A bright and crisp ***chû-suguha hamon*** that flows with beauty and consistency.

Hallmarks of a well-made sword.




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



silver ***habaki*** with
rainfall file marks

*Aogai-mijin-nuri*
*ishime-ji-fû-nuri-saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(青貝微塵塗黒石目地風塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in black with stone-like texture*
*and decorated with mother-of pearl*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*




肥 (Hi)
前 (zen)
住 (jû)
播 (Hari)
磨 (ma no)
守 (Kami)
藤 (Fuji)
原 (wara)
忠 (Tada)
国 (kuni)



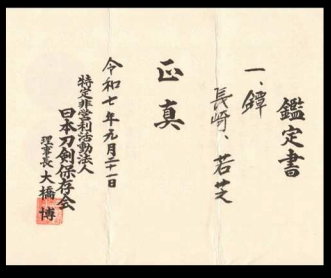

*Tsunagi*
A handcrafted duplicate wooden sword blade that holds together the ***koshirae*** when the blade is resting in ***shirasaya***.

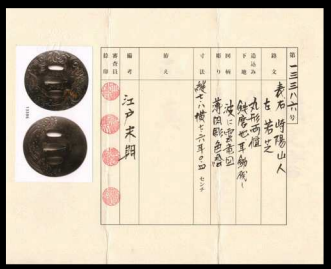


The *tsuba* is a work from the *Jakushi* (若芝) school, active in the late *Edo* period, depicting a dragon among clouds and waves.

The *Jakushi* lineage began when a *samurai* and painter known as *Jakushi* collaborated with the first master, *Kizaemon* (喜左衛門), in designing sword fittings. From this origin grew a distinctive artistic tradition that continued for several generations, producing iron round shape engraved with motifs such as wind, bamboo, landscapes, and dragons in clouds.

Rooted in painting rather than pure metalcraft, *Jakushi* works are distinguished by their compositional balance and atmospheric expression, qualities that give this piece its depth and quiet intensity.



*Kiyô san-jin Jakushi*
(Jakushi from Nagasaki)



*You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.*
Jon Kabat-Zinn



(reverse)



The *tsuka* is tightly wrapped *hishimaki* style with dark purple silk braids over beautifully aged *samekawa*.

Purple has long been esteemed in Japan's upper ranks as a noble colour and tastefully compliments the koshirae.





(Ichi) 一

(ryô) 了

monogram





NTHK-NPO Kanteisho



*Fuchi-kashira*
depicting clouds

This is the work of ***Ichiryô*** (一了), a brilliant metal craftsman active in the late ***Edo*** period. Both pieces depict clouds but through contrasting techniques – the ***fuchi*** is executed in high relief, giving the motif a sculptural depth, while the ***kashira*** is engraved in fine ***ke-bori*** lines, expressing subtle shadows and dimension with elegant simplicity.

The ***shakudô menuki*** depict a crawling dragon with precisely rendered scales that create lifelike movement. In its claw, the dragon holds a ***nyoi-hôju*** - the "wish-fulfilling jewel," a sacred orb symbolizing spiritual power, enlightenment, and the granting of wishes. Divine energy commanding natural forces - might paired with spiritual grace.



The ceiling painting of a cloud dragon at *Kenchô-ji Temple* in *Kamakura*

*nyoi-hôju*



*Koshirae bag*
decorated with a cloud pattern that harmonizes with the cloud-dragon theme of the ***koshirae***.

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uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJTA066

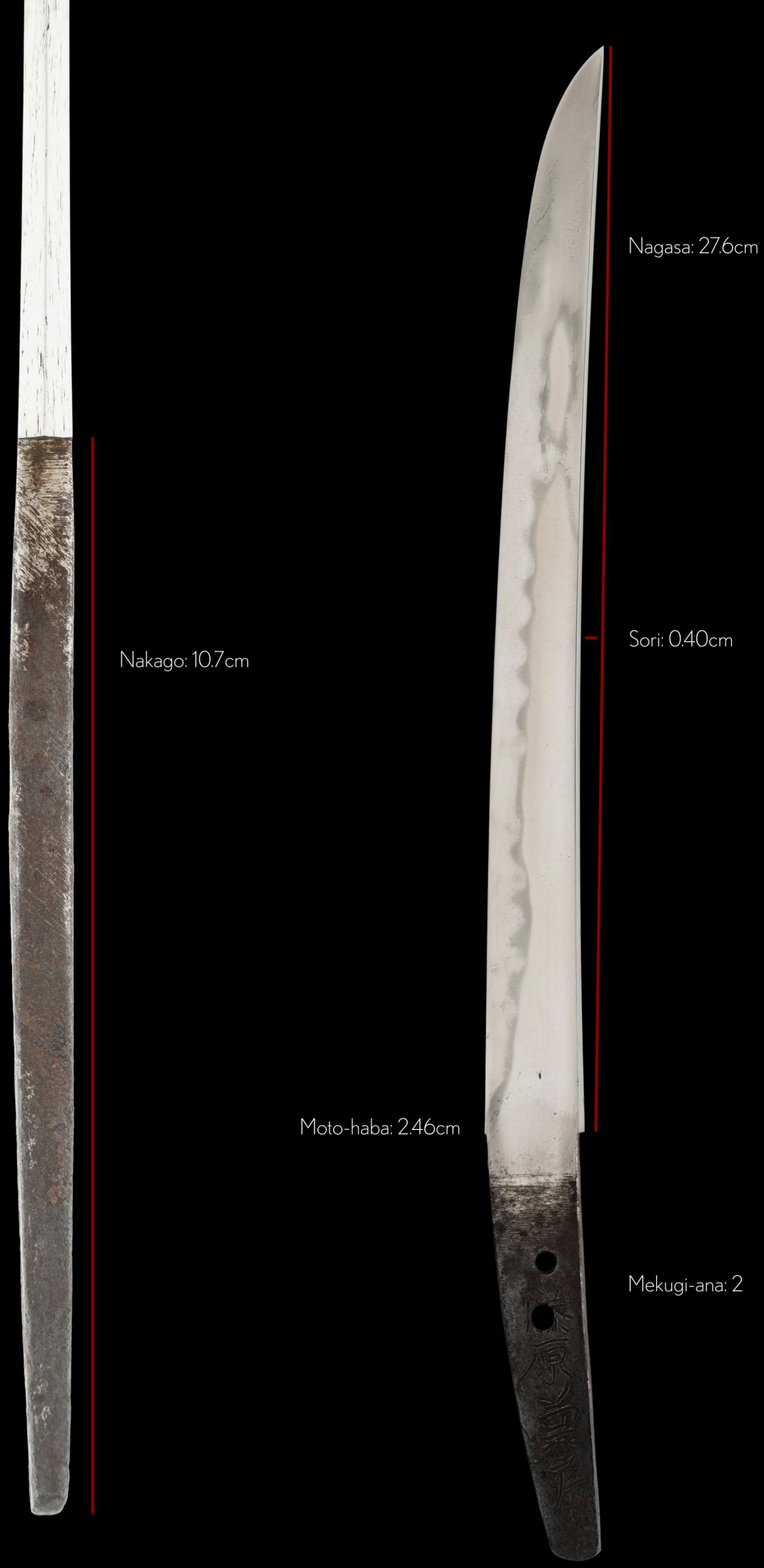
# A KANEFUSA TANTÔ

## SIGNED & DATED, KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI (KÔJI ERA: DECEMBER 1555)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Fujiwara Kanefusa*** *(藤原兼房)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 27.6cm **Sori:** 0.4cm **Moto-haba:** 2.46cm **Weight:** 170g |
| **Jihada:** | *Well-forged mokume-hada with icy ji-nie, shirake-utsuri and chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Splendid gunome-midare leading to hitatura, kinsuji, togari, ashi and tobiyaki* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-5:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, soroi, kozuka & tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Chûjô-saku** (*ranked as an above-average swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

***Fujiwara Kanefusa***, later known as *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa* was born in 1534 in Gifu as the third son of *Zensai Kanefusa*, and became one of the most distinguished smiths within the great *Oda Nobunaga*'s inner circle, forging at *Azuchi* and later working in *Kiyosu* until his death in 1590. This rare *tantô* is signed and dated to December 1555, when Kanefusa was about twenty-one years old. The *hamon* is bold, dynamic *gunome-midare* with huge islands of *tobiyaki* along with pointed *togari* characteristic of the Mino tradition. Under the light, the experimental spirit of young Kanefusa is palpable. The *koshirae* is refined and understated - black *ishime* on the saya with gold *kirimon* on the *hamidashi tsuba* and *kozuka* adding quiet authority. Young fire in a samurai's formal attire!


Moto-kasane: 4.9mm
Nakago: 10.7cm
Omosa: 170g
Nagasa: 27.6cm
Sori: 0.40cm
Moto-haba: 2.46cm
Mekugi-ana: 2

*Fujiwara Kanefusa* (藤原兼房), later known as *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa* (若狭守氏房), was born in 1534 in *Gifu* as the third son of *Zensai Kanefusa* (善斎兼房), head of the *Mino Kanefusa* lineage. In his early years he signed his works "*Kanefusa*," before receiving his later court titles and entering the service of *Oda Nobunaga* (織田信長).

He became one of the most distinguished smiths in Nobunaga's inner circle, forging at *Azuchi* and later working in *Kiyosu* until his death in 1590.

*Kanefusa*'s lineage, training and early environment reveal an individuality distinct from the established *Kanefusa* tradition. The vigour and ambition visible in his early blades reflect a craftsman experimenting within the framework of the Mino school, pushing the inherited techniques of his father while searching for a personal voice. This early phase is crucial to understanding the evolution that would eventually lead him to the reputation he achieved as *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa.*

This rare *tantô* is signed and dated to the first year of *Kôji* era (December 1555), when Kanefusa was approximately twenty-one years old. The *jigane* is tightly forged in *itame* producing an expressive surface where *shirake-utsuri* rises gently through the steel. The *hamon* is bold, dynamic *gunome-midare* with large islands of *tobiyaki* along with pointed *togari* characteristic of the Mino tradition. Long *ashi* reach the cutting edge in a dramatic fashion reinforcing the impression of a young smith testing the limits of his ability.

Under the light, the experimental spirit of young Kanefusa is palpable. It's also a sword that is quite curvy, acting like a mini katana. An NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate rightfully accompanies the blade.

The *koshirae* is refined and understated - rich black *ishime* lacquer on the *saya* with lovely gold *kirimon* crests on the *hamidashi tsuba* rim and *kozuka* adding quiet authority.

Young fire in a samurai's formal attire.





Location: *Mino province*
Family name: *Fujiwara*
Swordsmith: *Kanefusa (shodai Ujifusa)*

*machi-okuri-nakago* (slightly raised tang)
*higaki-yasurime* (criss-cross file marks)

藤 (Fuji)

原 (wara)

兼 (Kane)

房 (fusa)

*Kôji gannen jûnigatsu hi*
Dated on a day in the twelfth month in the first year of the *Kôji* era (December 1555).



(Kô) 弘

(ji) 治

(gan) 元

(nen) 年

(jû) 十

(ni) 二

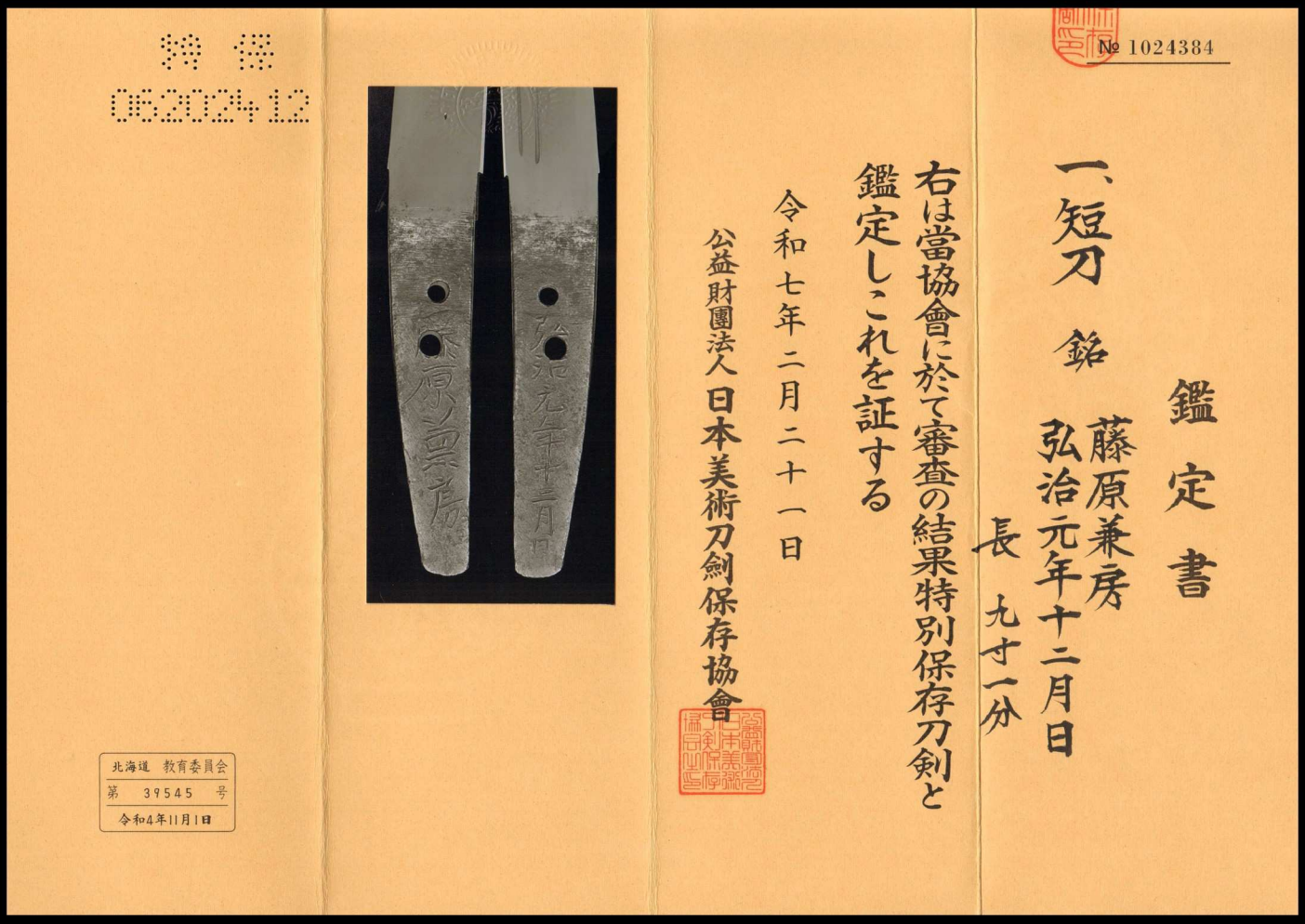
(gatsu) 月

(hi) 日

*kurijiri* (rounded bottom)




The *oshigata* above represents a work from the *Genki* era (1570-1573), the period in which *Kanefusa* – having already adopted the name *Ujifusa* – was at the height of his output due to his close connection with *Oda Nobunaga*. The latter signature appears more stoic in contrast to the spirited vitality of a young 21-year-old swordsmith.




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

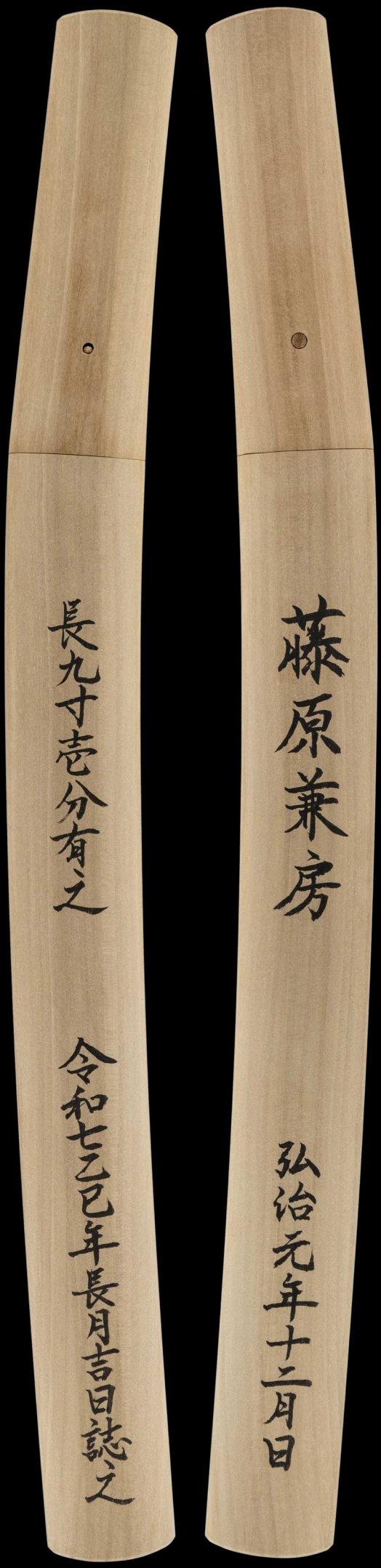
Issued in the 7th year of Reiwa (2025), February 21st

One, Tantô

*Mei* (signature)
*Fujiwara Kanefusa*
*Kôji gannen jûnigatsu hi*

*Nagasa* (length)
9-sun 1-bu (27.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




藤原兼房
*Fujiwara Kanefusa*
Fujiwara Kanefusa

弘治元年十二月日
*Kôji gannen jûnigatsu hi*
Dated a day in the twelfth month in the first year of *Kôji* era (December 1555)

長九寸壱分有之
*Nagasa 9-sun 1-bu kore ari*
Blade length 27.6 cm

令和七乙巳年長月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Nagatsuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the ninth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era, the Year of the Snake (September 2025)

In December 1555 (when this sword was dated), Japan was deep in the chaos of the *Sengoku Jidai* - the Warring States period - when regional warlords carved the archipelago into constantly shifting domains. Emperor *Go-Nara* held his throne in *Kyôto*, but the imperial court had become so impoverished that the emperor was reduced to selling his own calligraphy to survive, a powerless figurehead while true authority rested with whoever commanded the strongest army. Just two months earlier, in October, the cunning strategist *Môri Motonari* had achieved a stunning victory at the *Battle of Itsukushima*, luring an army of 20,000 onto a sacred island and annihilating them with just 3,500 troops in a nighttime surprise attack - one of the three greatest ambushes in Japanese military history. This single battle catapulted the *Môri* clan to dominance over western Japan and exemplified the era's brutal reality: intelligence and audacity often trumped sheer numbers.

In Mino province itself - where this *Kanefusa tantô* was forged - the political situation was particularly volatile. The ruthless *Saitô Yoshitatsu* had just seized power from his father, the infamous "Viper of Mino," *Saitô Dôsan*, by murdering his own two younger brothers earlier that year. The father-son conflict would culminate months later in May 1556 at the Battle of *Nagaragawa*, where Yoshitatsu's forces would kill Dôsan and cement control over the province. Meanwhile, in neighbouring *Owari* province, a young upstart named *Oda Nobunaga* was consolidating power and eyeing Mino's fertile lands - within a decade, he would conquer the entire province and launch Japan toward reunification. This was a moment when *rônin* (masterless samurai) wandered the countryside, castle towns bristled with newly-arrived Portuguese firearms (introduced just twelve years earlier in 1543), and swordsmiths like Kanefusa worked day and night forging blades for armies that seemed to multiply by the season. This tantô was born in fire during one of the most violent, dynamic periods in Japanese history.

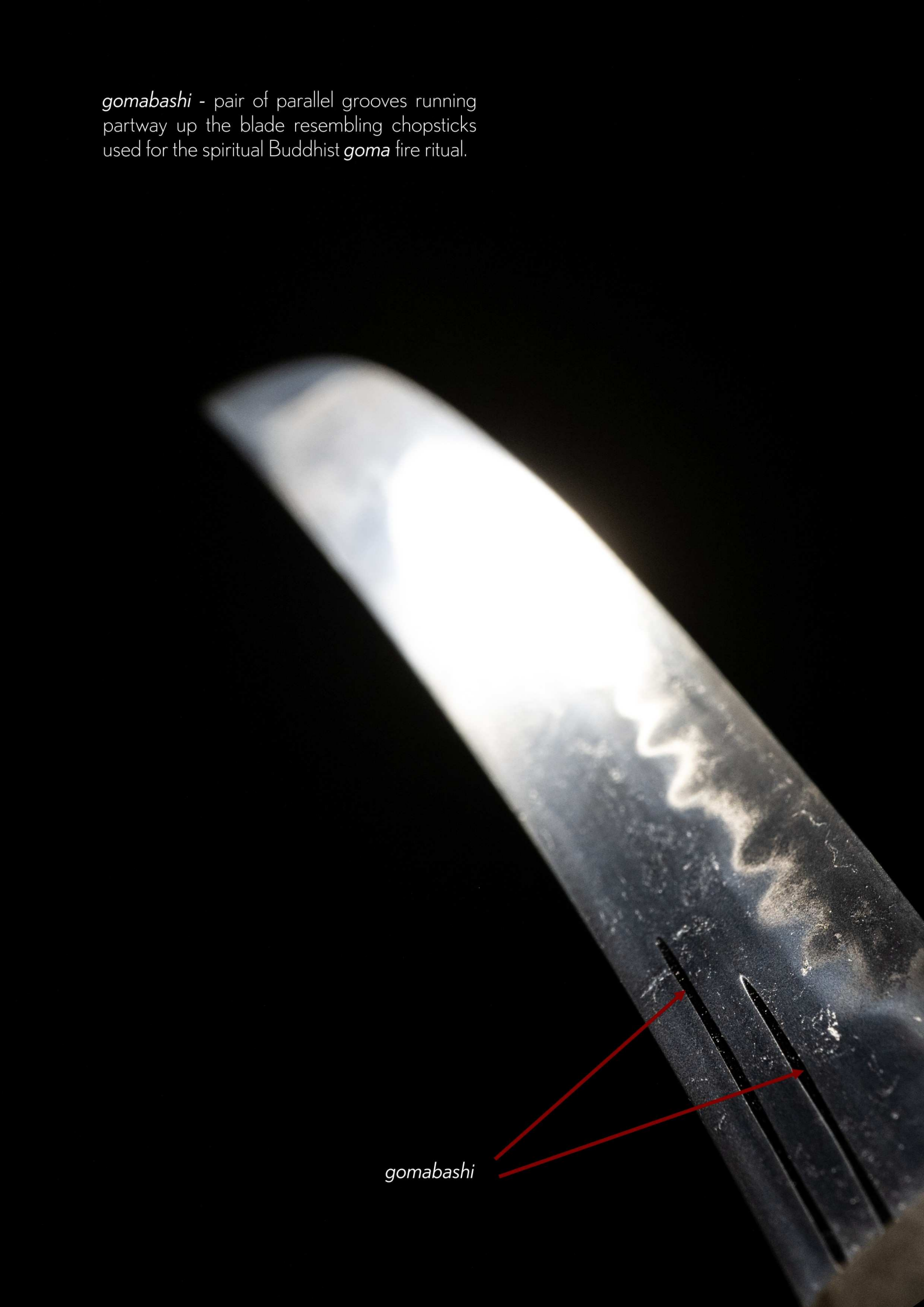


*Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582)*





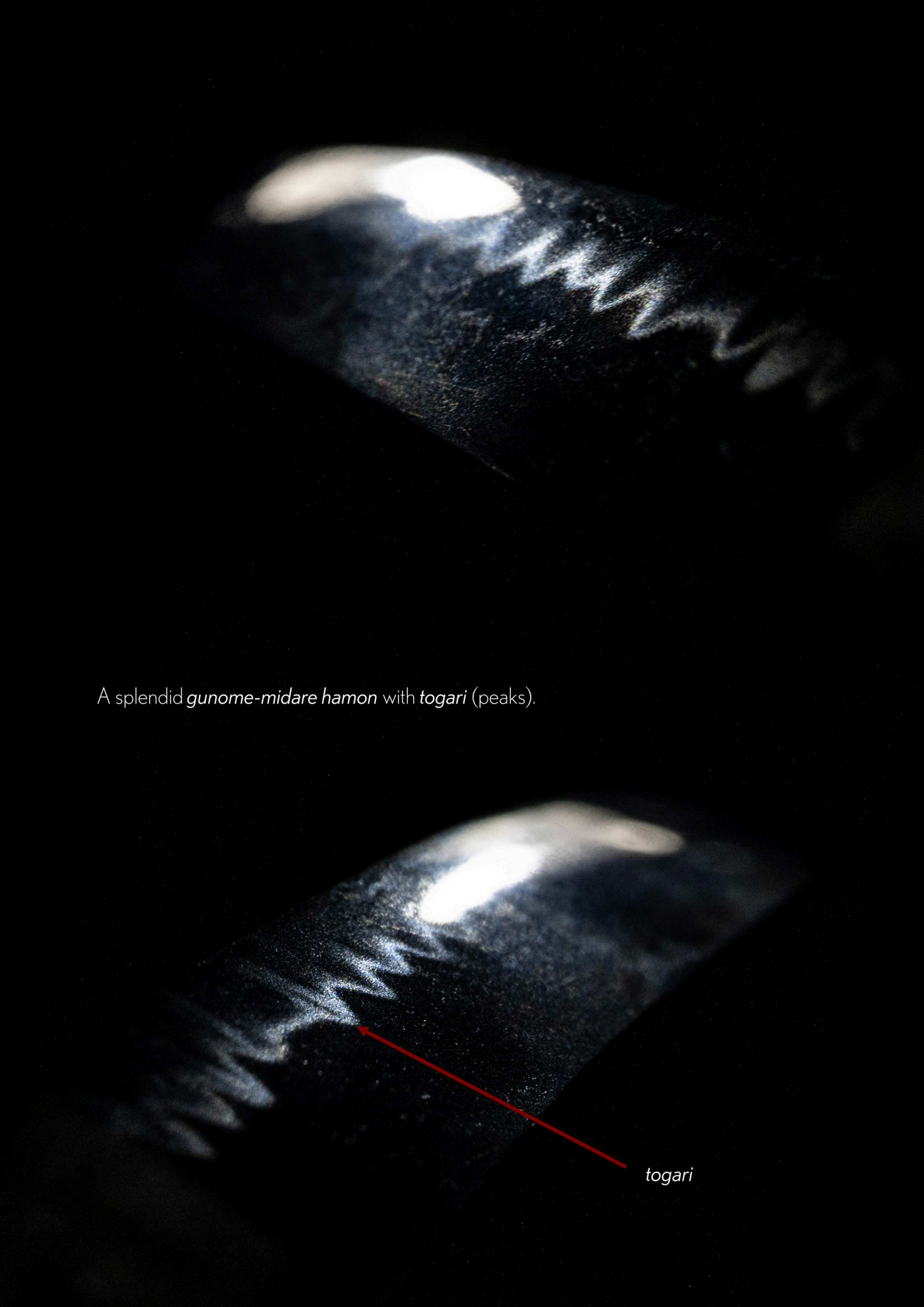
*gomabashi* - pair of parallel grooves running partway up the blade resembling chopsticks used for the spiritual Buddhist *goma* fire ritual.






This *tantô* has a ton of character.

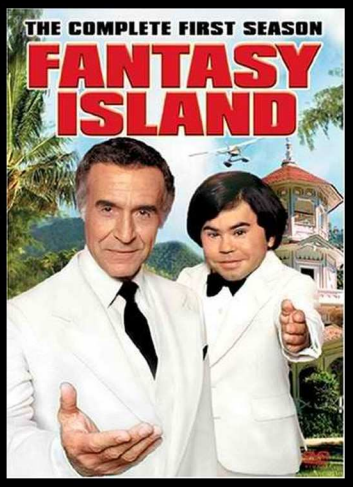
Tightly-forged *itame-hada*, *shirake-utsuri*, impressive *ashi* and delightfully curvy too.




A splendid ***gunome-midare hamon*** with ***togari*** (peaks).

Welcome...to *tobiyaki* island. *

This is a massive island of *tobiyaki* (hardened spot) as it is separate from the hamon itself, wow.

* 


Boss! De plane, De plane!



Icy ***ji-nie*** shines with confidence.




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



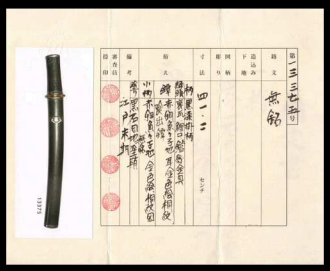
silver ***habaki*** with
rainfall file marks



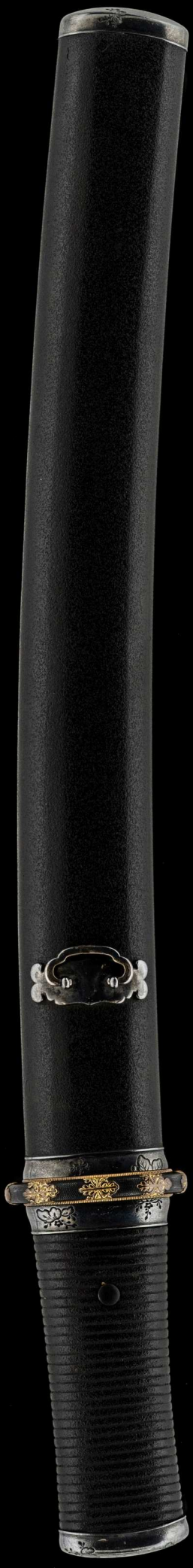
*Shibuichi ishime-ji kebori tôka-no-zu*
*sô-kanagu tantô-koshirae*
(四分一石目地毛彫桐花図
総金具短刀拵)

*Tantô-koshirae*
*with a matching set of fittings of*
*shibuichi with stone-surface texture,*
*and motif of paulownia flowers*
*in hairline carvings*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*

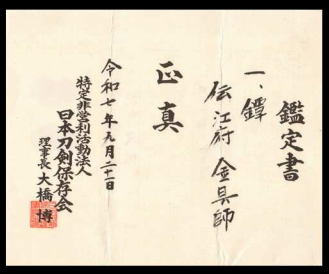




This ***tsuba*** is known as a ***hamidashi-tsuba***, a small ***tsuba*** that projects only slightly beyond the fittings and the rim of the ***saya***.

While its compact form carries a ceremonial elegance, it also served a practical purpose: in close-quarters grappling, such a ***tsuba*** would not catch on armour, allowing the blade to be drawn swiftly.

Fashioned in ***shakudô*** with a fine ***nanako*** surface and decorated with ***kirimon*** (paulownia crests), the highly formal design also balances practical utility.  A wonderful example of form meeting function.


鑑定書
一、鐔
伝江府 金象師
正真
令和七年九月二十日
特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋 博



(reverse)

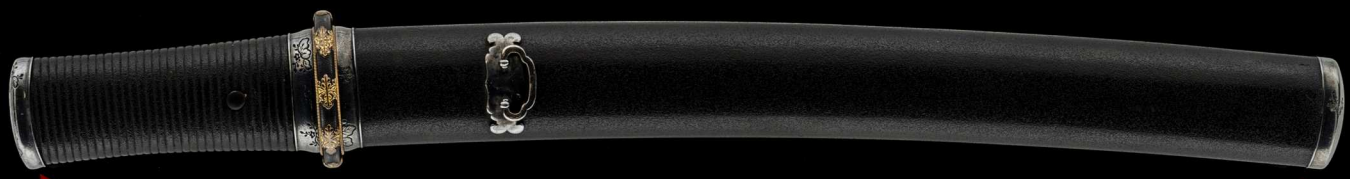


Placing the family crests on the rim with gold accents is more formal than centering them on the ***tsuba*** face.

*ura-gawara*

The ***fuchi-kashira***, ***kojiri***, ***koiguchi***, and ***ura-gawara*** form a ***sô-kanagu*** (matching set), all crafted by the same artisan.  And comes  with a Kanteishô certificate of authenticity by the NTHK-NPO.

Crafted during the late ***Edo*** period, the fittings are executed on a ***shibuichi*** ground with fine ***kebori*** engraving of paulownia blossoms, revealing the refined taste of the original owner.



*kashira*





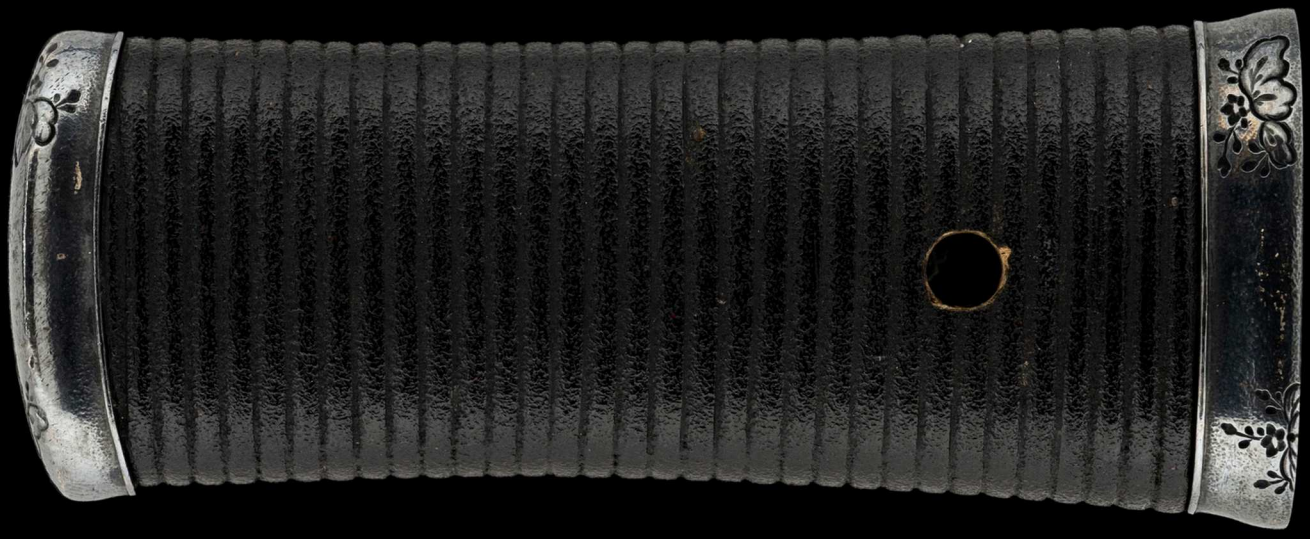
*kojiri*



*NTHK-NPO Kanteishô*

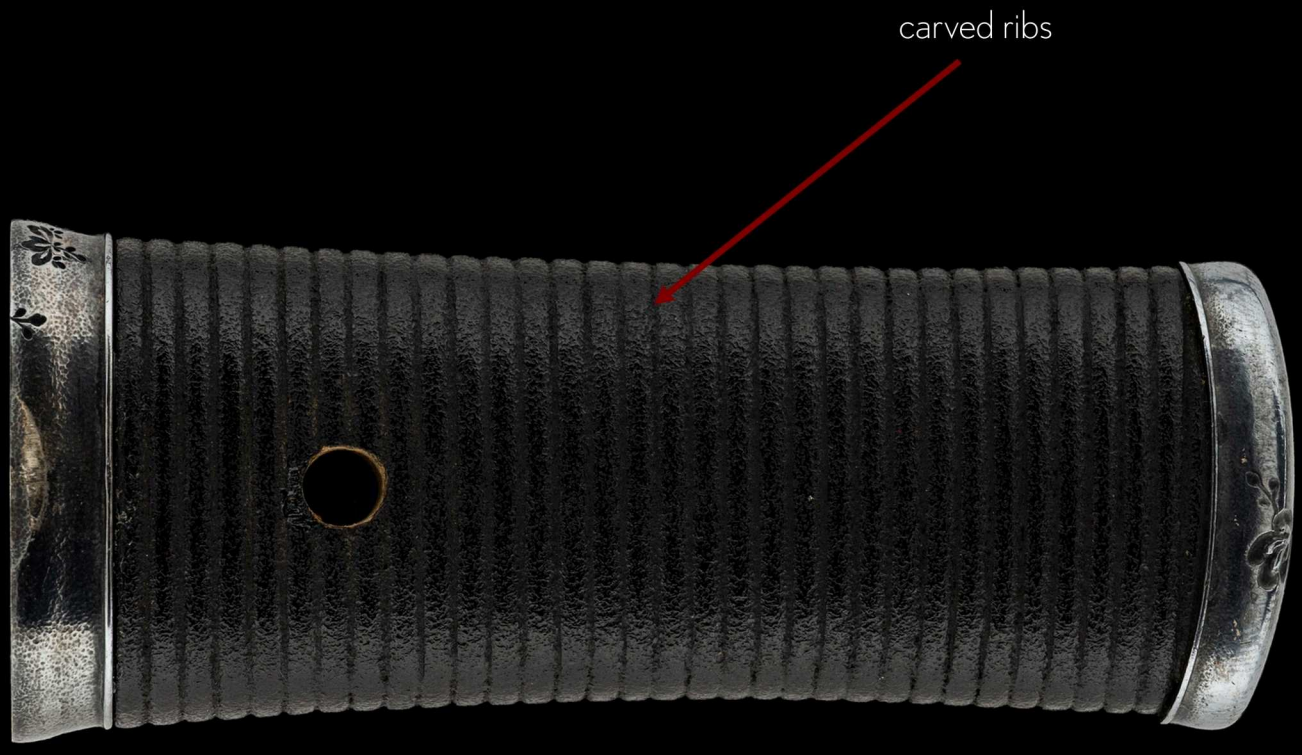
*fuchi*

*koiguchi*



Rather than being wrapped with traditional silk, the ***tsuka*** (hilt) core has been ***carved*** in the style of a ***katate-maki*** wrap and finished with black lacquer.

Together with the paulownia crests on the fittings, the ***tsuka*** conveys a strong decorative intention and a deliberate sense of formality.

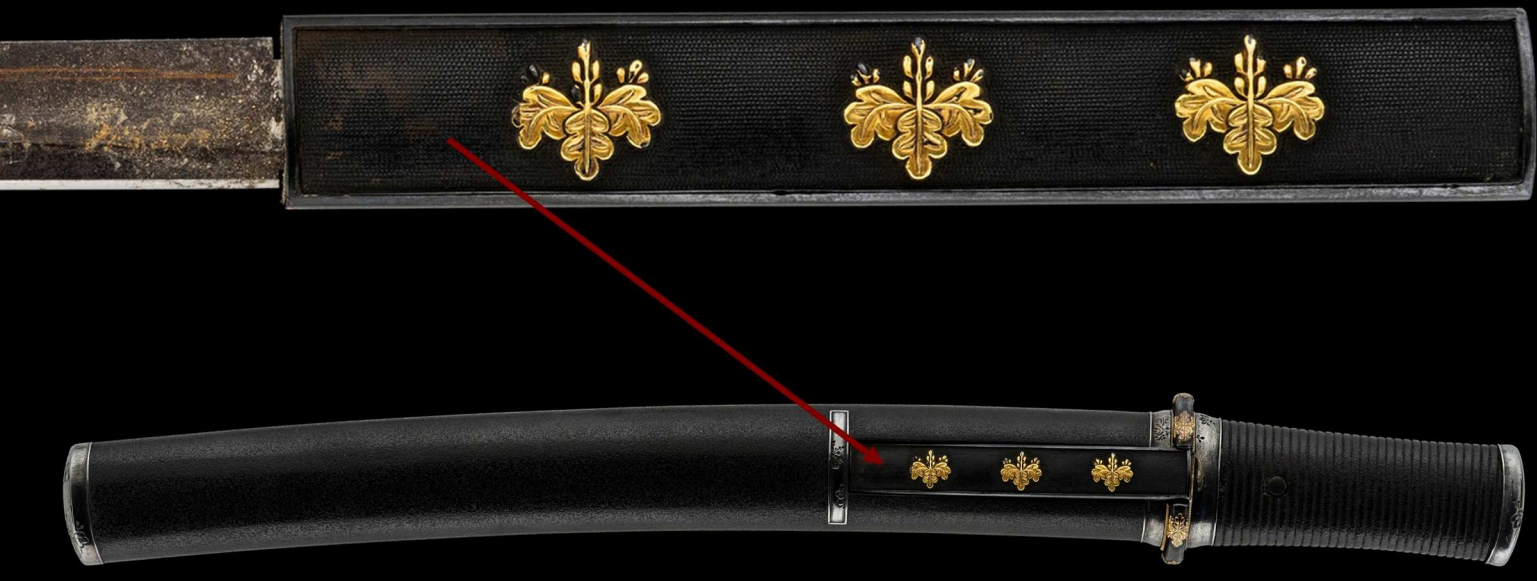




*Kozuka* (utility knife)

Fastened into a special notch built inside the ***saya*** (scabbard) and drawn through the slotted space of the ***hamidashi tsuba***.

This piece is the work of the ***Waki-Gotô*** (脇後藤), a branch of the ***Gotô*** family who served the shogunate for generations, produced in the mid-***Edo*** period. Executed on a ***shakudô*** ground with a finely applied ***nanako*** surface and adorned with brilliantly gilded ***kirimon*** (paulownia crests), it is a highly elegant and aristocratic work.



The ***kogatana*** of the ***kozuka*** is inscribed with "***Raiyoke***" ("Lightning Repeller").

From the fifth-generation ***Iga no Kami Kinmichi*** (伊賀守金道) onward, smiths paired this inscription with the chrysanthemum crest. The tradition stems from a legendary incident: while the Emperor traveled through a thunderstorm, a sword forged by the first-generation ***Kinmichi*** flew from its scabbard and slashed through the thunderclouds, clearing the sky in an instant. From that moment, blades inscribed "***Raiyoke***" were treasured as talismans against misfortune!





*Koshirae* bag with long life tortoise shell pattern.



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ITEM# UJKA491

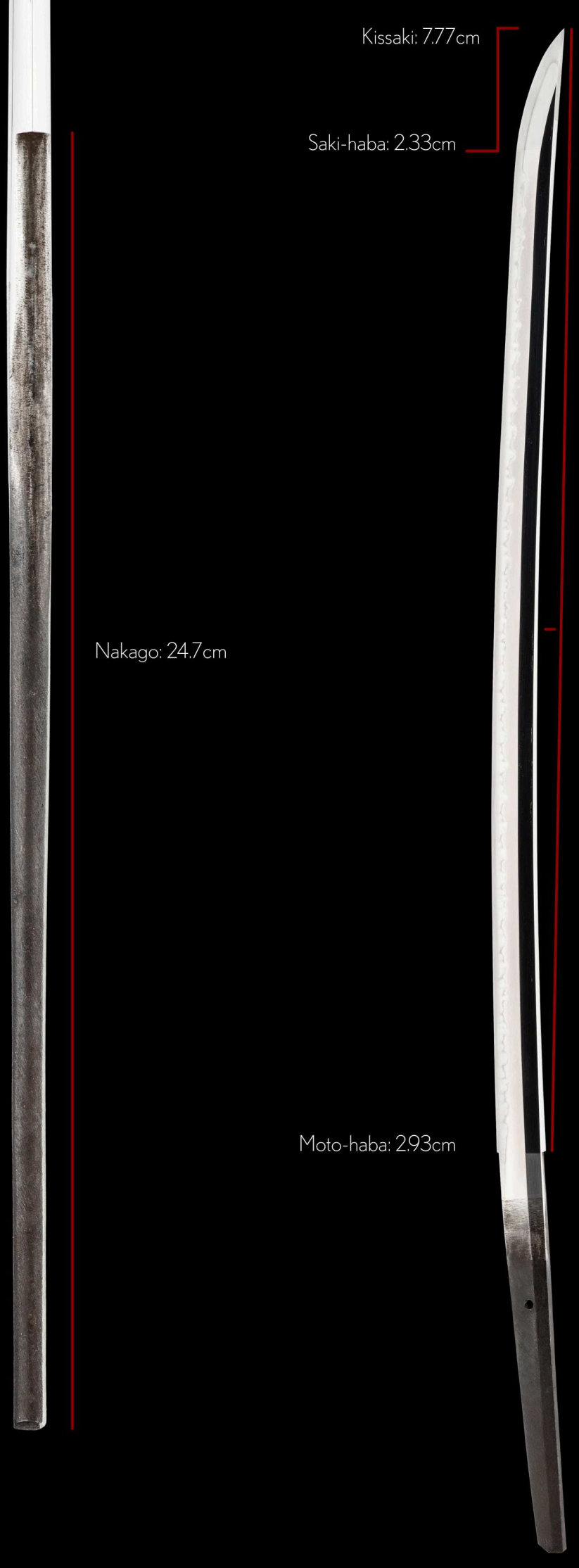
# A MUNEHIRA KATANA

## UNSIGNED, SHINSHINTÔ LATE EDO PERIOD (BUNSEI ERA: 1818~1830)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Koyama Munehira*** *(固山宗平)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 71.0cm **Sori:** 1.0cm **Moto-haba:** 2.93cm **Weight:** 930g (!) |
| **Jihada:** | *Well-forged mix of mokume and itame-hada with light midare-utsuri and chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gorgeous sashikomi gunome-chôji-midare with tama, tobiyaki, extra-long ashi* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Hozon** *(sword Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Chûjô-saku** (*ranked as an above average swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

Born in *Shirakawa*, *Mutsu* province in the *Kyôwa* era, ***Koyama Munehira*** was active during the late Edo period who had two younger brothers, *Munetoshi* and *Koyama Munetsugu*, the highly talented *jôjô-saku* swordsmith of the *shinshintô* period. The shape of this imposing katana was clearly inspired by the powerful swords of the mid-1300s Nambokuchô period. It measures 71.0 cm and weighs in at an impressive 930g. Its lethal-looking 7.8cm *kissaki* draws particular attention. As the sword is finished in a gorgeous *sashikomi* polish, both the *gunome-chôji-midare* hamon and the well-forged *itame* and *mokume-ha* pop out magnificently under the light. As the sword is *mumei* and in *shirasaya* only, this fine sword can be offered at a very reasonable price point. This is a learning and inspiring piece to jump head first into the Japanese sword world with.


Saki-kasane: 5.6mm
Moto-kasane: 7.1mm
Kissaki: 7.77cm
Saki-haba: 2.33cm
Nagasa: 71.0cm
Nakago: 24.7cm
Sori: 1.0cm
Omosa: 930g
Moto-haba: 2.93cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

*Koyama Munehira* (固山宗平) was a swordsmith active during the late *Edo* period. Born in *Shirakawa*, *Mutsu Province* in the *Kyôwa* era (1801~1804), his given name was *Sôbei* (宗兵衛), and used the art name *Hakuryûshi* (白竜子). He had two younger brothers, *Munetoshi* (宗俊) and *Koyama Munetsugu* (宗次), the highly talented *jôjô-saku* swordsmith of the *shinshintô* period.

Although traditionally said to have trained under *Kato Tsunahide* (加藤綱英), his style shows stronger influence from *Tsunahide*'s younger brother, *Chôunsai Tsunatoshi* (長雲斎綱俊), due to technical and stylistic similarities. *Munehira* initially worked in *Shirakawa*, then moved in 1823 to *Kuwana* when the *Matsudaira* (松平) family, lords of *Shirakawa*, were transferred there. During the *Tenpô* era (1830-1844), he served the *Doi* (土井) family of the *Koga* domain in *Shimousa*, and later returned to the *Matsudaira*'s service. He died in *Edo* around 1843.

His blades follow the *Bizen* tradition and are known for flamboyant *chôji-midare hamon*, bright *nioiguchi*, and abundant activity within the *yakiba*. The forging is refined, often showing *utsuri* in the steel. Some of his works are considered to rival those of *Munetsugu*, and a few joint works are known. He is rated *chûjô-saku* (upper middle grade) among *shinshintô* smiths.

The shape of the blade was certainly inspired by the powerful swords of the mid-1300s *Nambokuchô* period. It measures 71.0 cm with a gentle 1cm curvature and a weighs in at an impressive 930g. Its long and rather lethal-looking 7.8cm *kissaki* draws particular attention to the eye.

As the sword is finished in a gorgeous *sashikomi* polish, both the *hamon* and the *jihada* pop out, allowing for countless hours of *nihontô* enjoyment. The steel shows well-forged *itame and mokume hada* with thick *ji-nie* and light *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a dynamic *gunome-chôji-midare* with a bright *nioiguchi*, and active features such as *ashi*, *kinsuji*, *tobiyaki, tama* and *sunagashi*.

As the sword is *mumei* and in shirasaya only, this fine sword can be offered at a very reasonable price point. This is a learning and inspiring piece to jump into the Japanese sword world with. Comes with NBTHK Hozon certification.





Location: *Iwashiro province*
Family name: *Koyama*
Swordsmith: *Munehira* (first generation)

*machiokuri-nakago* (slightly raised tang)
*sujikai-yasurime* (slanting file marks)



*Katasogi*
(*Kaga* style)

*Iriyama-gata*
(pointed)

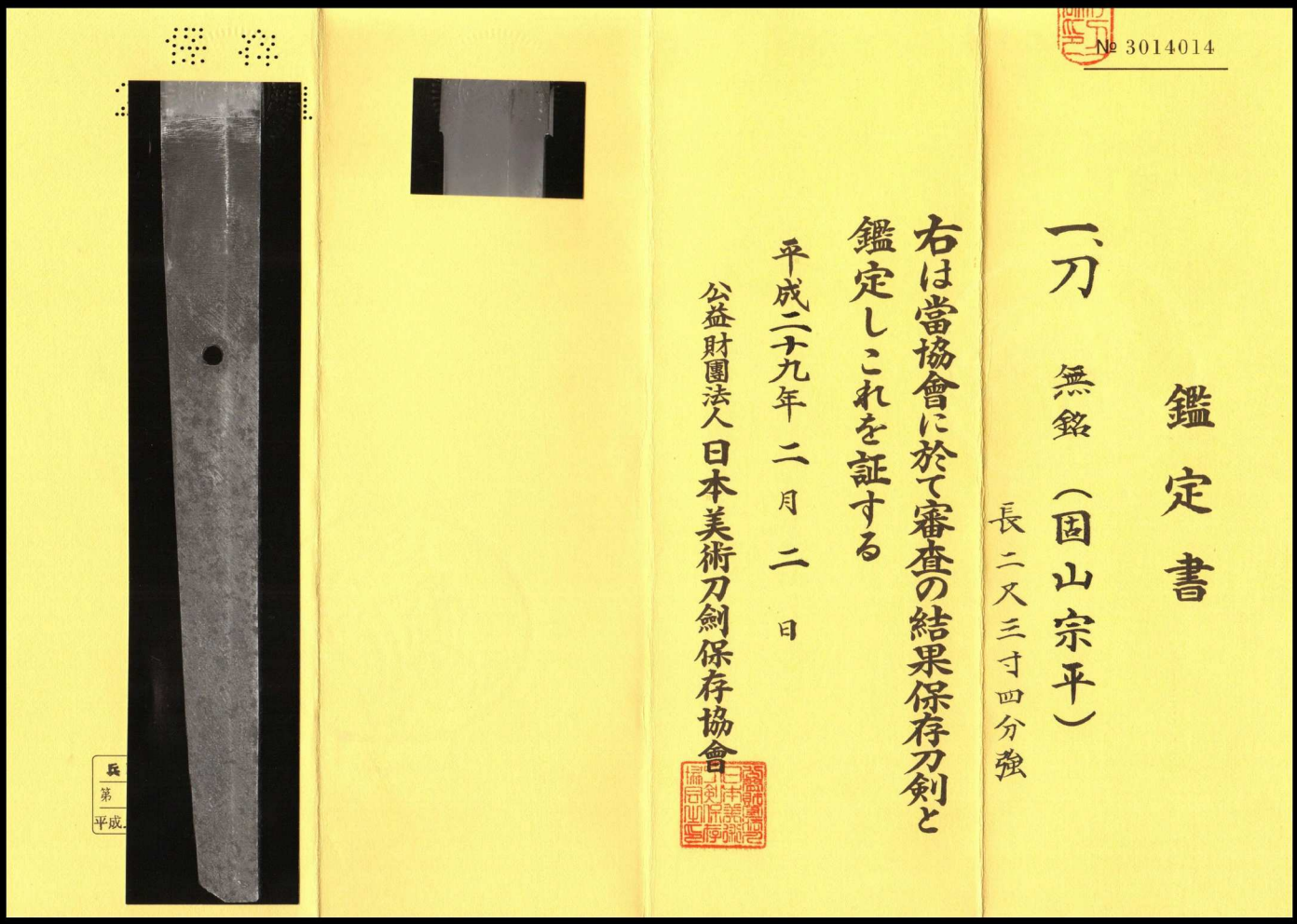
*Kurijiri*
(rounded)

While *Koyama Munehira*'s tangs are generally finished in standard *kurijiri* (rounded) or *iriyama-gata* (peaked) styles, this particular example features a rare configuration called *katasogi* (片削ぎ), whereby the tip of the tang slopes only on the *ha* (edge) side, forming an asymmetrical shape. It closely resembles the distinctive "*Kaga*" *nakago* typically associated with smiths from the *Kaga* region.

Interestingly, a known *tantô* by *Munehira* has been documented with a *nakago* described as "*ubu*, with the tang tip sloping upward on the edge side in an *iriyama-gata* shape." This suggests that at least a few of his works exhibit this *katasogi*-like nakago.



*katasogi*-like tip




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 29th year of Heisei (2017), February 2nd

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Koyama Munehira*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 4-bu kyô (71.0cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




固山宗平
*Koyama Munehira*
Koyama Munehira

生茎無銘也時代文政頃
*Ubu-nakago mumei nari jidai Bunsei goro*
Unaltered tang, unsigned, around Bunsei period (1818~1830)

長貳尺参寸四分強有之
*Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun 4-bu kyô kore ari*
Blade length 71.0 cm

令和七乙巳年長月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Nagatsuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the ninth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (September 2025)







Those that are familiar with Unique Japan, know that the majority of swords that are offered come with a set of koshirae. And that nearly all swords from the ***shintô*** and ***shinshintô*** period are signed. Well, this sword runs contrary to both!

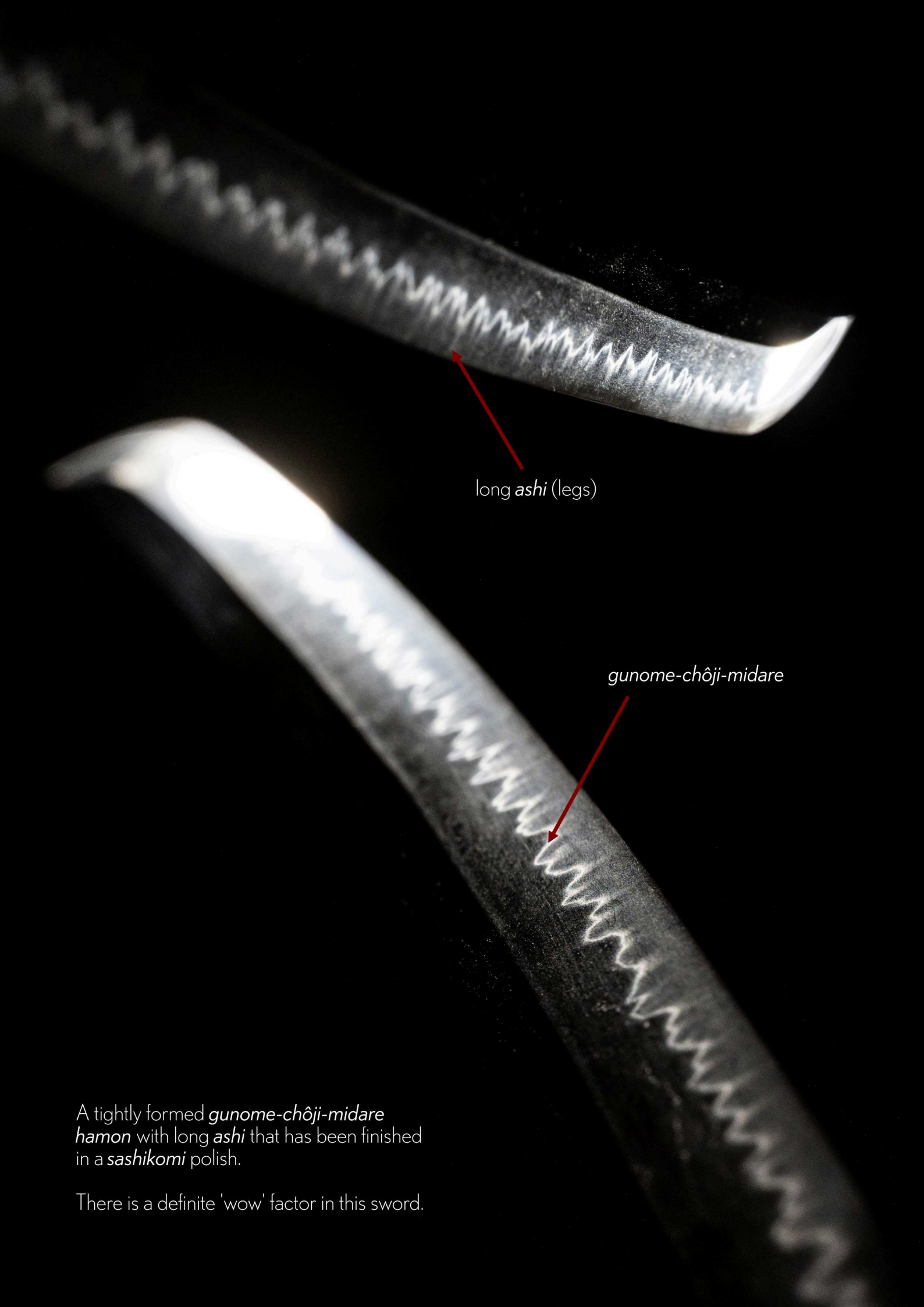
What we have here is a massive, unsigned katana from the ***shinshintô*** period, crafted in the clear style of ***Koyama Munetsugu*** in such a gorgeous ***sashikomi*** polish. The result is a more 'classical finish' without the use of ***hadori*** that can exaggerate the contrast of the hamon and body of the blade.

This is a sword meant for a hamon connoisseur, who simply wants to sit quietly under the light with a beautifully executed piece without any further distractions. Except for maybe some blues or jazz playing in the background...

An impressive 7.77cm long ***ô-kissaki*** (tip) speaks to the imposing swords that were crafted during the tumultuous mid-1300s ***Nambokuchô*** period in which this katana was certainly inspired by.

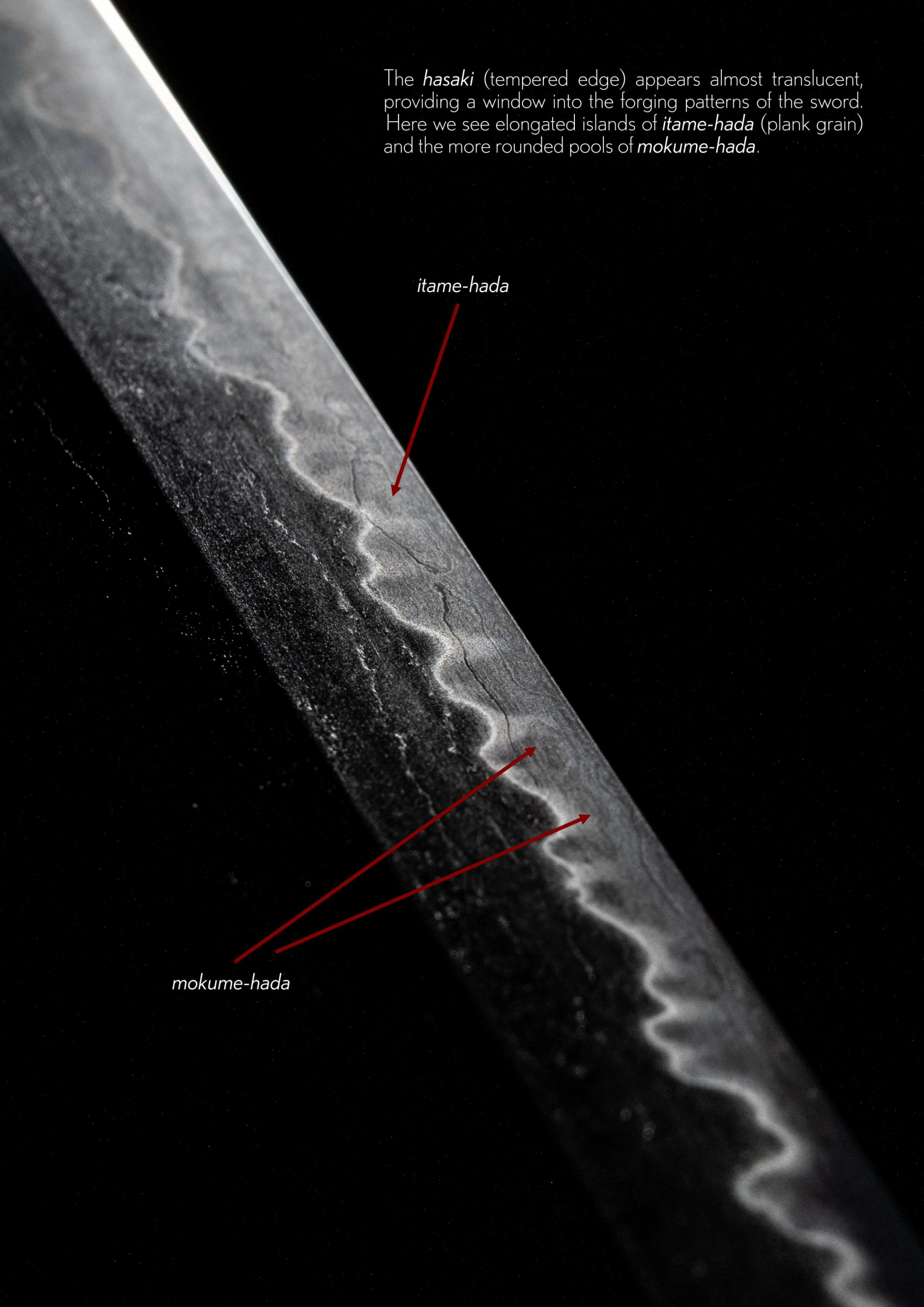
Feel the power.



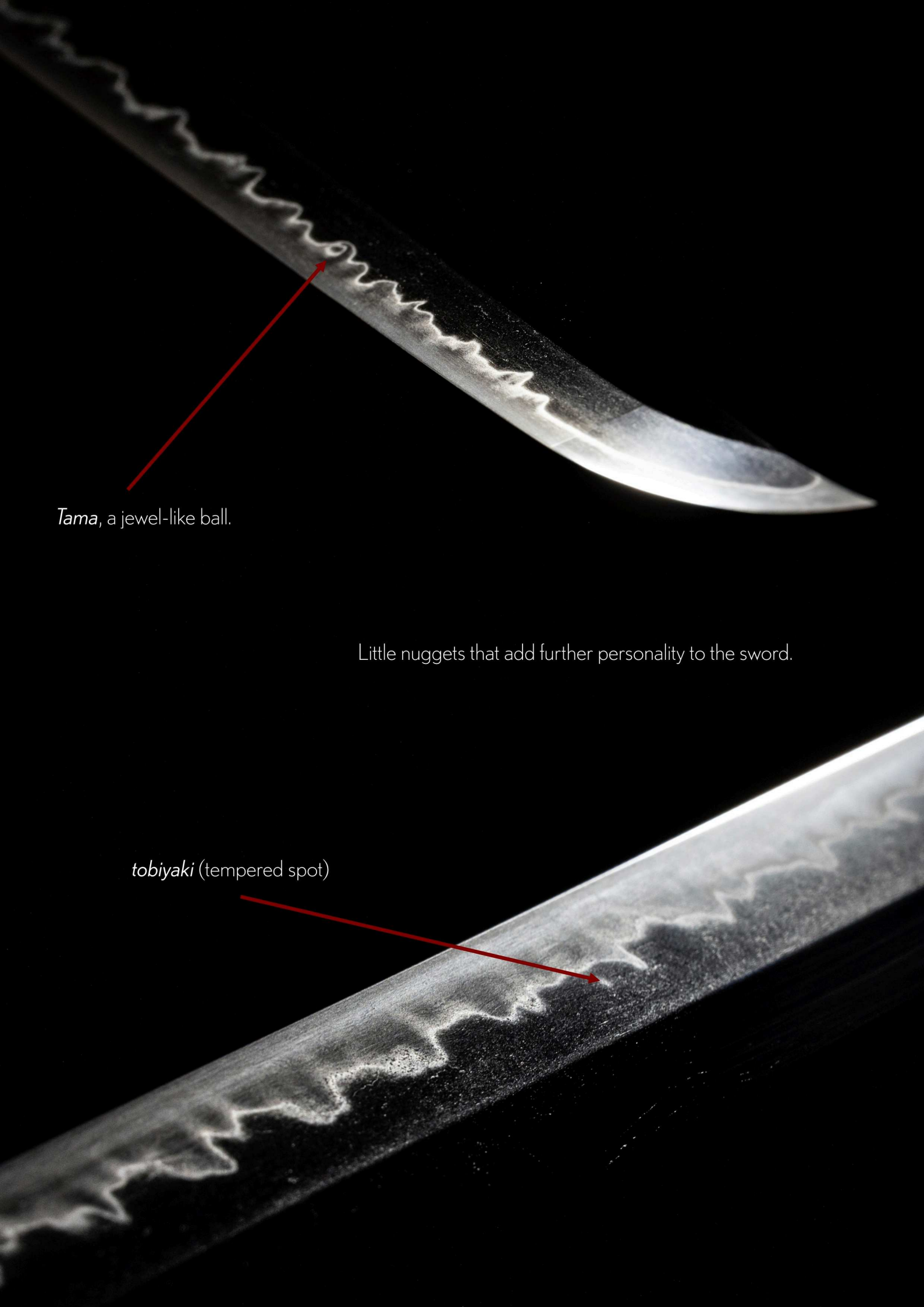


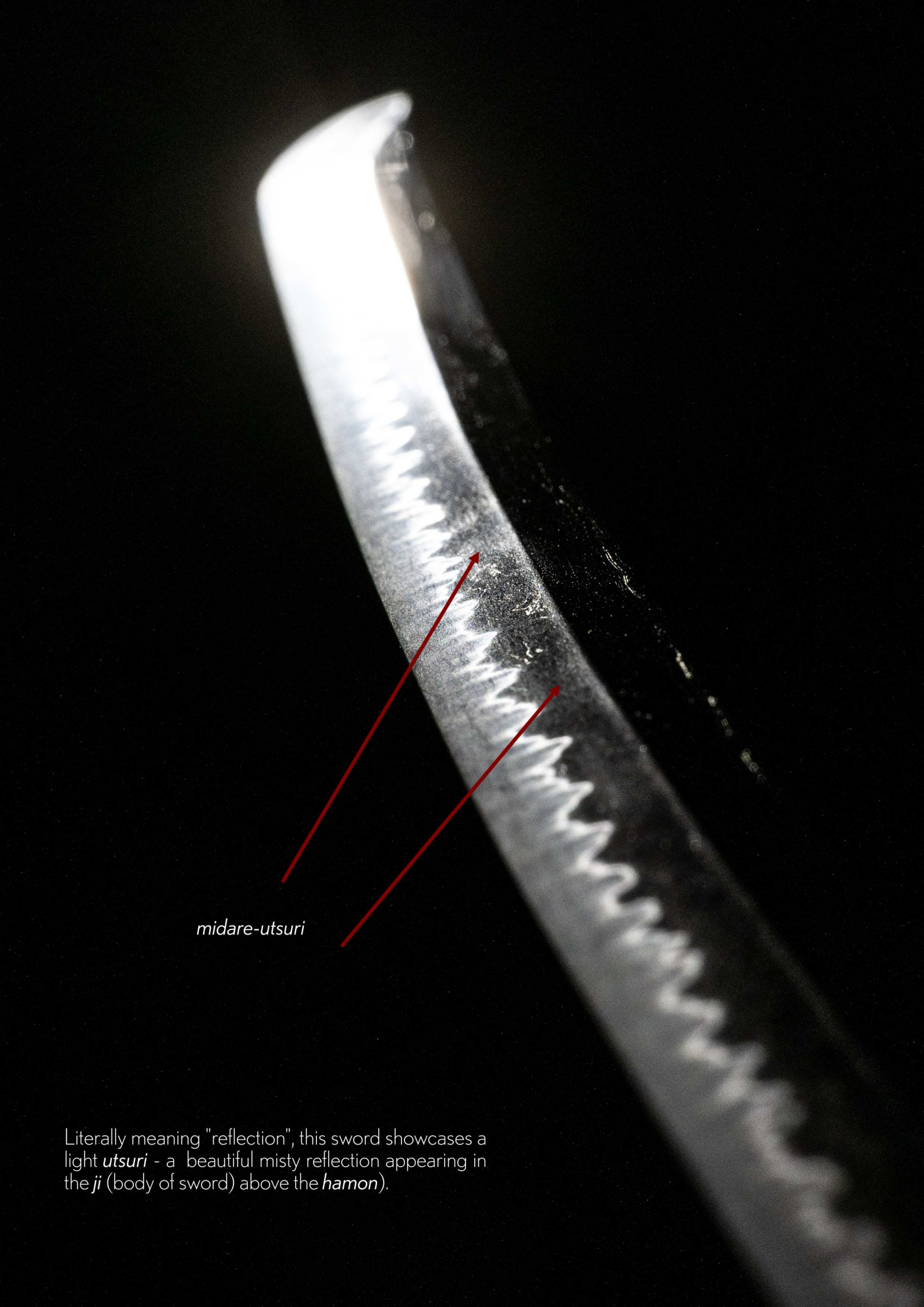

A tightly formed ***gunome-chôji-midare hamon*** with long ***ashi*** that has been finished in a ***sashikomi*** polish.

There is a definite 'wow' factor in this sword.




The ***hasaki*** (tempered edge) appears almost translucent, providing a window into the forging patterns of the sword. Here we see elongated islands of ***itame-hada*** (plank grain) and the more rounded pools of ***mokume-hada***.


*Tama*, a jewel-like ball.
Little nuggets that add further personality to the sword.
*tobiyaki* (tempered spot)




Literally meaning "reflection", this sword showcases a light ***utsuri*** - a beautiful misty reflection appearing in the *ji* (body of sword) above the ***hamon***).




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



two-toned silver ***habaki***

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