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Japanese Sword Catalogue 47

RELEASED: Oct 2/2026

(COVER PHOTO)

ITEM# UJKA466

A KO-KONGOBYÔE KATANA
NANBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (1356~1361)

NBTHK TOKUBETSU HOZON & NTHK-NPO YÛSHÛSAKU
FEATURING DARUMA DEPICTED ON THE FUCHI-KASHIRA

service@uniquejapan.com
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Catalogue 47 / Index of Japanese Swords

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To online visitors around the world…

Every sword in this catalogue has been sold, and these pages are our permanent reference record. We hope you enjoy browsing them, and that they give you a feel for the quality of swords we find for our clients.

We respect the leap of personal faith it takes to commit to a sword from photos and descriptions. It is our promise to answer all your questions, so you feel completely confident that your sword is destined for your family to cherish and preserve. All Unique Japan swords are guaranteed authentic and come with a **3-day worry free inspection period** upon arrival at your home.

We acquire swords regularly and can source pieces for collectors seeking a specific smith or school. Please contact me to be informed of our latest arrivals and to join our VIP emailing list.

Domo arigato,
Pablo

Pablo Kuntz
Founder, Unique Japan

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

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ITEM# UJKA484

SOLD

A SANDAI YASUTSUGU KATANA

SIGNED, SHINTÔ PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1673)

Swordsmith:	*(Aoi-mon) Yasutsugu Nanban-tetsu o motte Bushû Edo kore o tsukuru (Edo sandai)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 70.1cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 0.9cm **Moto-haba:** 3.02cm **Weight:** 790g
Jihada:	*Beautifully forged mokume, itame with a dark jigane, ji-nie and plenty of chikei*
Hamon:	*Bright chû-suguha* with *notare, uchinoke, niju-ba, sunagashi, ko-ashi and kinsuji*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fk and tsuba certified as Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo-koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

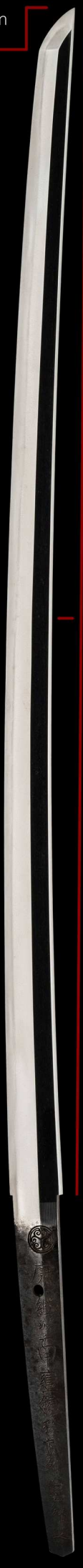
This striking katana is by third generation ***Yasutsugu***, forged with *Nanban-tetsu* in Edo during the *Kanbun* period. The cutting edge measures a classic *jô-sun* of 70.1cm with a finely forged *itame* and *mokume-hada* with *ji-nie* and plentiful *chikei*. A bright *suguha hamon* with brushed *sunagashi* and impressive *kinsuji* can be enjoyed quietly under the light. A spectacular Edo-period koshirae features gorgeous depictions of *chidori* birds inlaid in abalone shell. *Chidori* translates to "one thousand birds" as they typically migrate in huge groups to Japan at the end of the rainy season battling head winds, rain and waves. Thus these little forces of nature symbolize gritty determination. A marvellous *fuchi-kashira* with golden waves attributed to master *Teruhide* of the famed *Ômori* school is also a great feast for the eyes. This is a brilliant samurai katana from the illustrious *Yasutsugu* school that will shine brightly in a lucky person's Japanese sword collection.

Saki-kasane: 4.5mm

Moto-kasane: 7.2mm

Nakago: 20.7cm

Omosa: 790g



Kissaki: 2.47cm

Saki-haba: 1.94cm

Nagasa: 70.1cm

Sori: 0.9cm

Moto-haba: 3.02cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

Edo Sandai Yasutsugu, third generation of the *Yasutsugu* line, official swordsmith of the *Tokugawa* shogunate and *jô-saku* ranked superior smith, inherited two extraordinary privileges from the founder: the character 康 from *Tokugawa Ieyasu*'s own name, and the right to strike the *aoi-mon* onto the *nakago*. Very few smiths in Japanese history received either.

The lineage split after second generation *Nidai Yasutsugu* died in 1646, dividing into *Edo* (Tokyo) and *Echizen* (Fukui) branches. The Edo house held the senior position, serving directly in the capital. This katana is from such lineage.

The *mei* (signature) proudly declares *nanban-tetsu o motte kore o tsukuru* - a sword made, in part, using foreign imported steel. By the mid-17th century (when this sword was crafted) the shogunate had moved to formally restrict the use of *namban-tetsu*. The Yasutsugu school's position within the Tokugawa orbit, however, meant they remained among the very few lines that could still work with it legitimately. A statement of privilege as much as a technical note.

This fine *Kanbun* era *katana* features a beautifully forged *itame* mixed with *mokume-hada* that swirls like whirlpools across the steel - densely and finely worked, alive with shining *ji-nie*. The *hamon* is a bright *chû-suguha* mixed with shallow *notare*, small *ashi* and plenty of *kinsuji* and *sunagashi* adding a sense of movement. This is also a substantial sword, weighty and powerful. A katana beaming with quiet confidence.

A glorious late Edo-period certified *koshirae* completes the picture with a black lacquered *saya* in gold *maki-e nami-chidori* with spectacular abalone-inlaid plover birds. It would be a real challenge to recreate such masterful lacquerwork today. An eye-catching *fuchi-kashira* attributed to *Ômori Teruhide*, expertly styled with golden *Ômori-nami* waves is simply awesome. A unique *sanmai-awase* brass *tsuba* with a mirrored design of a pine shore and sailing boats brings further balance and also historical measure. Every element chosen with thoughtful intention. A samurai with superb taste commissioned this koshirae with great care and attention.

All told, this is a brilliant samurai katana from the illustrious *Yasutsugu* school with several talking points that will shine brightly in a very lucky person's Japanese sword collection.

Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
UJKA484 - A Sandai Yasutsugu Katana
uniquejapan.com/ujka484-video

Location: *Edo, Musashi province*
Swordsmith: *Yasutsugu* (third generation)

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

Tokugawa Aoi-mon (hollyhock crest)

康 (Yasu)

継 (tsugu)

以 (motte)

南 (Nan)

蛮 (ban)

鉄 (tetsu)

於 (oite)

武 (Bu)

州 (shû)

江 (E)

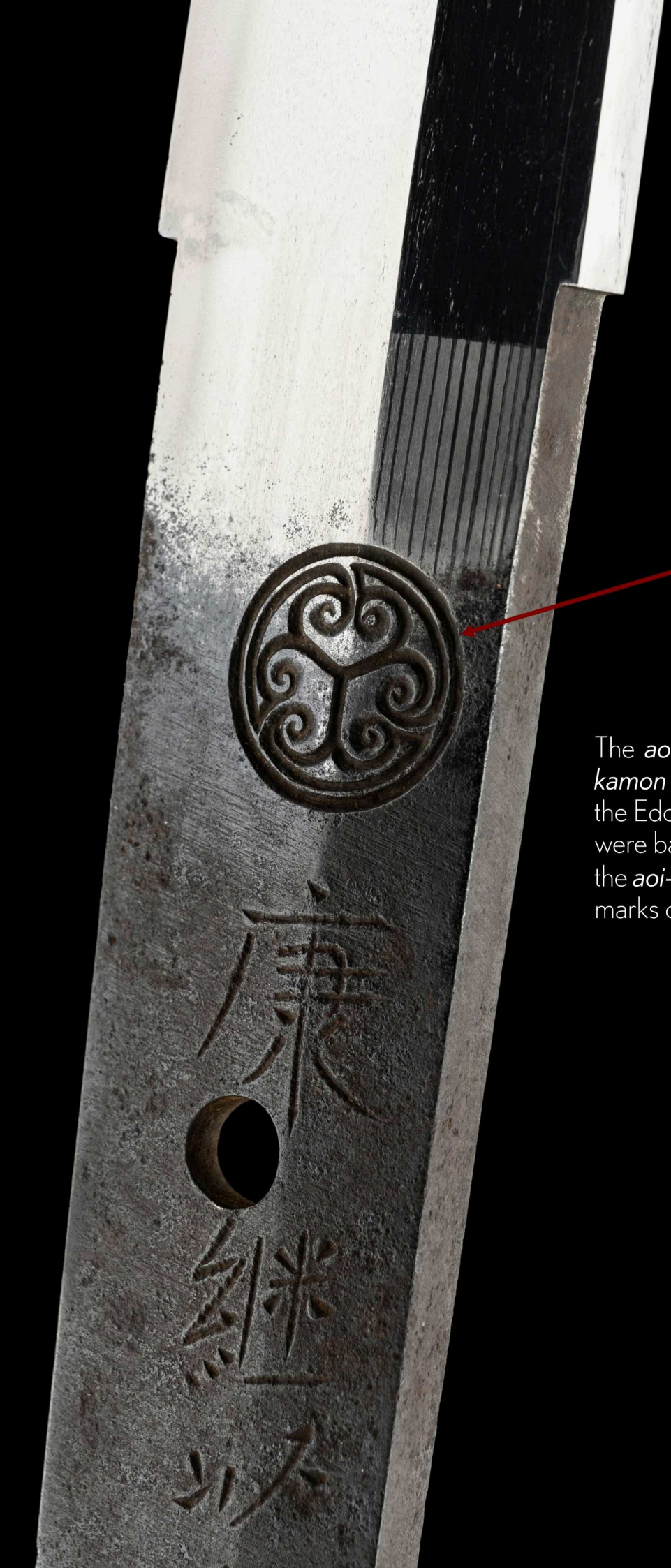
戸 (do, ni)

作 (tsukuru)

之 (kore, o)

Yasutsugu Nanban-tetsu o motte Bushû Edo ni oite kore o tsukuru

Crafted by Yasutsugu in Edo, Bushû (Musashi) province using imported steel



The *aoi-mon* (hollyhock) was the official *kamon* (crest) of the ruling *shogunate* of the Edo period, the *Tokugawa* family who were based in *Owari* province. The use of the *aoi-mon* (葵紋) crest in his signature marks official Tokugawa recognition.

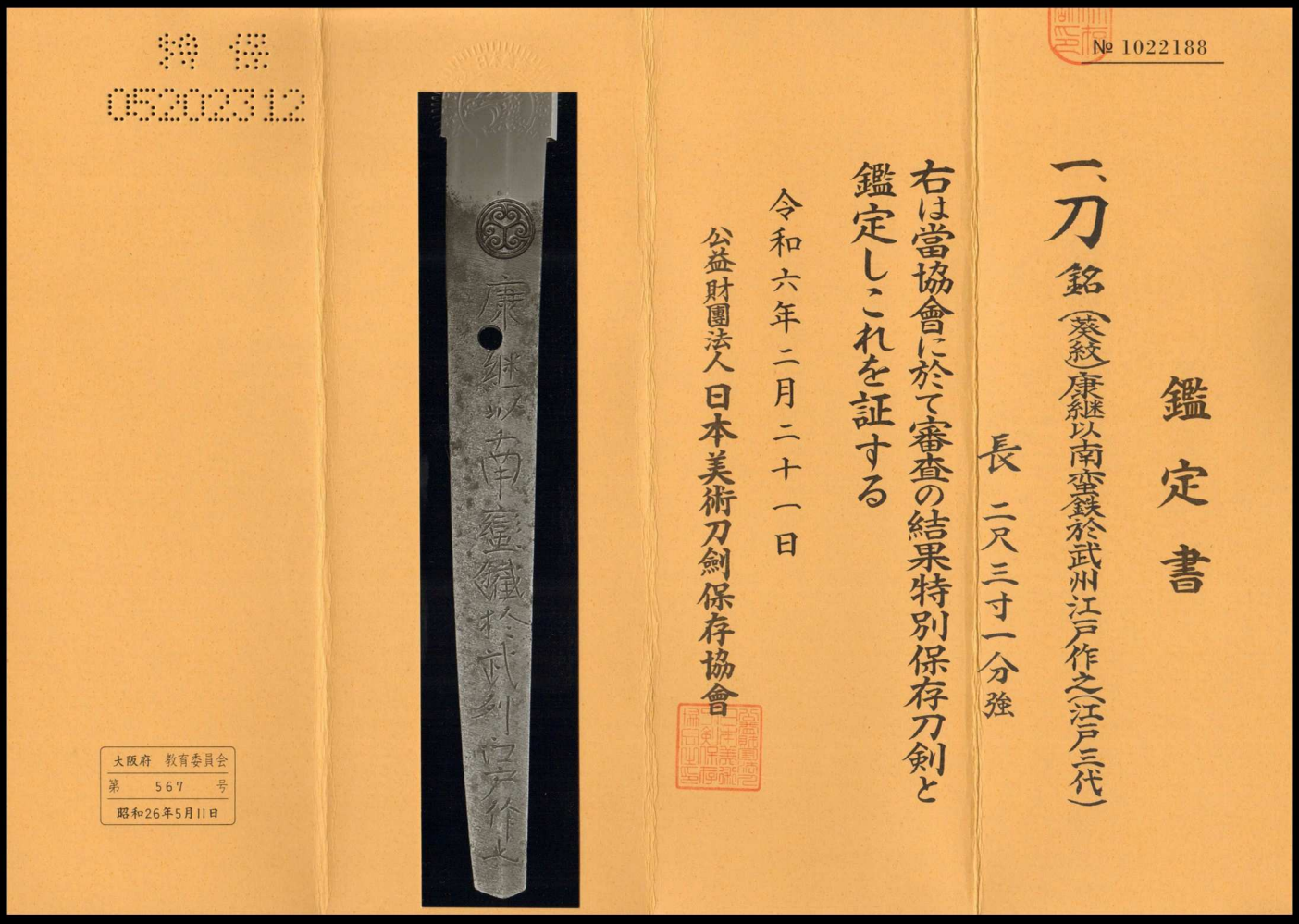
Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616)
Founder and first shogun of the
Tokugawa shogunate (Edo period)

(*ura*, reverse)

one hole, a perfect *ubu-nakago*

The shape of the *nakago-jiri* (butt-end)
is called *iriyama-gata*.

Iri means 'enter' and *yama* is 'mountain',
suggesting the start of the climb ahead.



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)
(Aoi-mon) Yasutsugu nanban-tetsu o motte
Bushû Edo ni oite kore o tsukuru (Edo Sandai)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu kyô (70.1cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

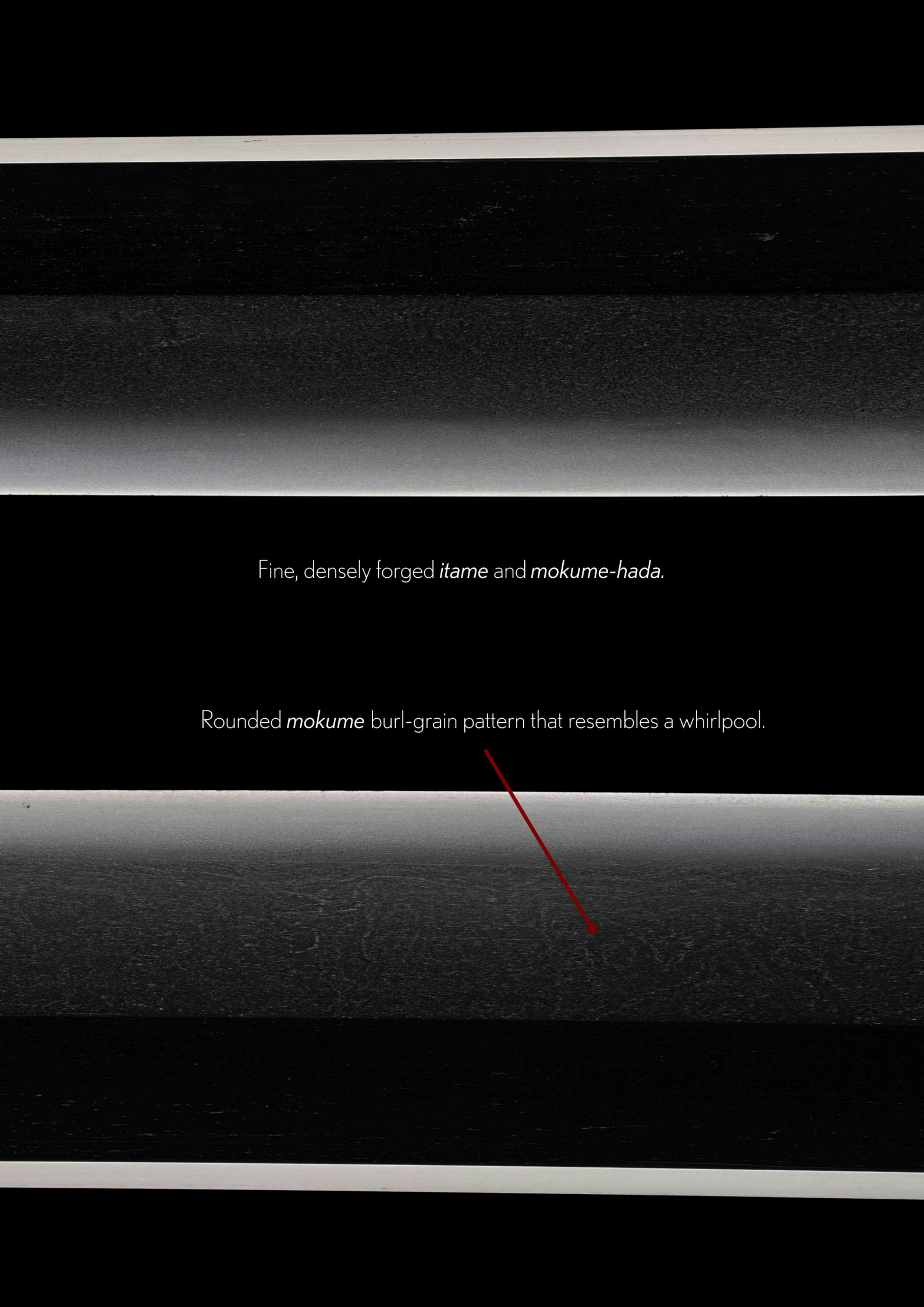
武州江戸三代康継
Bushû Edo Sandai Yasutsugu
The third generation of Edo Yasutsugu from Edo, Bushû (Musashi) province

十三字ノ長銘ニ徳川葵紋ヲ添フ
Jûsanji no chômei ni Tokugawa Aoi-mon o sou
A long signature of thirteen characters accompanied by Tokugawa Aoi-mon crest

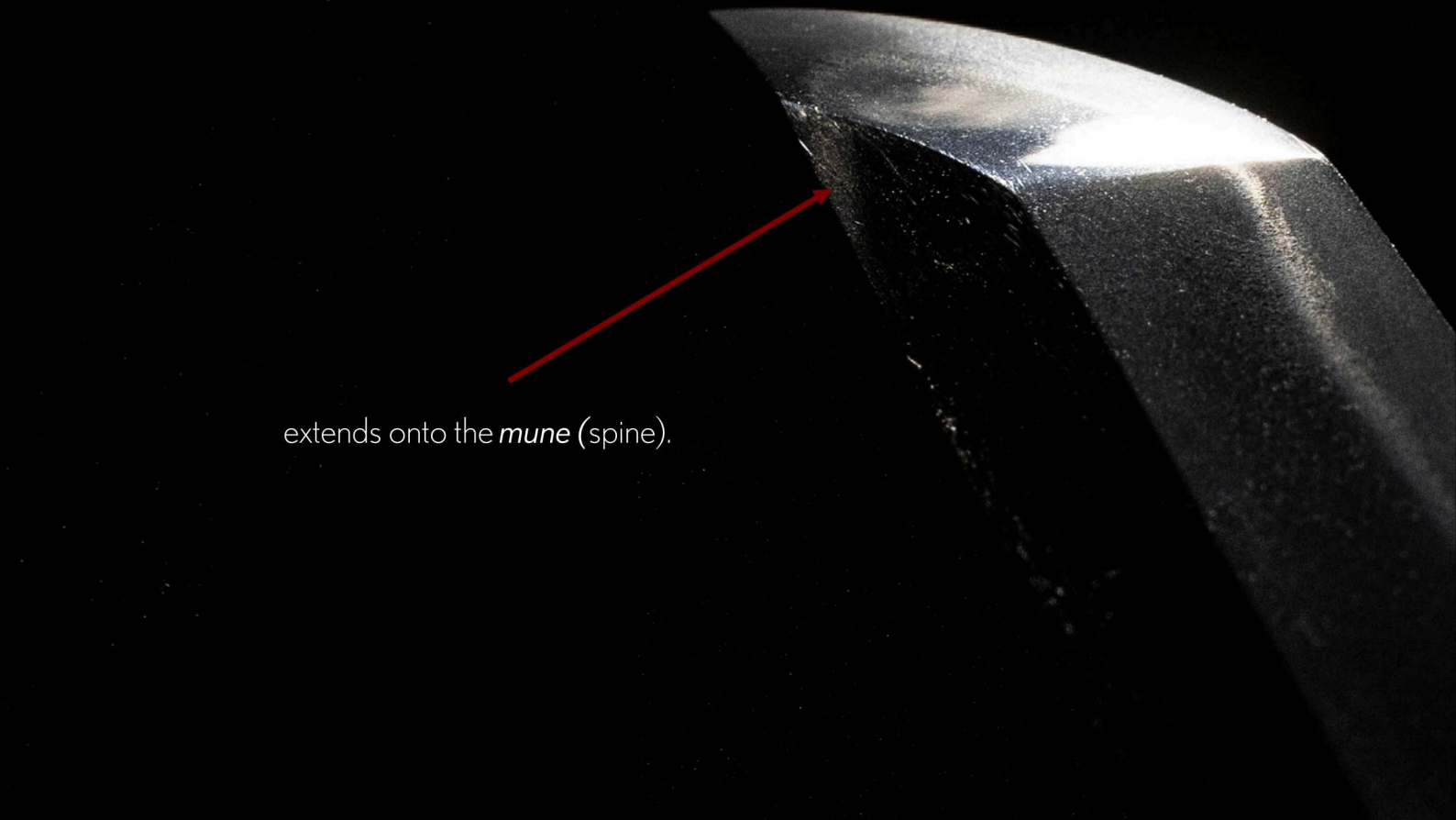
時代寛文頃
Jidai Kanbun goro
Around the Kanbun period (1661~1673)

刃長貳尺参寸壱分強有之
Hachô 2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu kyô kore ari
Blade length 70.1 cm

令和八丙午年文月吉日誌之
Reiwa hachi hinoe-uma doshi Fumizuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the seventh month of the eighth year of the Reiwa era, the Year of the Horse (July 2026)

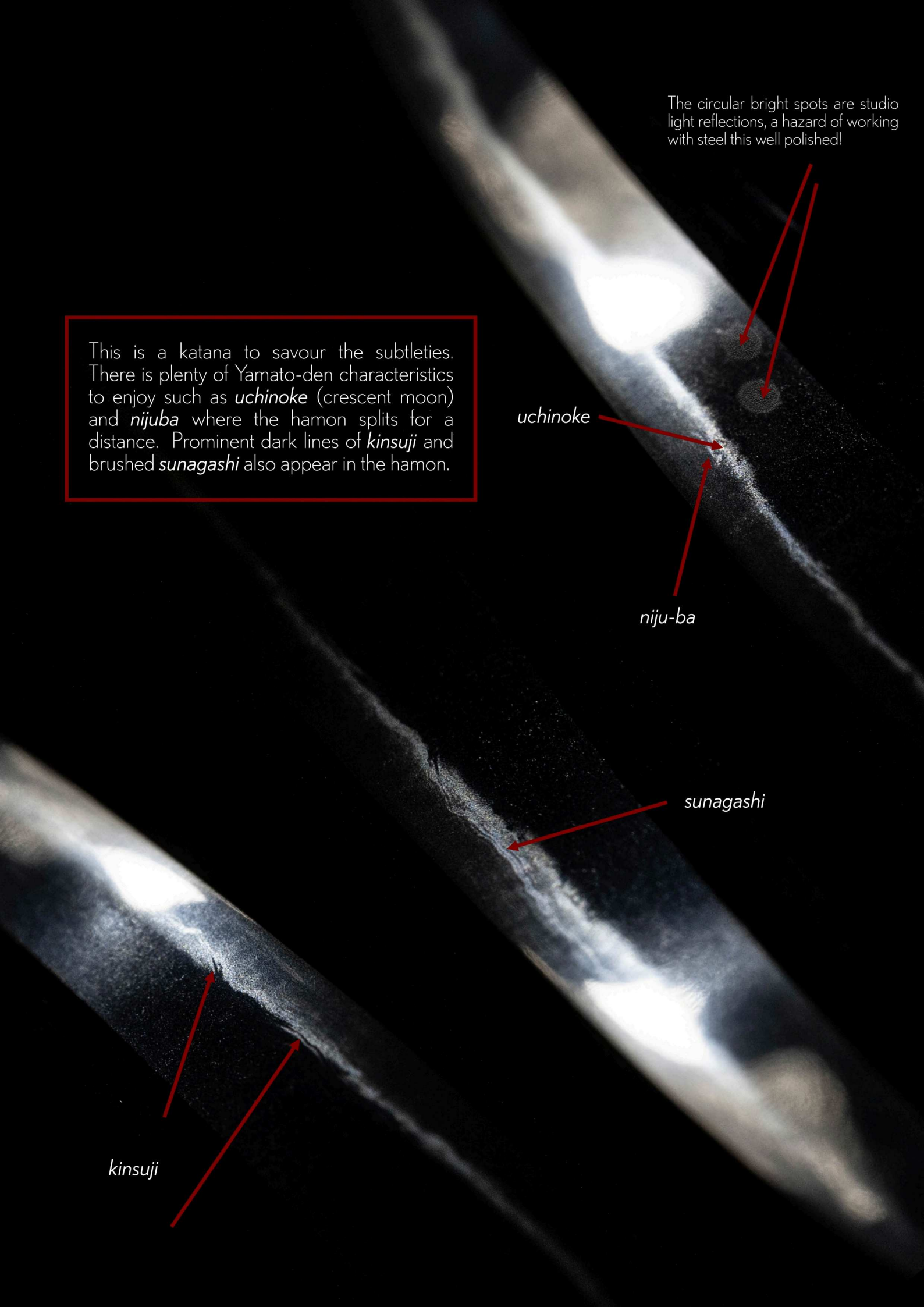

Fine, densely forged *itame* and *mokume-hada.*
Rounded *mokume* burl-grain pattern that resembles a whirlpool.

The ***bôshi*** begins straight, and turns back in a small round consistent manner known as (***ko-maru kaeri***). Note how the bôshi tails off onto the ***mune*** (spine).

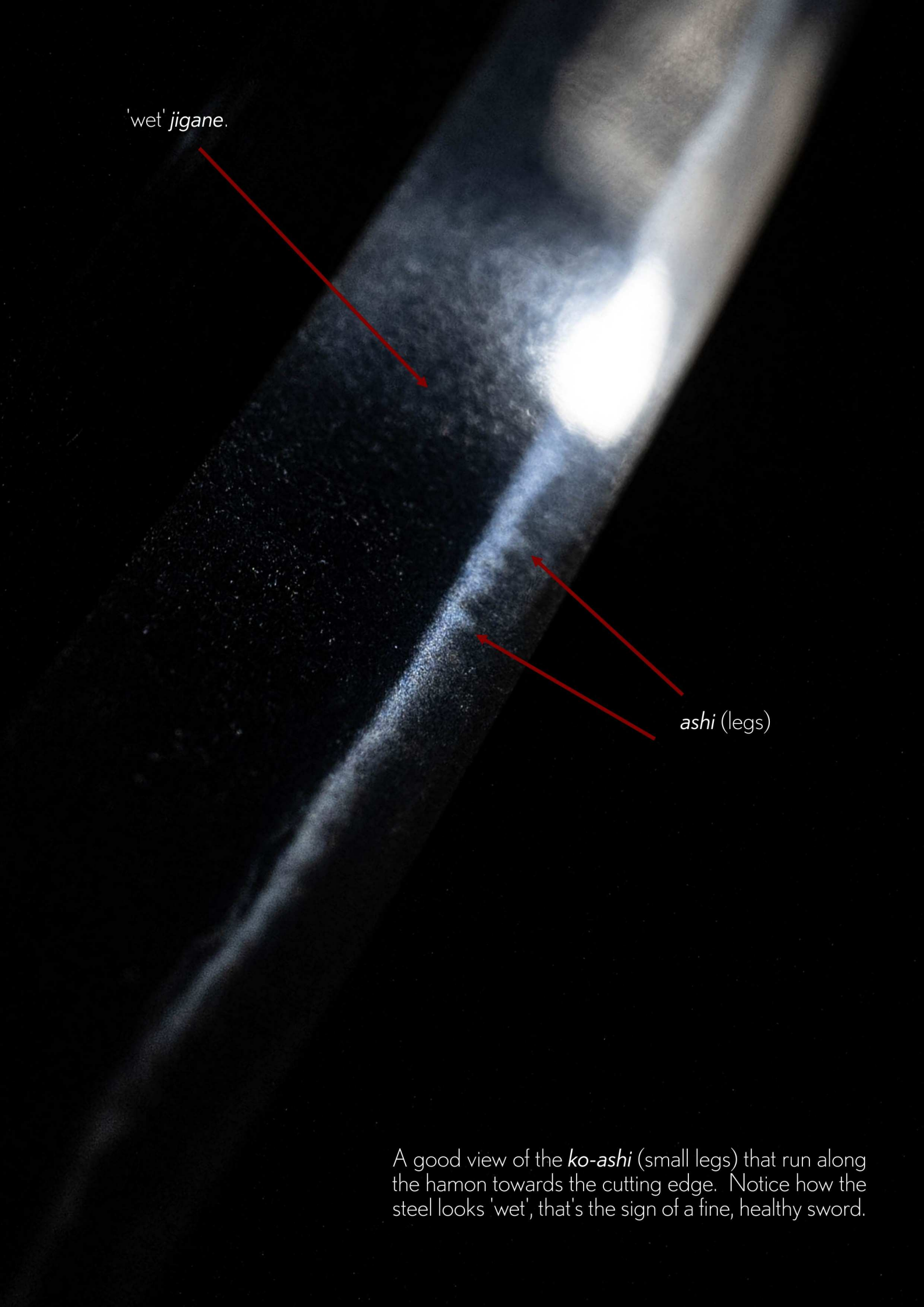


extends onto the ***mune*** (spine).

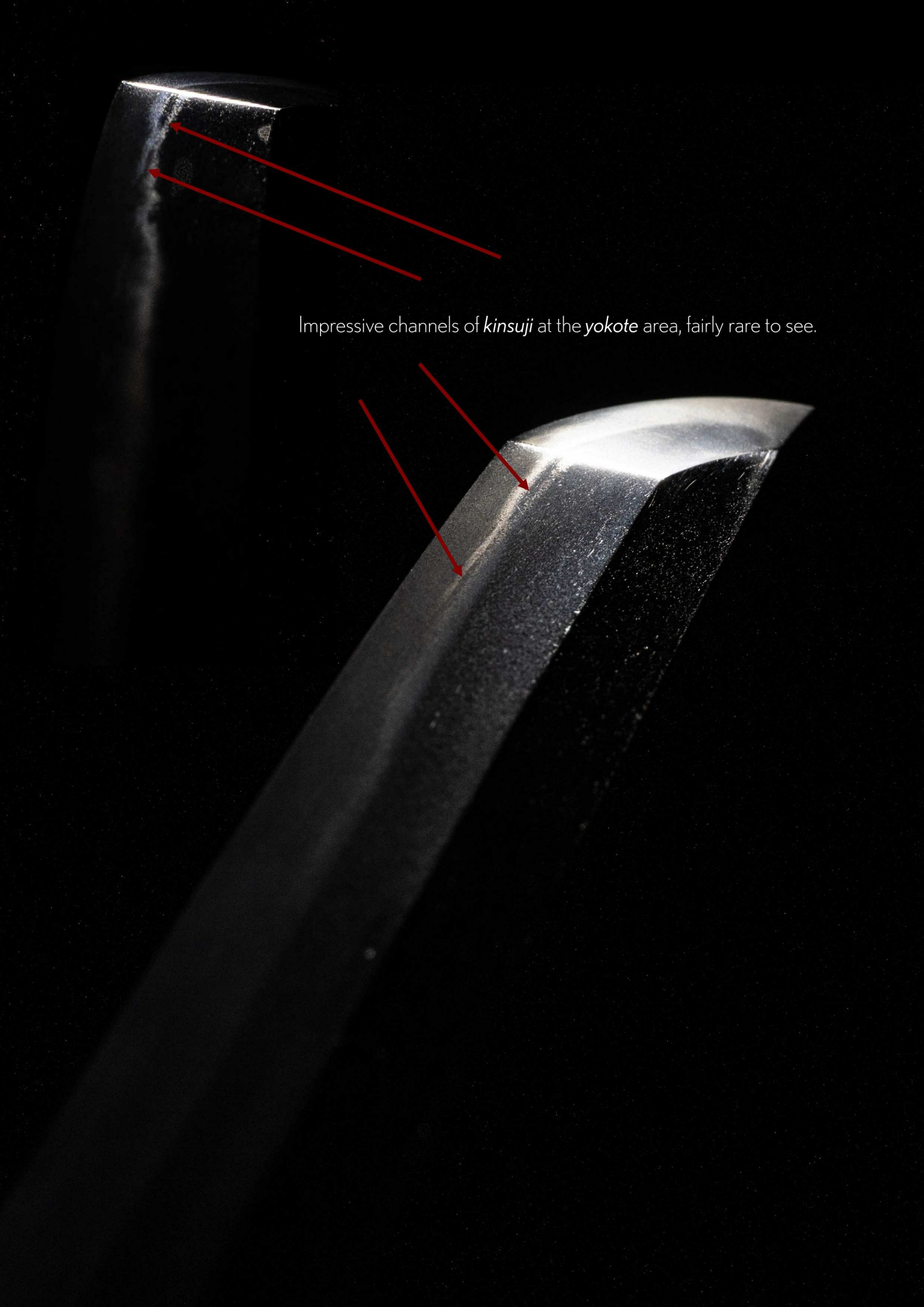
Here we see a thick snowy white ***nioiguchi***,
crystals that make up the ***suguha*** hamon.


The circular bright spots are studio light reflections, a hazard of working with steel this well polished!
This is a katana to savour the subtleties. There is plenty of Yamato-den characteristics to enjoy such as *uchinoke* (crescent moon) and *nijuba* where the hamon splits for a distance. Prominent dark lines of *kinsuji* and brushed *sunagashi* also appear in the hamon.
uchinoke
niju-ba
sunagashi
kinsuji

Gentle ***notare*** wave formations gives
the sword a sense of movement.



A good view of the ***ko-ashi*** (small legs) that run along the hamon towards the cutting edge. Notice how the steel looks 'wet', that's the sign of a fine, healthy sword.

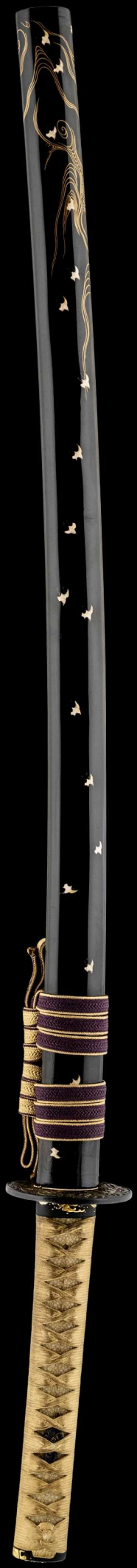


Impressive channels of ***kinsuji*** at the ***yokote*** area, fairly rare to see.

Holding the sword just right, reveals a delightful bright white *shirake-utsuri* reflecting the *hamon* inside the dark *jigane* (body) of the sword.
splendid *chikei* can be seen mixed in with the *itame* and *mokume-hada*.
shirake utsuri

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

gold ***nijû-habaki*** with
copper ground (fine quality)



Kuro-roiro-nuri nami-ni-chidori-makie-saya uchigatana-koshirae
(黒呂色塗波に千鳥蒔絵鞘打刀拵)

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in black with maki-e decoration
depicting wave and birds

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

each ***chidori*** bird inlaid in abalone shell.

Chidori in Ukiyo-e

The ***saya*** (scabbard) is finished in glossy black lacquer, decorated in gold ***maki-e*** waves with ***chidori*** (plover birds), each one expertly inlaid in ***awabi*** (abalone shell).

Nami-chidori. Waves and birds.

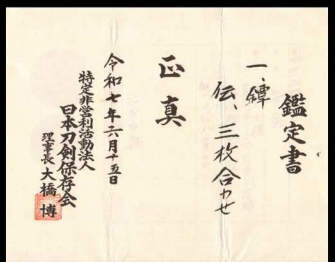
This is one of the most beloved motifs in Japanese art, and the meaning runs deep. The waves represent the hardships of life. The birds are family, flying together above them, facing whatever comes their way.

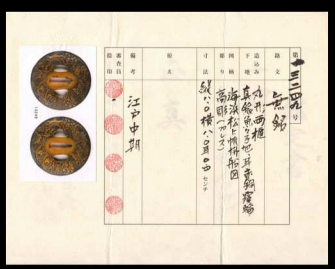
And there is wordplay too, as there so often is in Japanese art - ***chidori*** echoes ***chidoru***, meaning to seize a thousand, and so the pattern quietly carries prayers for victory and the attainment of goals. This koshirae was clearly commissioned with great care - and great hope.

This meaningful brass ***tsuba*** depicts pine trees on the shore and a sailing boat moving across the surface. The imagery is filled with positivity- safe voyages, prosperity, the open seas ahead.

The construction is ***sanmai-awase*** - three plates laminated together, the outer surfaces shaped through a form of press work. This method emerged from necessity rather than choice: working with thinner plates minimized flaws at a time when quality materials were scarce.

Creativity and resourcefulness on full display.





(front)

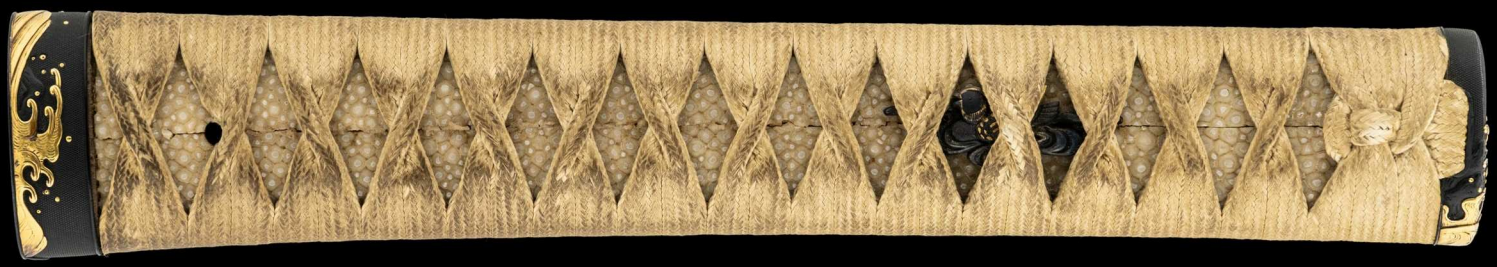
That the front and reverse bear exactly the same design is no accident, it is one of the defining characteristics of ***sanmai-awase*** construction. Made to be admired from every angle.

(reverse)

Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Ômori Teruhide
(大森英秀, 1730 ~ 1798)

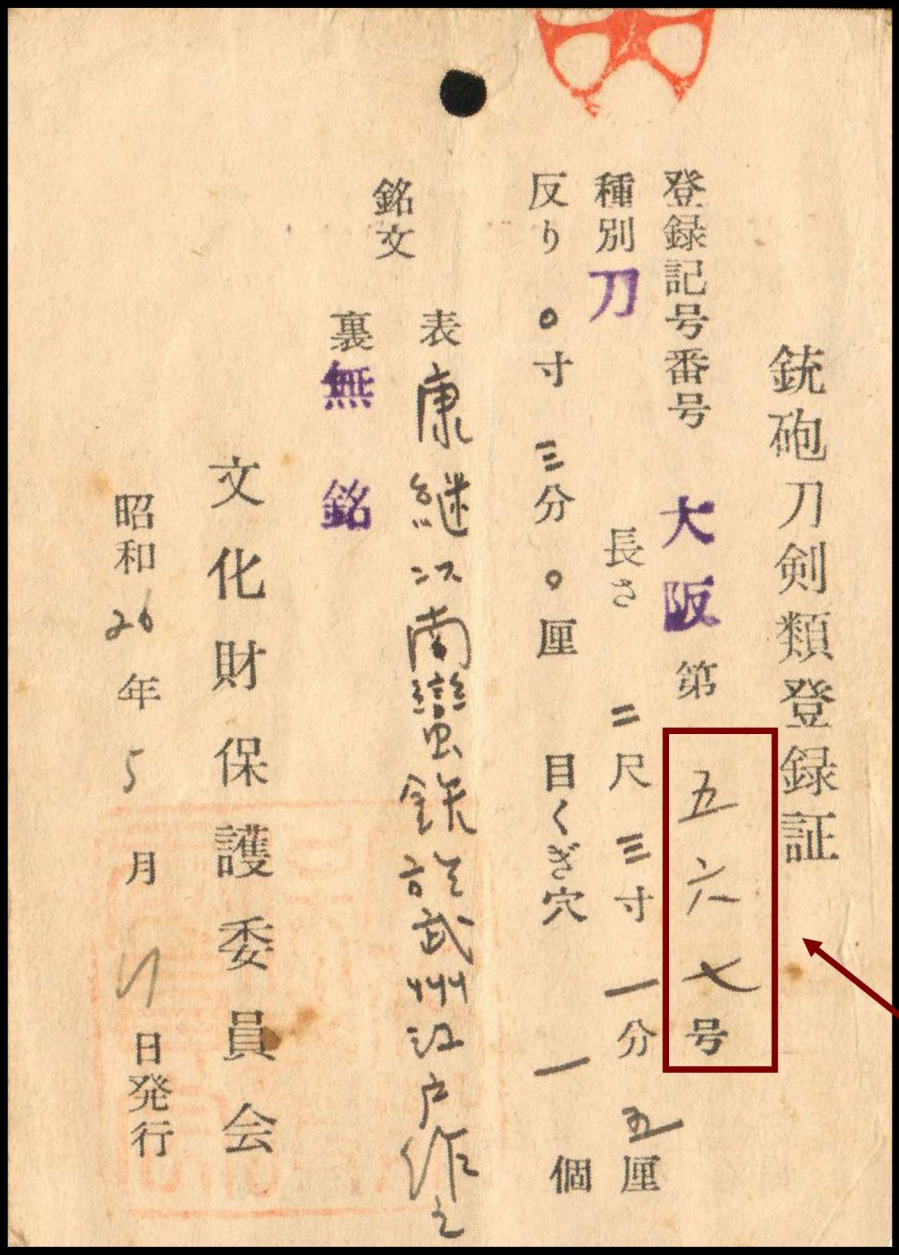
What a glorious *fuchi-kashira*. *Ômori Teruhide* was born in Edo in 1730, the nephew of *Ômori Hidemasa* and eventual adopted son and second-generation head of the highly respected *Ômori* school. *Hidemasa* himself studied under the legendary *Yokoya Sômin,* the man who effectively defined the aesthetic vocabulary of Edo-period metalwork. Teruhide inherited that tradition and made it his own.

The groundwork is a top-quality base of *shakudô nanako* with gold accents - rich, deep, and rather moving. The wave (*nami*) carving here is, of course, the signature technique of the school. *Ômori-nami* is the term collectors use. No other school rendered the energy of the open sea quite like the *Ômori* school.



The ***tsuka*** (hilt) is a samurai classic - white ***samekawa*** (ray skin) beneath an ivory coloured braid that has aged like a fine wine. Feel the history...

The ***menuki*** are ***shakudô*** with gold accents, carrying a motif of aquatic plants - a natural companion to the waves rolling across the ***fuchi-kashira***.



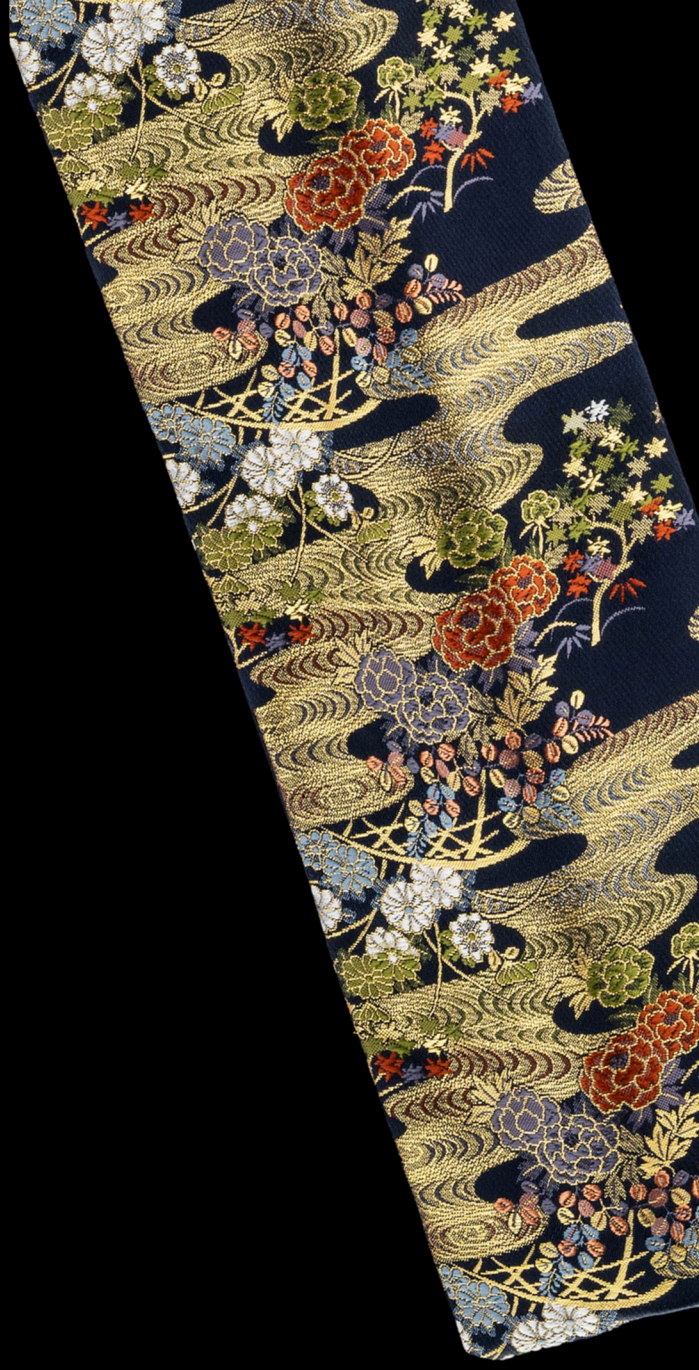
567 (!)

This is the original *torokusho* (registration card) for the *3-dai Yasutsugu katana*. The card was registered in the 26th year of *Shôwa* (1951).

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

It also shows this sword had never left Japan, even after WWII when many swords were confiscated by allied forces.

This katana of the very first swords registered in Japan. It was registered in *Ôsaka* and the registration number is only 567 (wow).



Koshirae bag with a beautiful chrysanthemum wave pattern.

Congratulations Simon,

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJDI014

SOLD

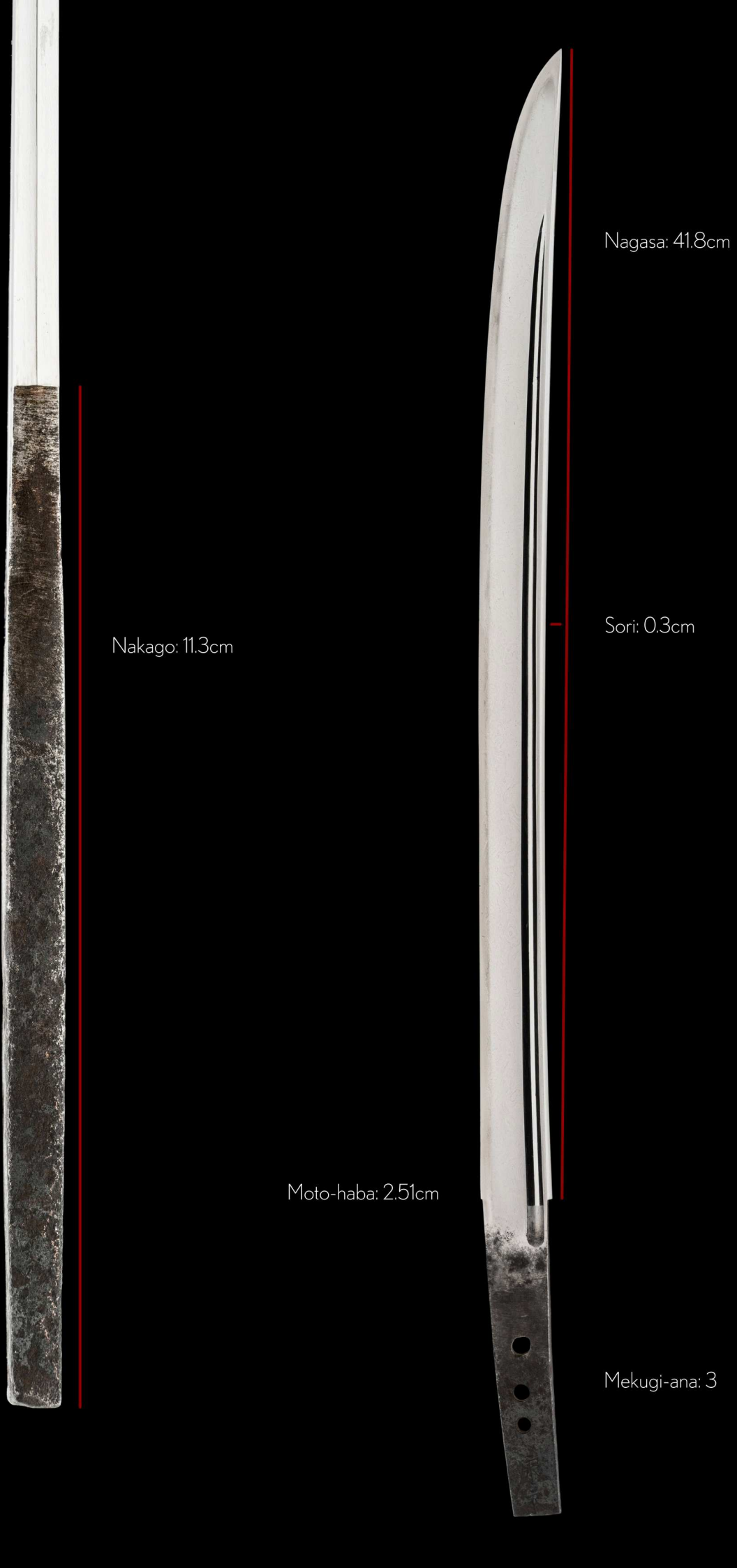
A SUKESADA / YASUNAGA DAISHÔ

SIGNED, KOTÔ MUROMACHI PERIOD (1394~1428 & 1500~1550)

Swordsmiths:	***Osafune Sukesada*** (祐定, *katana*) & ***Osafune Yasunaga*** (康永, *wakizashi*)
Measurements (k):	**Length:** 64.5cm (*suriage*) **Sori:** 2.73cm **Moto-haba:** 2.78cm **Weight:** 595g
Measurements (w):	**Length:** 41.8cm (*suriage*) **Sori:** 0.3cm **Moto-haba:** 2.51cm **Weight:** 255g
Jihada:	*Well-forged itame and nagare-hada with chikei and utsuri especially on wakizashi*
Hamon:	*Ko-midare based on suguha, bright nioguchi, kinsuji, yo, hakikake bôshi*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(wakizashi is Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(katana is Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificates #3-6:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** *(tsuba, fk, kogai/kozuka, koshirae designated Authentic)*
Rankings:	**Chûjô-saku & Wazamono** *(Yasunaga ranked above average, made sharp swords)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** *(shodô artist)*
Included:	Shirasaya x 2, daishô koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

Here is a brilliant *daishô* formed of *Muromachi* period *Bizen Osafune* school swords by ***Sukesada*** and ***Yasunaga***. The *Sukesada* katana is gloriously curved, with a *jihada* of *itame* mixed with *mokume* that stands out prominently. The wakizashi by *Yasunaga*, son of *Ôei* era master *Yasumitsu*, features abundant activity with a particularly bright *nioiguchi*. The *daishô* koshirae follows formal samurai *daishô* attire with *shakudô* fittings that display a powerful theme of dragons resulting in immense spiritual protection to the swords. There is fine energy channelled into this *daishô*, two war veterans from the *Muromachi* period now firmly in retirement, but always on the ready if ever called upon.

Saki-kasane: 4.6mm
Moto-kasane: 6.4mm
Nakago: 17.2cm
Omosa: 595g
Kissaki: 2.98cm
Saki-haba: 1.98cm
Nagasa: 64.5cm
Sori: 2.73cm (wow)
Moto-haba: 2.78cm
Mekugi-ana: 2


Moto-kasane: 5.1mm
Nakago: 11.3cm
Omosa: 255g
Nagasa: 41.8cm
Sori: 0.3cm
Moto-haba: 2.51cm
Mekugi-ana: 3

This brilliant ***daishô***, consists of works by two swordsmiths from the *Bizen Osafune* lineage. The ***katana*** is a ***niji-mei*** (two-character signature) *Sukesada* (祐定), and the ***wakizashi*** is also a ***niji-mei*** by *Yasunaga* (康永).

The ***katana*** was crafted at a time to meet the high demand of the turbulent *Muromachi* period. The blade features a very deep and most impressive curvature so it could be wielded with one hand (***katate-uchi***), with a ***jihada*** of ***itame*** mixed with ***mokume*** that stands out prominently. The ***hamon*** is a calm (yet deadly) ***suguha*** with ***ko-midare*** and ***sunagashi***. The presence of a ***bô-hi*** groove to reduce weight reflects the practical reality required for combat situations.

The ***wakizashi*** by *Yasunaga*, is traditionally regarded to be the son of *Yasumitsu* (康光) and one of the representative masters of the *Ôei-Bizen* period. He thus learned from the most accomplished of that generation. The ***jigane*** shows a flowing ***itame*** grain that occasionally resembles the ***ayasugi*** pattern, accompanied by light ***utsuri***, showcasing a level of skill inherited from his father. The ***hamon*** is ***suguha*** mixed with ***ko-midare***, featuring abundant activity within the edge than the ***katana*** with a bright ***nioiguchi***. A bright ***nioguchi*** (crystals that form the hamon) is always a sign of a well-made, healthy, vibrant sword.

Yasunaga is ranked ***chûjô-saku*** (an above average smith) and also ***wazamono*** for his sharp sword-making abilities. It's always a pleasure to see a kotô period smith with ***wazamono*** ranking - a six-hundred-year-old sword that can still bite.

The ***daishô koshirae*** houses these two blades in a unified colour scheme appropriate for formal ***samurai daishô*** attire. White ***samekawa*** with black silk hilts and a beaming glossy black scabbards. The ***shakudô*** fittings embody a powerful theme of dragons that offer immense spiritual protection to the swords.

It's a ***daishô*** of veteran swords that deserve to be treated well. Great samurai energy that will look fabulous on display in any home or office.

Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
UJDI014 - A Sukesada / Yasunaga Daishô

uniquejapan.com/ujdi014-video

Location: *Bizen province*
School name: *Ôsafune school*
Swordsmith: *Sukesada*

suriage-nakago (shortened tang)
katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

transition to original file marks

original *mekugi-ana*

祐 (Suke)

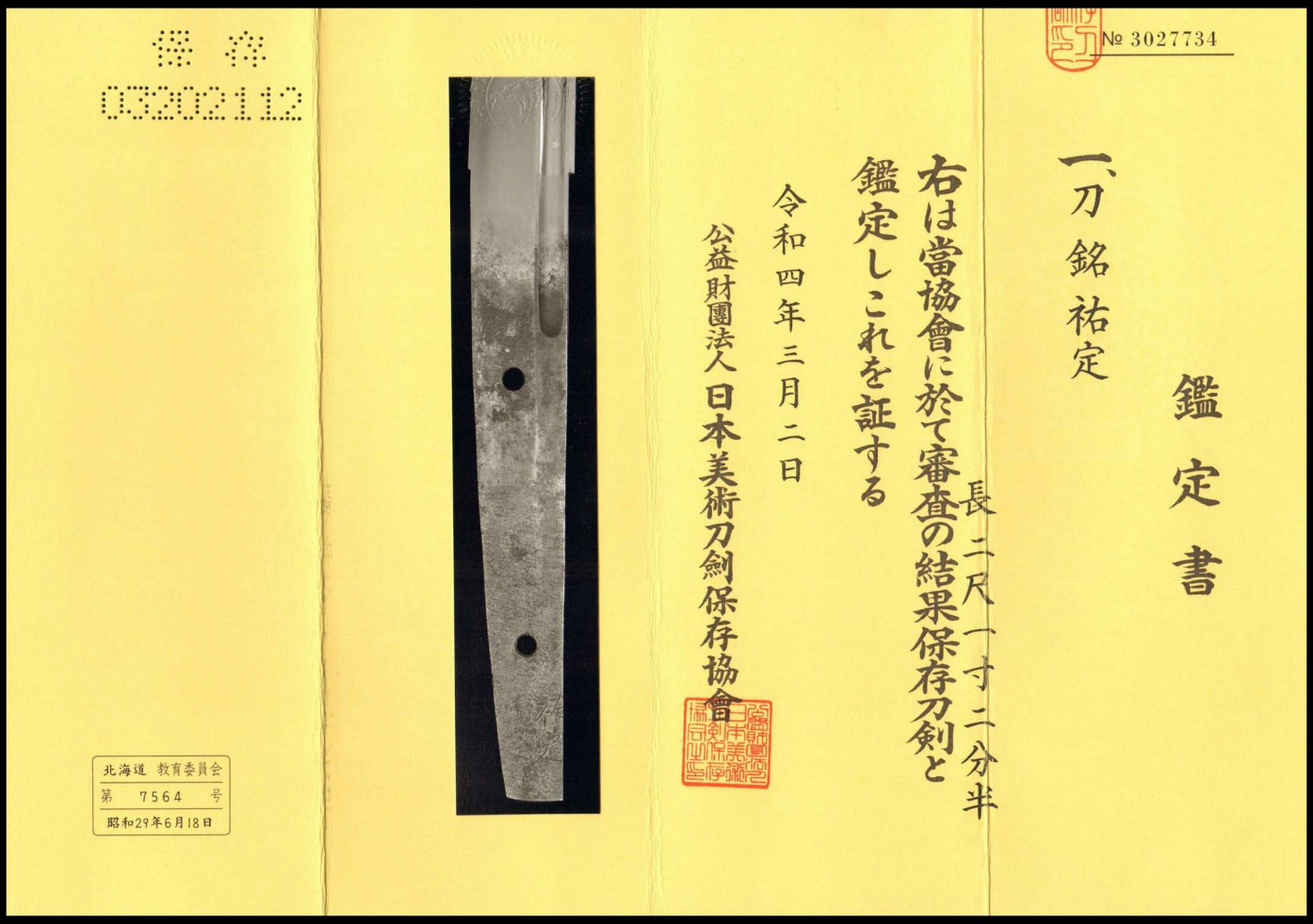
定 (sada)

The technique of finishing the end of a groove in a rounded shape is known as ***maru-dome***. Typically, the end of the groove is positioned just above the ***habaki***, but now extends into the ***nakago*** due to the blade being shortened for use on the battlefield as an awesome, deeply curved one-handed ***katate-uchi*** katana.

maru-dome

An example of ***maru-dome*** on an ***ubu-nakago*** (unshortened) blade.

(***ura***, reverse)



NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

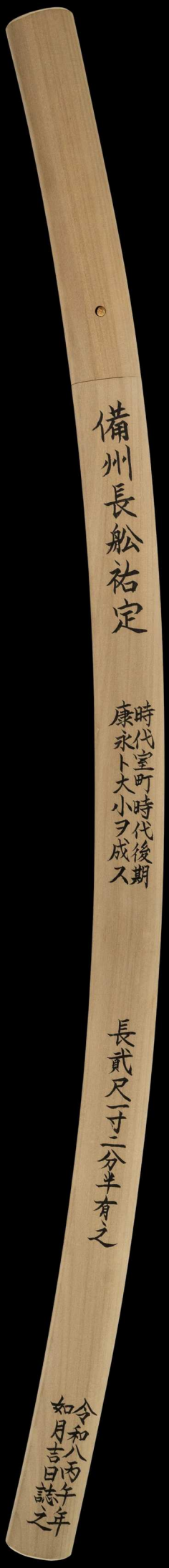
Issued in the 4th year of Reiwa (2022), March 2nd

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Sukesada

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 1-sun 2-bu han (64.5cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



備州長舩祐定
Bishû Osafune Sukesada
Osafune Sukesada from Bishû province

時代室町時代後期康永ト大小ヲ成ス
Jidai Muromachi jidai kôki, Yasunaga to daishô o nasu
Late Muromachi period, constituting a daishô with Yasunaga

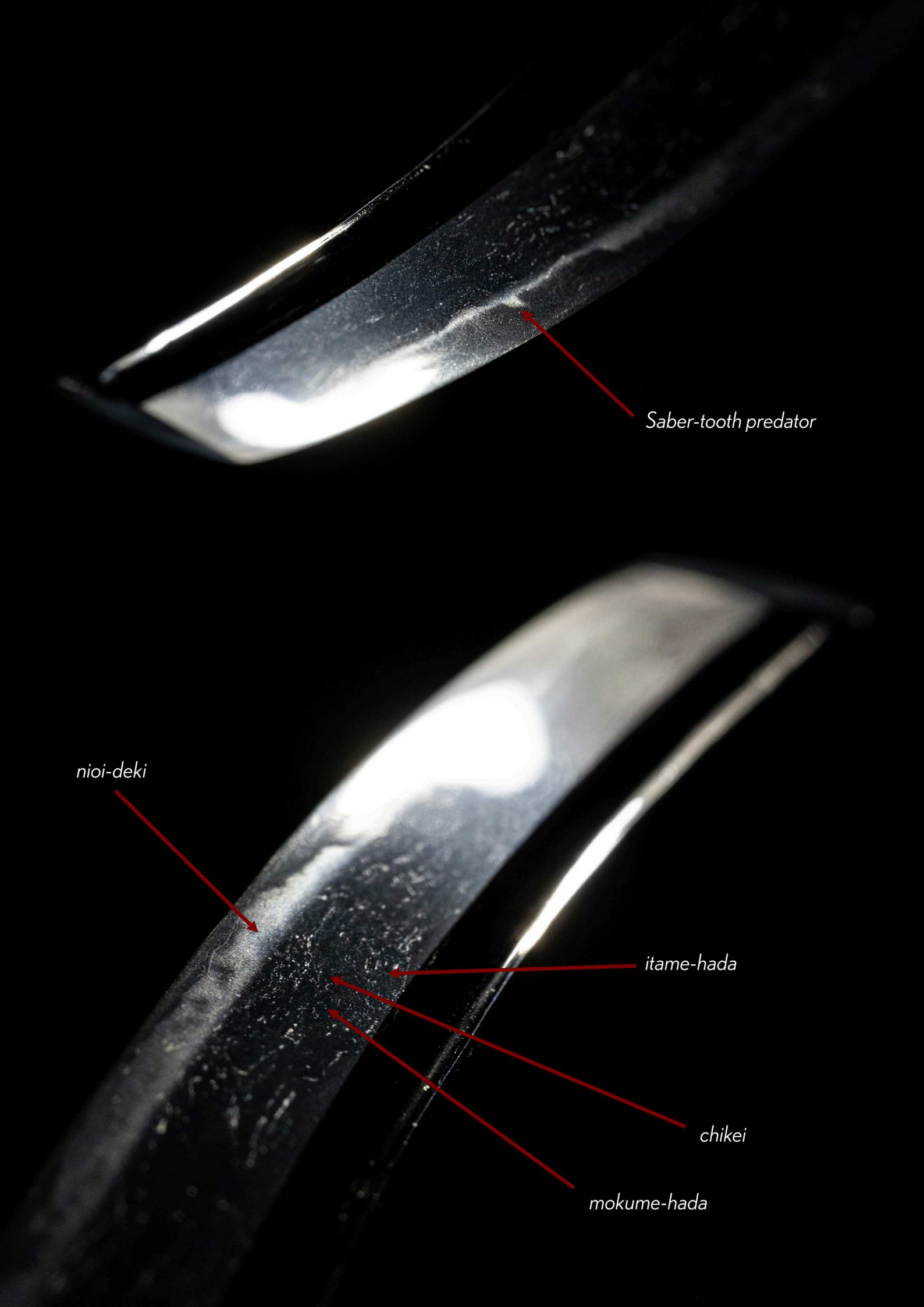
長貳尺一寸二分半有之
Nagasa 2-shaku 1-sun 2-bu han kore ari
Blade length 64.5 cm

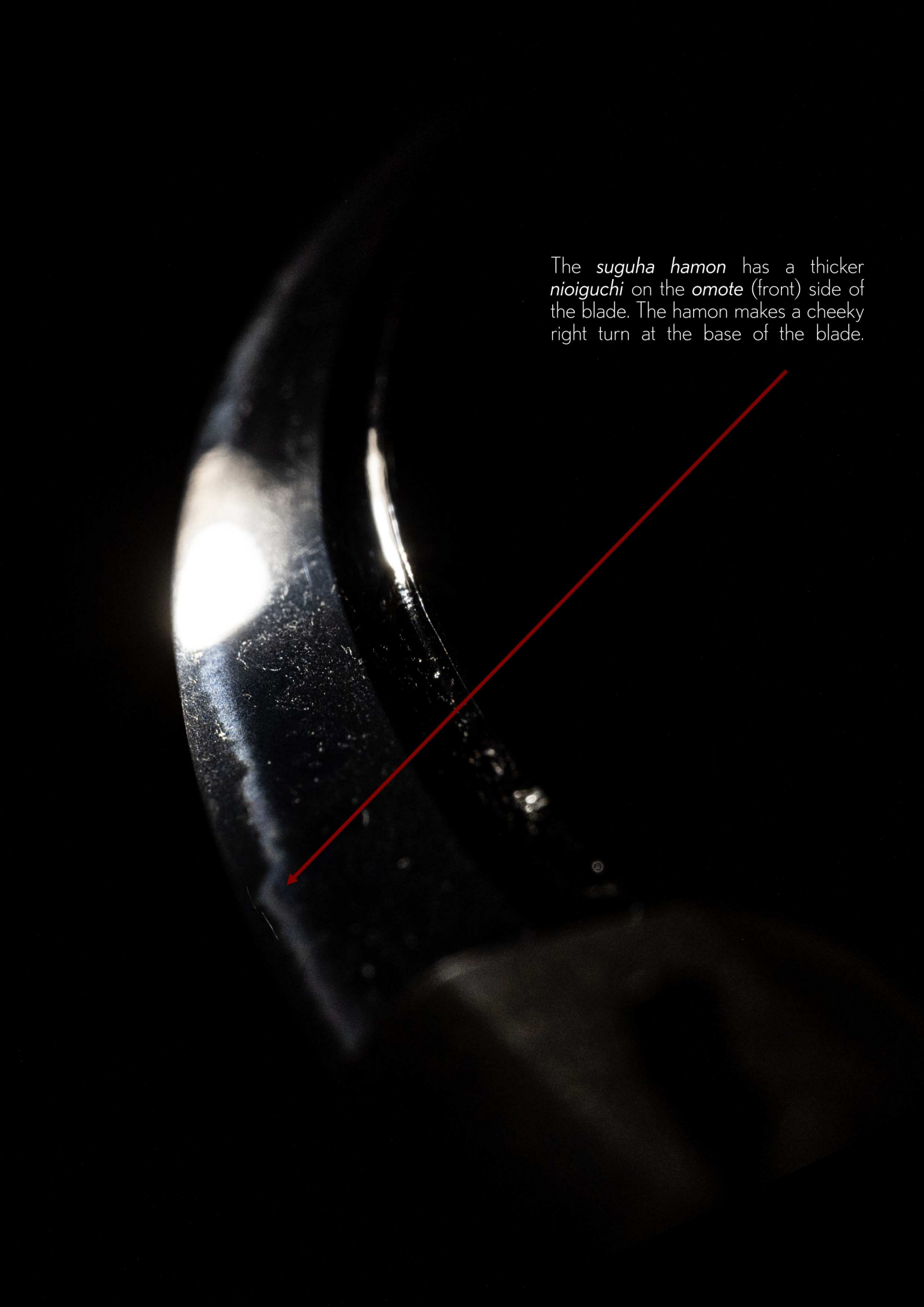
令和八丙午年如月吉日誌之
Reiwa hachi hinoe-umadoshi Kisaragi kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the second month in the eighth year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Horse (February 2026)

Forty Seven Ronin
Gekko Ogata (born 1859)

The katana's dramatic curvature is reminiscent of samurai archer. Its ***suguha hamon*** runs with quiet discipline like a loyal soldier.

Hakikake (beautiful brushed boshi)


Saber-tooth predator
nioi-deki
itame-hada
chikei
mokume-hada



The ***suguha hamon*** has a thicker ***nioiguchi*** on the ***omote*** (front) side of the blade. The hamon makes a cheeky right turn at the base of the blade.

The upper portion of the blade transitions into ***ko-midare hamon*** adding further personality to the katana.

Location: *Bizen province*
School name: *Osafune school*
Swordsmith: *Yasunaga* (first generation)

suriage-nakago (shortened tang)
katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

Similar to the *katana*, the boundary of the original file marks can also be identified on the *wakizashi*.

original *mekugi-ana*

康 (Yasu)

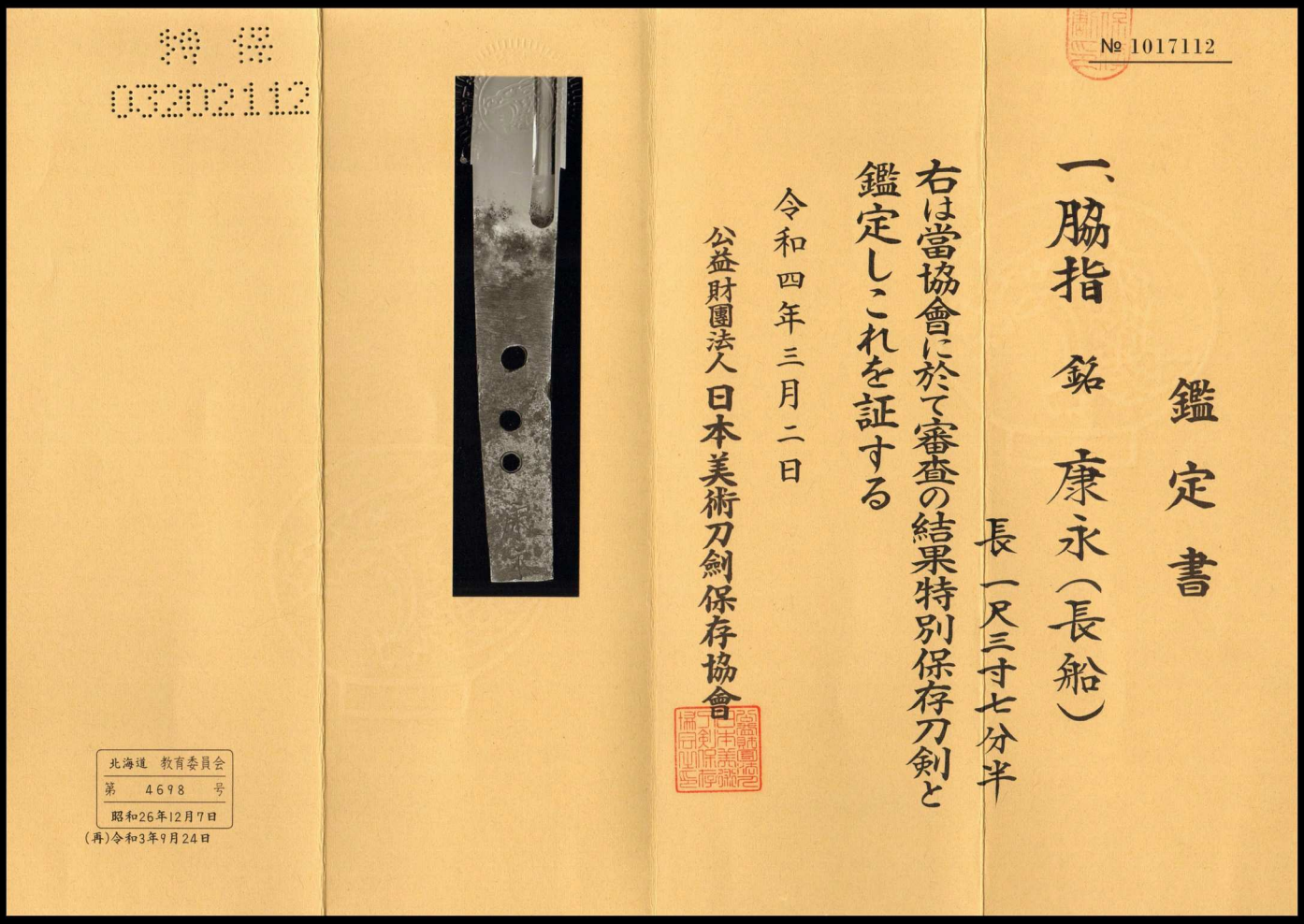
永 (naga)

The *bô-hi*, which would have originally ended above the *habaki*, also extends into the *nakago* matching the katana..

wonderful aged patina on the nakago,

The horizontally cut *nakago-jiri* is referred to as *Keichô-suriage*, suggesting that the blade was shortened around the *Keichô* era (1596-1615).

(*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 4th year of Reiwa (2022), March 2nd

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)
Yasunaga (Osafune school)

Nagasa (length)
1shaku 3-sun 7-bu han (41.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

備州長舩康永
Bishû Osafune Yasunaga
Osafune Yasunaga from Bishû province

時代應永頃祐定ト大小ヲ成ス
Jidai Ôei goro, Sukesada to daishô o nasu
Around Ôei period (1394~1428)
Constituting a daishô with Sukesada

長壱尺参寸七分半有之
Nagasa 1-shaku 3-sun 7-bu han kore ari
Blade length 41.8 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)

600 years of proud heritage

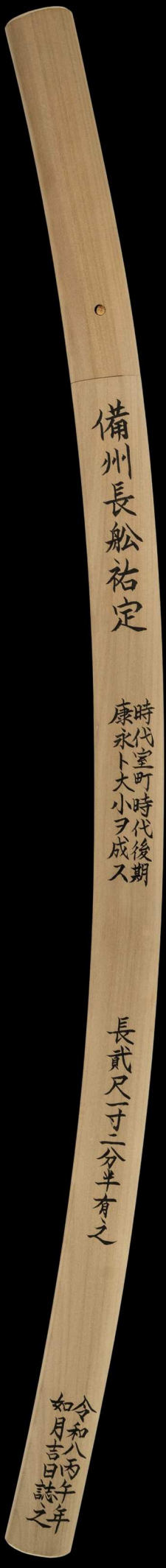
A bright, consistent and well-executed ***suguha hamon*** with lovely details such as ***yô*** (leaves) that 'fall' from the ***hamon***. Yasunaga may be ranked as ***chûjô-saku*** (an above average swordsmith) by ***Fujishiro***, but this sword is clearly the work of a superior-ranked smith.

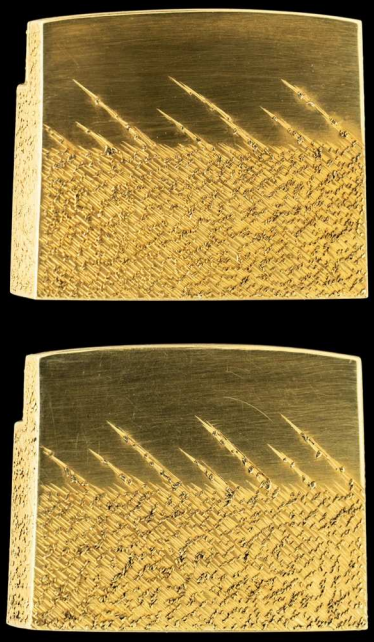
Midare utsuri - a wavy shadow *hamon* - appears hugging the *shinogi* line in classic *Bizen* tradition.
Large pools of *ô-mokume*
midare-utsuri

sunagashi
chikei
A river of nagara-hada.
mokume-hada

Expertly forged steel that catches the light just right - note the swirling *nagare* and *itame-hada* - there is an aliveness to this wakizashi.
A gorgeous *bo-hi* (groove) that enhances the elegant line of the sword.

Shirasaya
(protective scabbards with *Nozomi-san sayagaki)*





matching gold *habaki* with
rainfll design file marks

Kuro-roiro-nuri saya
daishô-uchigatana-koshirae
(黒呂塗鞘打刀大小拵)

Uchigatana-daishô-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black

Crafted during the modern-era

The ***daishô***, restricted to ***samurai*** class wear, emerged as a defining symbol of their status. This paired-sword tradition gained prominence near the close of the *Muromachi* period (1336-1573), with surviving examples dating to the late sixteenth century. A 1629 edict formalized the ***daishô*** requirement for ***samurai*** on official duties.

This tradition ended during the *Meiji* period when an 1871 edict removed the ***samurai***'s obligation to wear ***daishô***, followed by an 1876 public sword ban.

These reforms effectively ended both the ***daishô*** tradition and the ***samurai*** class itself.

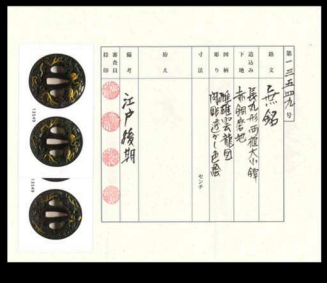
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

dai

This dynamic pair of glorious ***daishô tsubas*** were crafted by the ***Nomura*** school during the late ***Edo*** period. The lineage began with the first generation, ***Masatoki***, who studied under ***Gotô Kenjô*** before establishing his own school. As a result, many artists of the ***Nomura*** school traditionally underwent training with the ***Gotô*** family.

Made of ***shakudô*** with gold accents, the artwork features impressive three-dimensional carvings of cloud dragons guarding the swords with a powerful and spiritual presence.

shô



NTHK-NPO Kanteishô Certificate

Guard the jewel..

(reverse)

dai

shô

The *fuchi-kashira* was signed and crafted by *Kurokawa Shigehisa* (黒川茂久), the twelfth head of the prestigious *Kurokawa* family, who served as the *Onkoshimono-kata* (sword administrators) for the *Fukui* Clan for generations. *Shigehisa* was a master of extraordinary talent; not only did he serve as the official craftsman for the domain lord, but his original *tsuba* designs also earned the supreme honor of being selected for the *Shogun*'s personal swords. In these pieces, the surging waves are expressed with dynamic, three-dimensional carving. As a matching set for a *daishô*, the craftsmanship clearly reflects an intent for the most formal of attire.

(Kuro) 黒

(kawa) 川

(Shige) 茂

(hisa) 久

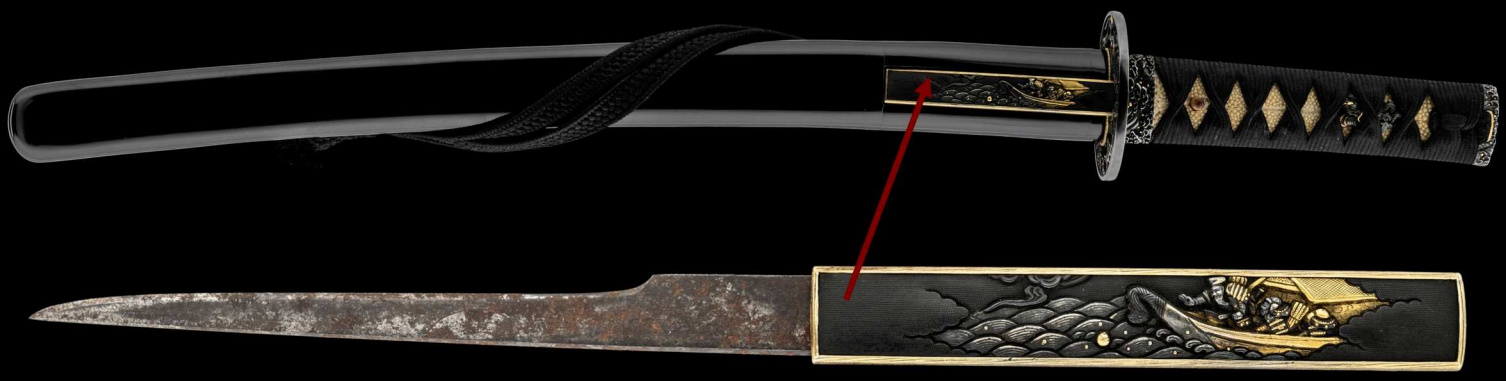
monogram

The ***daishô tsuka*** (hilts) are covered with antique white samekawa (ray skin) and wrapped in ***hishimaki*** style with black ***ito***, complemented by ***shakudô fuchi*** with gold accents and ***shakudô menuki***.

Every element follows the traditional formal dress code for attending castle ceremonies - a cohesive, tidy and dignified ***daishô koshirae***.

The ***menuki*** continue the dragon theme with terrific depictions of crawling dragons. The dragon was the most formal motif of the ***Edo*** period and was highly regarded by samurai as a symbol of power, martial fortune, and success.

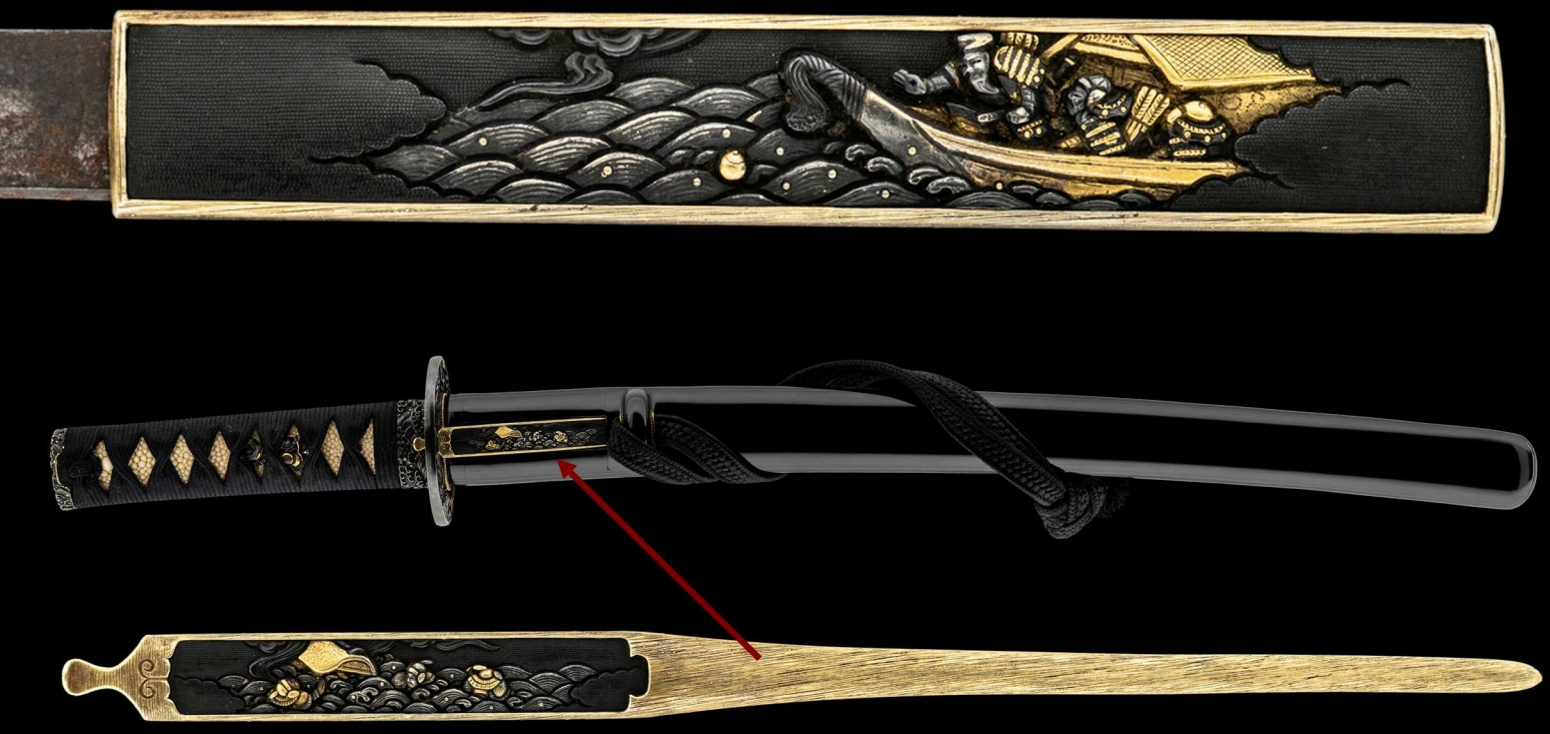
kozuka (utility knife)



The set of ***kozuka*** and ***kogai***, together as ***futatokoro***, were practical accessories for the Edo-period ***samurai***, housed in dedicated slots on the wakizashi ***saya*** (scabbard).

The pieces are crafted by ***Gotô Ryûjô***, a master from a branch of the prestigious ***Gotô*** family. Expertly carved into the ***shakudô nanako*** base is the ***Battle of Dan-no-ura***, the final decisive conflict of the ***Genpei War.***

For generations of ***samurai***, this battle was a fitting motif – a reminder of where they came from and what they stood for.



kogai (hair pick)

祐 (Suke)

定 (sada)

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

康 (Yasu)
永 (naga)
長 (Osa)
船 (fune)

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

Daishô koshirae bags with pattern of flowers and clouds.

Congratulations David.

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJTA065 SOLD

A SUKEMUNE TANTÔ

SIGNED, SUE-KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI PERIOD (TENBUN ERA: 1532~1555)

Swordsmith:	***Shimada Sukemune*** *(shodai, 1st gen.)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 22.3cm (*ubu*) **Moto-haba:** 2.48cm **Weight:** 135g
Jihada:	*Itame and mokume-hada with ji-nie and chikei*
Hamon:	*Bright gunome-chôji-midare with with hitatsura, tobiyaki in nie-deki*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(a sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificates #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** *(soroi kanagu,kozuka and koshirae designated Authentic)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Chûjô-saku** (*ranked as an above average swordsmith*)
Sharpness:	**Wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of sharp swords*)
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)*
Included:	Shirasaya, koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

This striking tantô was crafted by ***Shimada Sukemune***, an eminent swordsmith active in the mid-16th century, during the *Tenbun* to *Eiroku* eras of the late *Muromachi* period. Based in *Shimada* of *Suruga* province, he flourished under the rule of the *Imagawa* clan, contributing significantly to the development of the Shimada school. This sharp tantô features a well-forged itame-hada mixed with *mokume*, complemented by a bright, lively hamon of *gunome* and *chôji-midare*. Its wide *hirazukuri* (flat-shaped) displays a flamboyant *hitatsura* 'all-over' hardening that has made *Sôshu-den* works particularly desirable over the centuries. Sword is complimented with a regal *aikuchi kiku-mon* (chrysanthemum) *koshirae* with matching plant design celebrating longevity in life. The *saya* is tastefully decorated with a charming sprinkling of mother-of-pearl. All told this is a vibrant, energetic *tantô* from the late *Muromachi* period with plenty of *nihontô* character to cherish.

Moto-kasane: 5.5mm

Nakago: 9.01cm

Omosa: 135g

Nagasa: 22.3cm

Moto-haba: 2.48cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

Shimada Sukemune (島田助宗) was an eminent *wazamono*-ranked swordsmith active in the mid-16th century, during the *Tenbun* to *Eiroku* eras of the late Muromachi period. Based in *Shimada* of *Suruga* Province, he flourished under the rule of the *Imagawa* clan (今川氏), contributing significantly to the development of the Shimada school. Tradition holds that he was the younger brother of the famed *Shimada Yoshisuke* (島田義助), and his distinctive, vibrant style became a hallmark of the Shimada lineage.

There are also accounts of Sukemune forging swords in *Kai* Province under the patronage of *Takeda Shingen* (武田信玄), suggesting his skills were recognized by powerful warlords beyond his native land.

This sharp tantô features a well-forged *itame-hada* mixed with *mokume*, complemented by a bright, lively *hamon* of *gunome* and *chôji-midare*. Its wide *hirazukuri* (flat-shaped) displays a flamboyant *hitatsura* "all-over" hardening that has made *Sôshu-den* works particularly desirable.

This *hitatsura* style reflects the geographical proximity of Suruga Province to Sagami, the home of *Sôshû-den*. Furthermore, the tantô holds the iconic *suken horimono* and a bulging *funagata nakago* that embodies the *Sôshû* spirit.

Sword is complimented with a regal *aikuchi kiku-mon koshirae* with matching plant design celebrating longevity in life. The saya is tastefully decorated with a charming sprinkling of mother-of-pearl. All told this is a vibrant and rather energetic *tantô* from the late Muromachi period with plenty of *nihontô* character to cherish.

Location: *Suruga province*
Shimada name: *Shimada school*
Swordsmith: ***Sukemune*** (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
kiri-yasurime (horizontal file marks)

助 (Suke)

宗 (mune)

作 (saku)

Ha-agari kurijiri

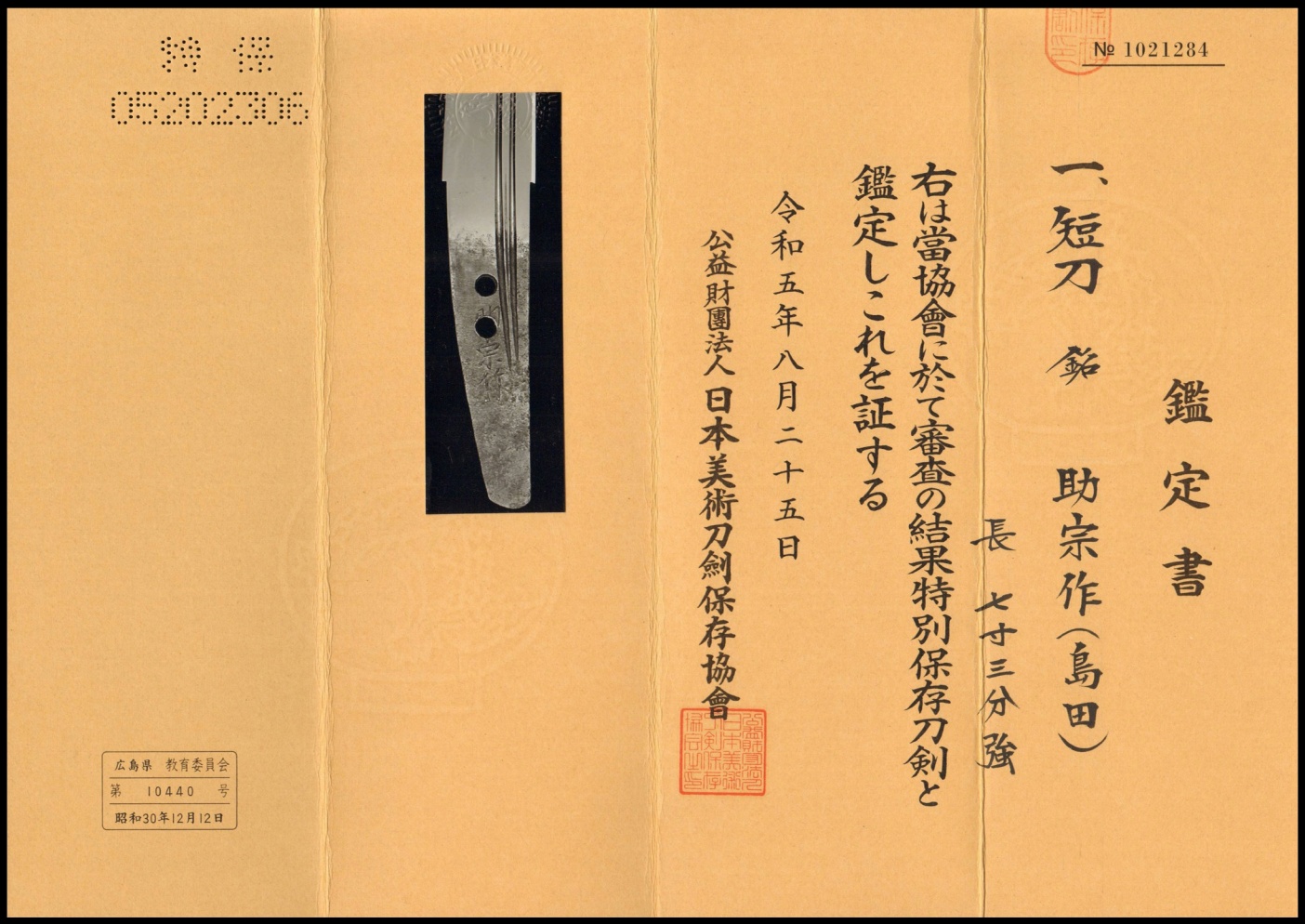
The ***nakagojiri*** (butt-end of the tang) is rounded, similar to that of ***kurijiri*** (chestnut shaped) but the cutting edge side slants more steeply than the back (***mune*** side).

(*ura*, reverse)

Hôchô Masamune Tantô
14th century Kamakura period
Japanese National Treasure

The shape of the ***nakago*** (tang) is called ***funagata*** (boat-shaped), as the line of the cutting edge resembles the bottom of a boat. "***Funa***" or "***fune***" means boat.

This style is famously seen in Masamune's ***Hôchô*** masterpiece, and it also appears in the work of the ***Shimada*** school of ***Suruga***, which was strongly influenced by the ***Sôshû-den*** tradition.



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), August 25th

One, Tanto

Mei (signature)
Sukemune saku (Shimada)

Nagasa (length)
7-sun 3-bu kyô (22.3cm)

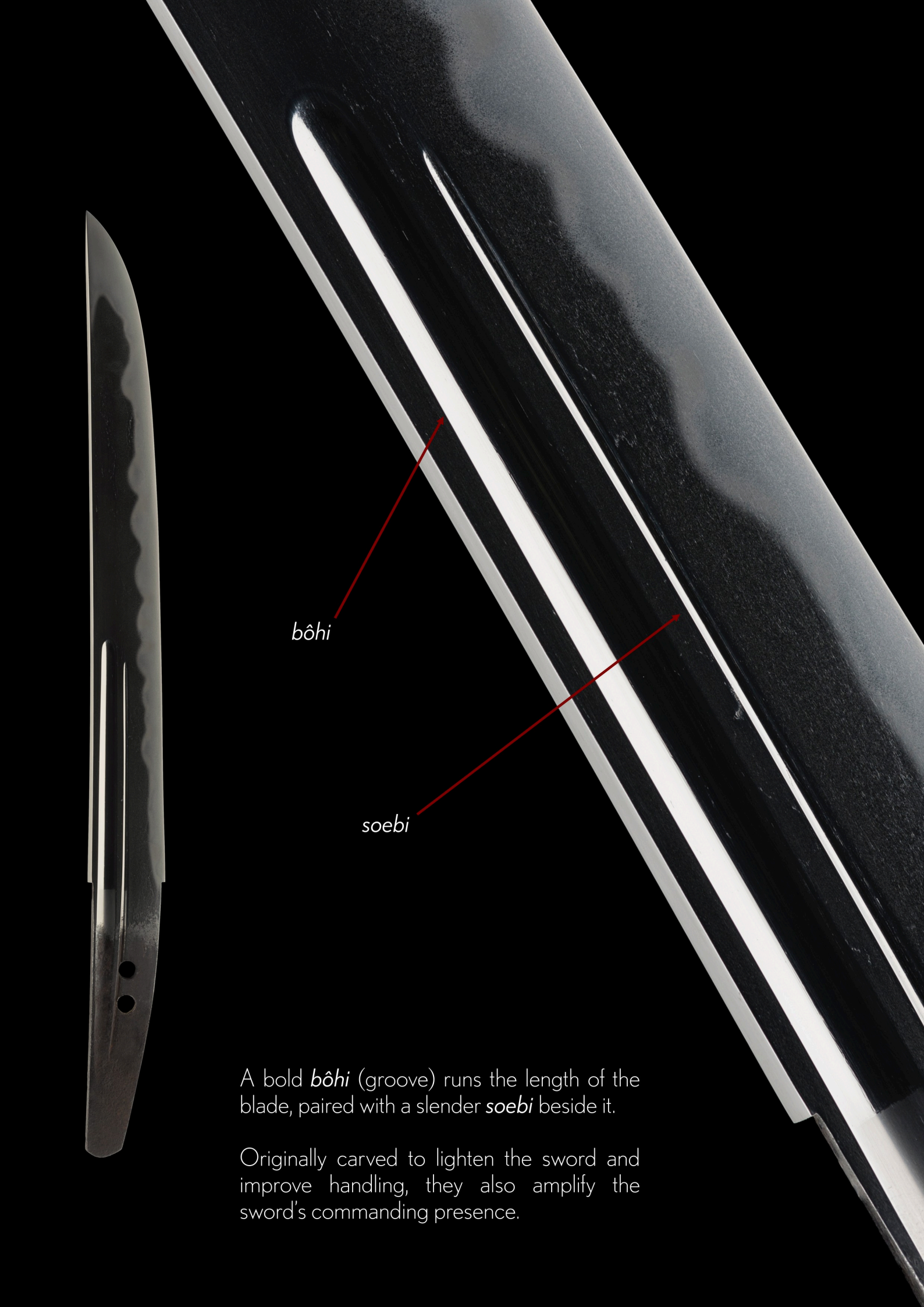
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

島田助宗
Shimada Sukemune
Shimada Sukemune

刃長七寸三分強有之
Hachô 7-sun 3-bu kyô kore ari
Blade length 22.3 cm

時代天文頃
Jidai Tenbun goro
Around Tenbun period (1532~1555)

令和七乙巳年水無月吉日誌之
Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Minazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the sixth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (June 2025)

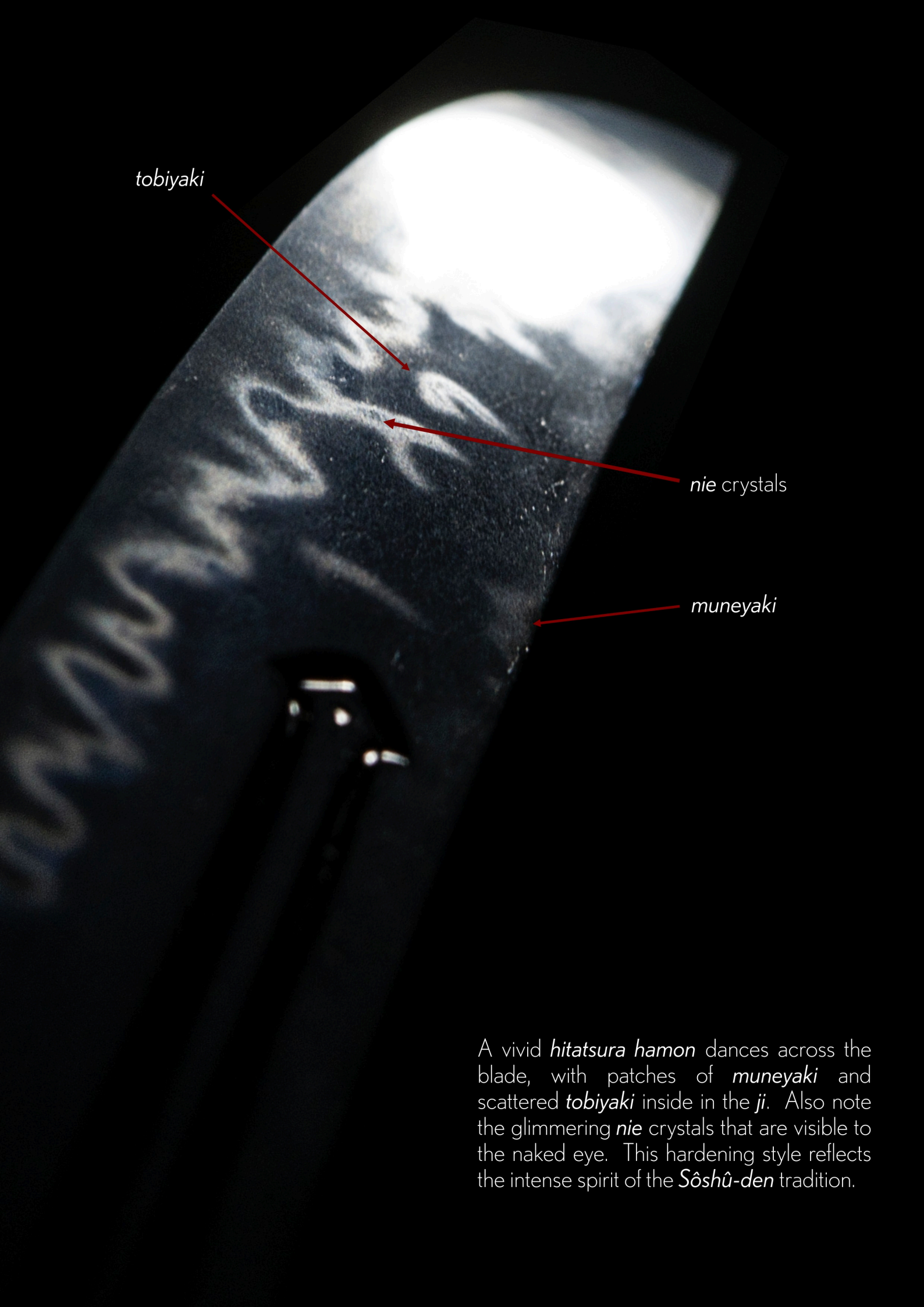


A bold ***bôhi*** (groove) runs the length of the blade, paired with a slender ***soebi*** beside it.

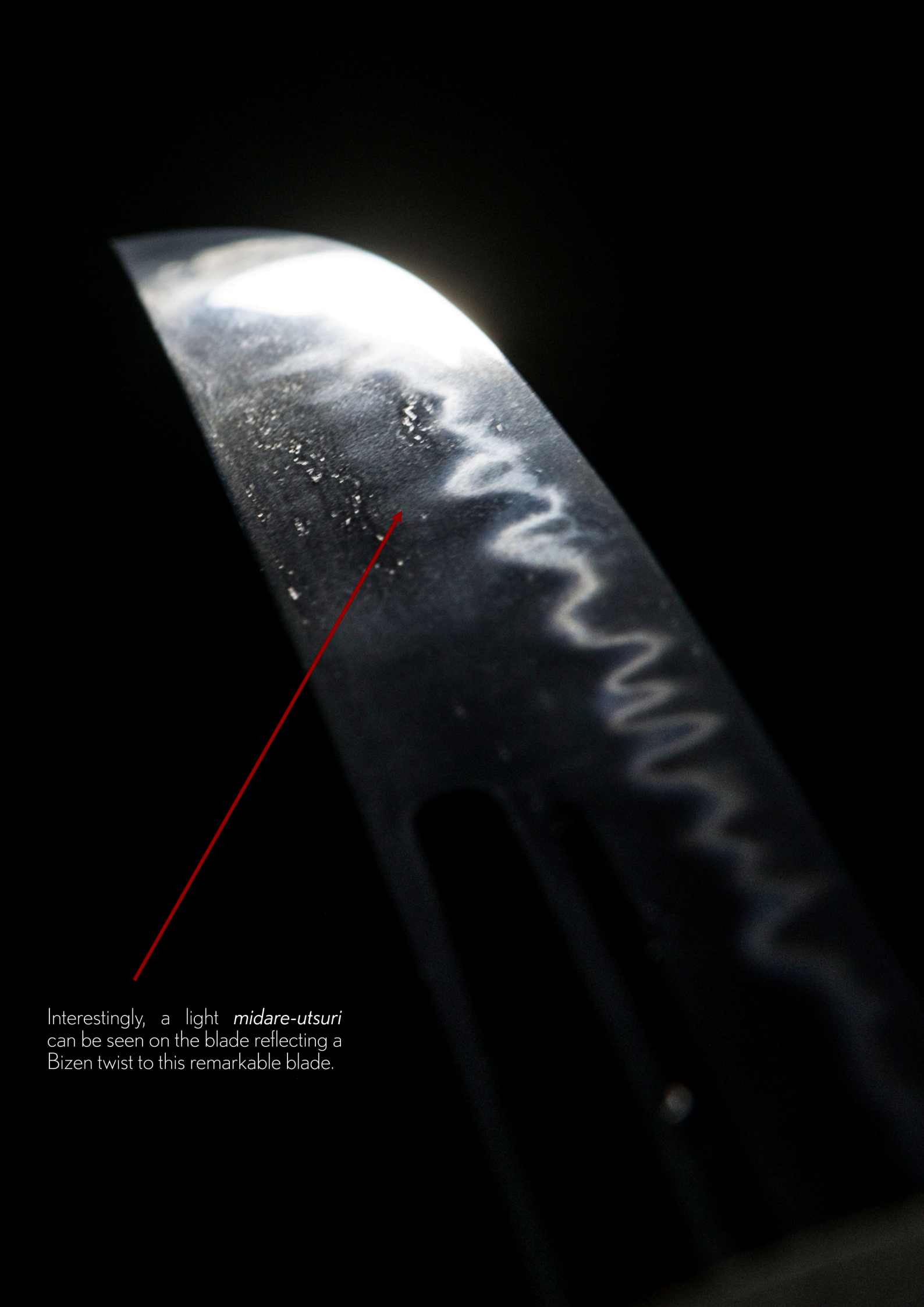
Originally carved to lighten the sword and improve handling, they also amplify the sword's commanding presence.

The ***bôshi*** enters with a gentle ***midare-komi***, blending into the tip in a natural continuation of the hamon.

It returns deeply along the ***mune*** in a quiet deep ***kaeri***, showing careful control at the kissaki. A subtle touch of brushed ***hakikake*** can also be observed.



A vivid ***hitatsura hamon*** dances across the blade, with patches of ***muneyaki*** and scattered ***tobiyaki*** inside in the ***ji***. Also note the glimmering ***nie*** crystals that are visible to the naked eye. This hardening style reflects the intense spirit of the ***Sôshû-den*** tradition.



Interestingly, a light *midare-utsuri* can be seen on the blade reflecting a Bizen twist to this remarkable blade.

The spirit of ***Sôshû-den.***

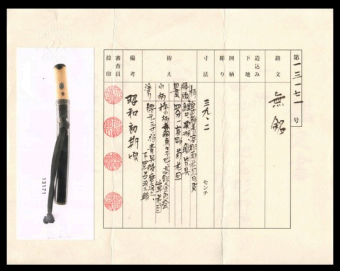
Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

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

Shibuichi migaki-ji
kebori nogusa no zu kaigu
aikuchi-koshirae
(四分一磨地毛彫
野草図皆具合口拵)

Aikuchi-koshirae
with matching shibuichi fittings
with hairline carvings
depicting plants

Crafted during the
Early Shôwa period
(1926~1940)

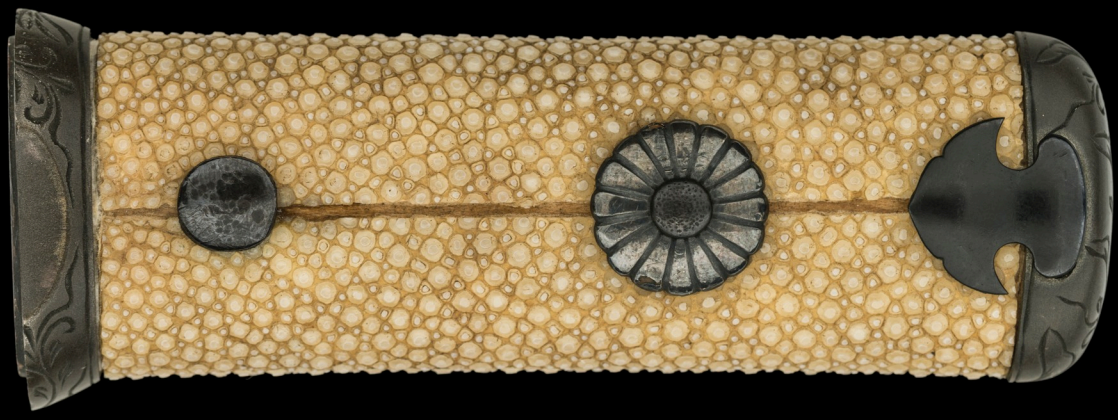


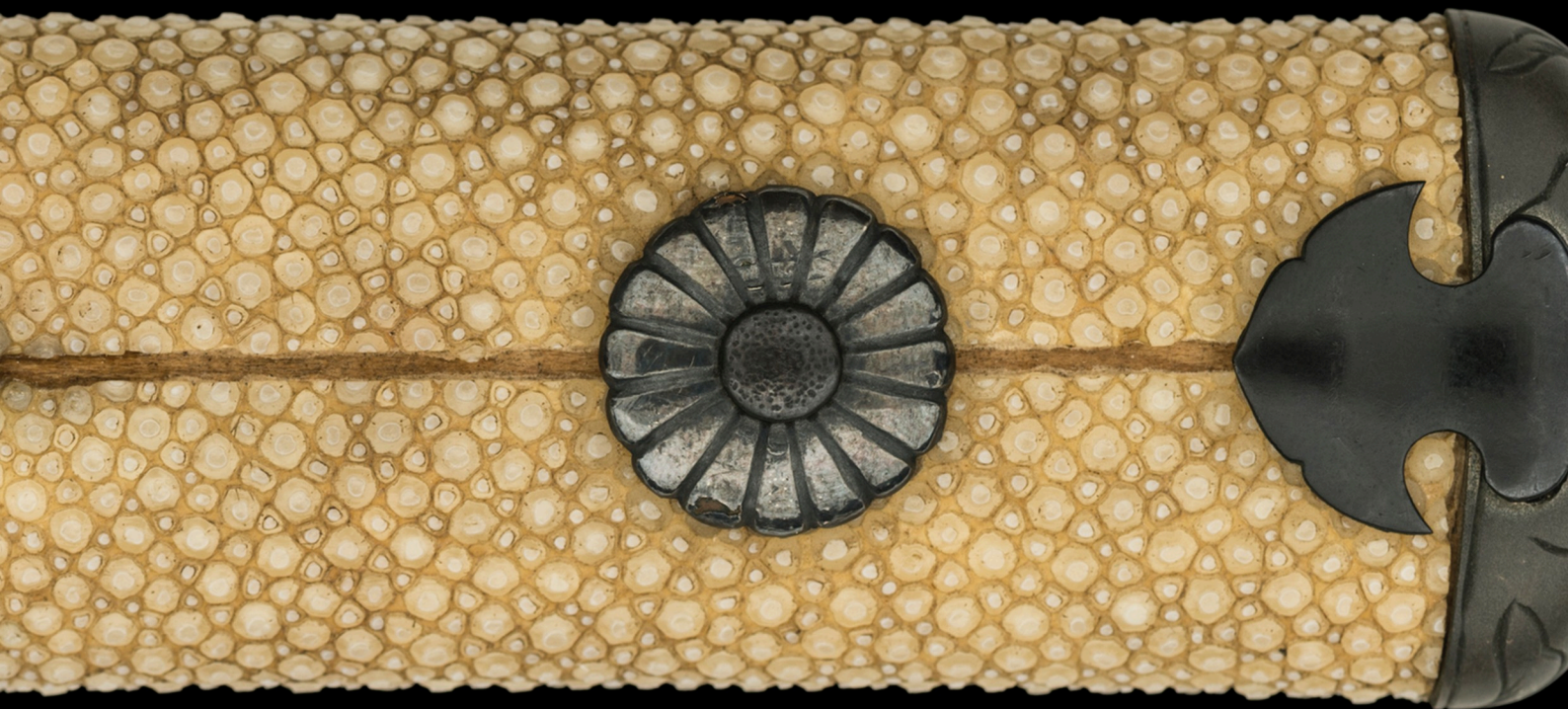
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

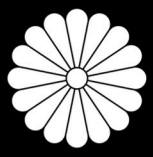
Soroi-kanagu
depicting plants pattern

This ***tantô*** is accompanied by a matching set of fittings (***soroi-kanagu***) decorated with engraved plant motifs in hairline carvings.

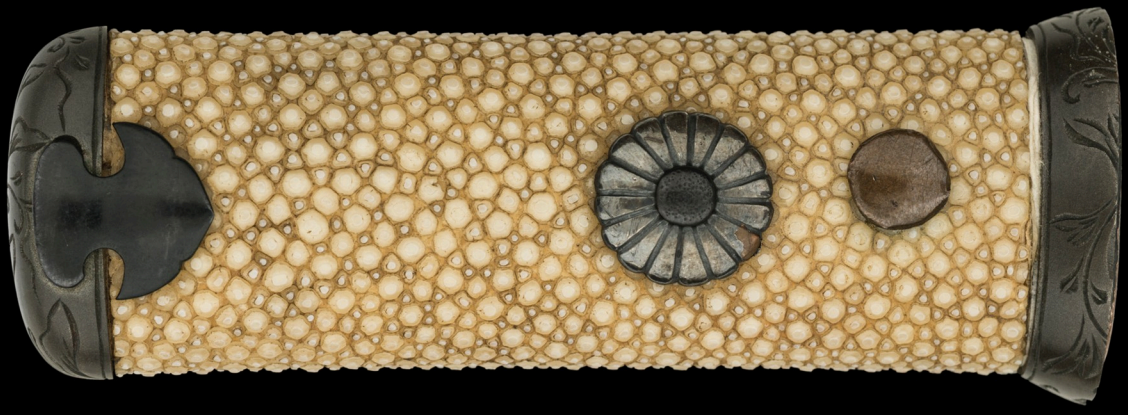
The ***fuchigashira***, ***kashira***, ***kurigata***, and ***koiguchi*** together form what is known as a ***kaigu***—a unified set crafted by the same artisan.



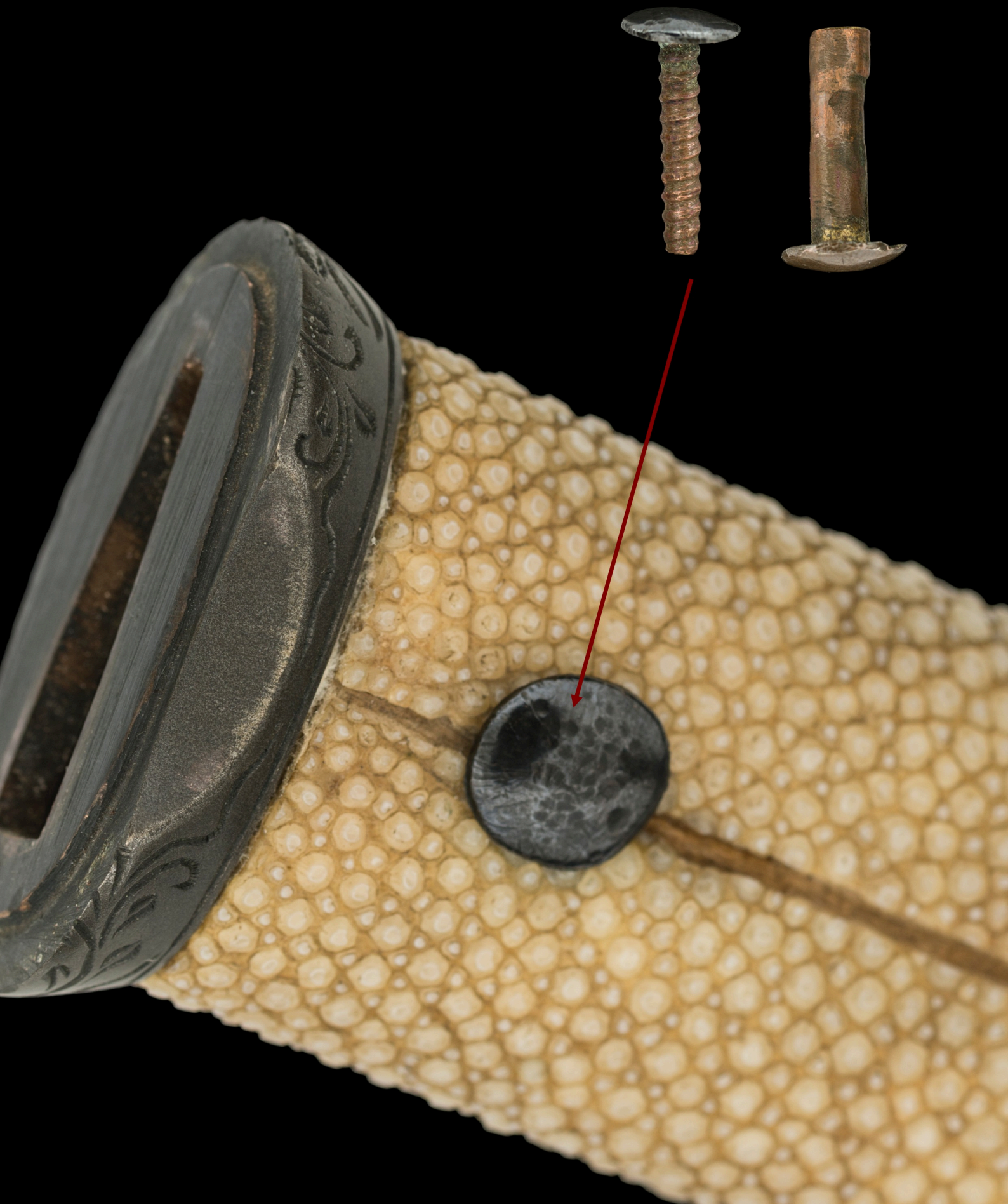




Menuki feature the chrysanthemum crest (***kikumon***), a symbol historically associated with the Japanese Imperial family. Its presence on sword fittings may signify a connection to the court, a display of loyalty, or an aspiration toward noble ideals. In some cases, it may also reflect the sword owner's social standing.



This *tantô* features a rarely-seen screw-style *mekugi*,
a secure variation from the traditional wooden peg.



Congratulations Art.

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJKA466

SOLD

A KO-KONGOBYÔE [MORITAKA] KATANA

UNSIGNED, CHÛ-KOTÔ NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (ENBUN ERA: 1356~1361)

Swordsmith:	***Chikuzen Ko-Kongobyôe [Moritaka] Katana***
Measurements:	**Length:** 74.1cm (*o-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba:** 3.17cm **Weight:** 940g
Jihada:	*Well-forged standing out itame-hada mixed with mokume-hada, plentiful chikei*
Hamon:	*Bright hoso-suguha with ko-midare, kinsuji and sunagashi*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificates #2:	**NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku** *(as sword designated as Masterwork)*
Certificate #3-5:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, menuki and tsuba certified as Authentic)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)*
Included:	Shirasaya, Daruma koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

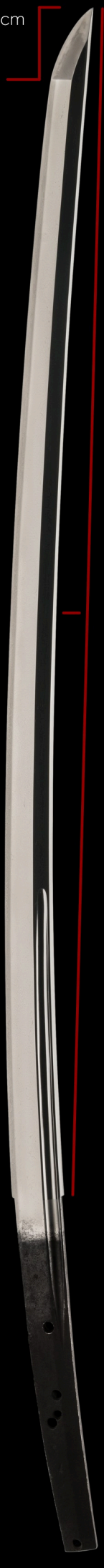
This *Nambokuchô* period powerhouse of a katana has been certified to the ***Ko-Kongôbyôe school*** with the NTHK-NPO organization awarding the blade with *Yûshûsaku* and attributing the blade to swordsmith ***Moritaka***. The *Kongôbyôe* smiths were highly respected for the harmonization of technical skill and spiritual discipline, embodying the ethos of warrior-monks. *Jihada* lovers will appreciate the standing out *itame* interspersed with *mokume*, and lively *chikei*. The *hamon* is a *suguha* base with small *midare* elements, enhanced by visible *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. Its commanding Edo-period *koshirae* features fittings adorned with *Buddhist* motifs such as a *vajra*-hilted *ken* and the watchful eye of *Daruma*, evoking the school's mountain origins, spiritual resolve and stoic strength.

Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 6.9mm

Nakago: 21.8cm

Omosa: 940g



Kissaki: 4.53cm

Saki-haba: 2.26cm

Nagasa: 74.1cm

Sori: 1.3cm

Moto-haba: 3.17cm

Mekugi-ana: 5

This simply awesome katana has been certified **Tokubetsu Hozon** to the ***Ko-Kongôbyoe*** school by the NBTHK with the NTHK-NPO sword organization taking it a step further, awarding the blade with their highest honours of ***Yûshûsaku*** (Masterwork) and attributing the blade to a specific swordsmith: ***Moritaka***. The ***Kongôbyôe*** school is believed to have originated from a ***yamabushi*** (mountain ascetic) named ***Morikuni*** (盛国), who forged swords near ***Mt. Hôman***, a site of religious significance associated with esoteric Buddhism. His son ***Moritaka*** carried forward this tradition, and successive generations continued to use the name ***Moritaka***, becoming known for their resilient blades that were built foremost with battle in mind.

The ***Kongôbyôe*** smiths were regarded not only for their technical skill but also for their spiritual discipline, embodying the ethos of warrior-monks. Their works were deeply rooted in the martial needs of the ***Kyûshû*** region during times of political unrest, including the Mongol invasions. Their swords are often characterized by solid construction, restrained elegance, and practical strength, which made them popular with warrior elites. While many of their blades were unsigned, their distinctive style – centred on robust geometry, conservative temper lines, and quiet refinement – has allowed experts to attribute works reliably within the school.

This powerful and heavy blade is a fine example of the ***Nanbokuchô*** period style. The ***jigane*** is a well-forged ***itame*** of large grain with interspersed ***mokume***, standing out with prominent ***ji-nie*** and lively ***chikei***. The ***hamon*** is a ***suguha*** base with small ***midare*** patterns, enhanced by visible ***kinsuji*** and ***sunagashi***, creating a subtle interplay of light and movement along the edge. The ***nakago*** bears five ***mekugi-ana***, indicating repeated remounting across eras – evidence of its long functional life as a weapon rather than a mere decorative piece.

Its impressive Edo-period ***koshirae*** is decorated with mother-of-pearl and features a gold-coloured ***tsuka-ito*** and ***sageo***, creating a formal yet commanding appearance. Fittings are adorned with Buddhist motifs such as a ***vajra-hilted ken*** and ***Daruma***, evoking the mountain ascetic origins of the ***Kongôbyôe*** tradition. These religious symbols emphasize the spiritual resolve and stoic strength embodied in both the smiths and the swords they produced.

Feel the energy!

Location: *Chikuzen province*
School name: *Ko-Kongôbyôe*
Swordsmith: *Moritaka* (first generation)

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

current hole

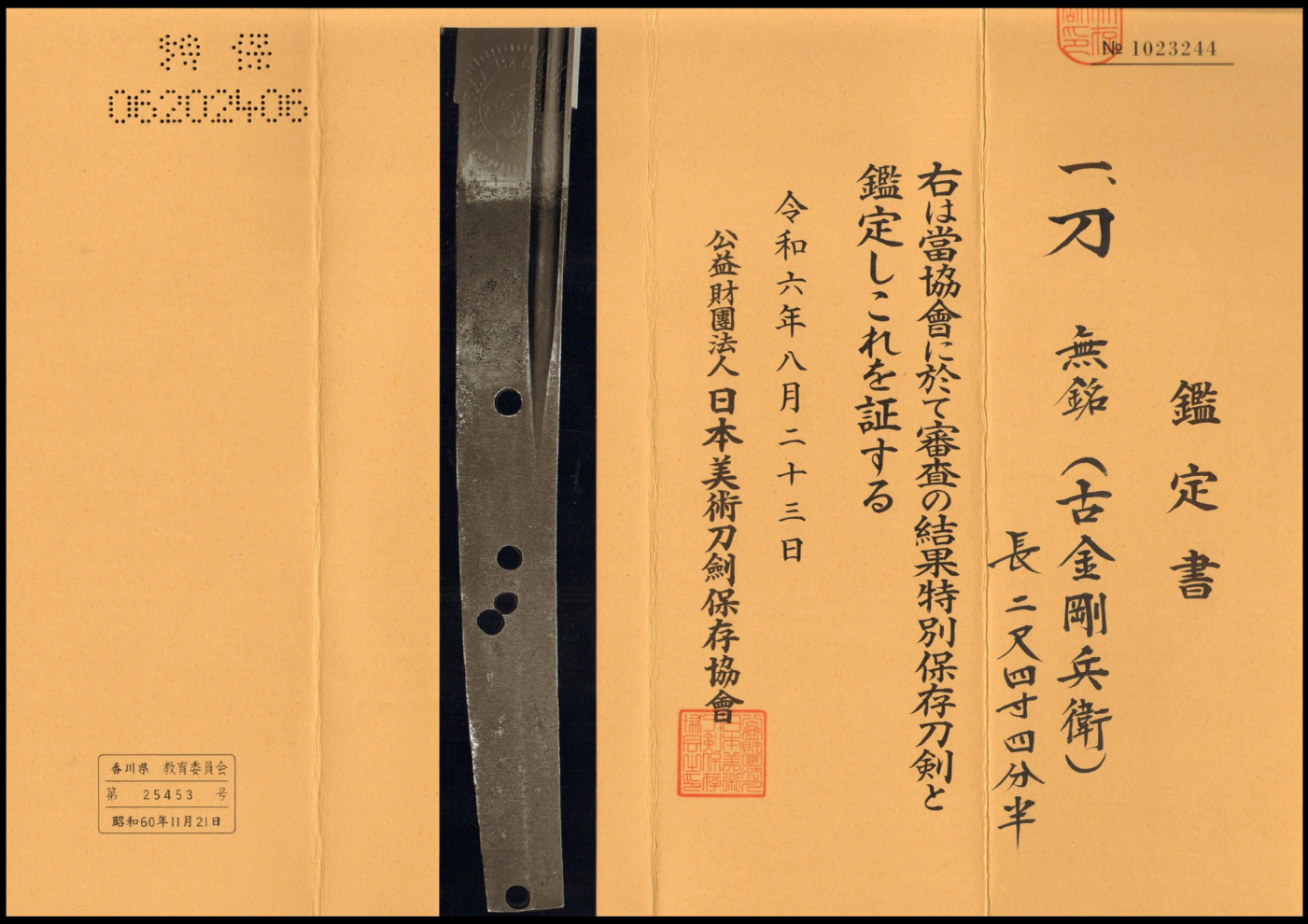
The five *mekugi-ana* (peg holes) indicate that this blade has undergone five separate periods of *suriage* (shortening). The lowest hole, located near the current tang end, is the oldest and was made following a first *ô-suriage*.

While many *ô-suriage* blades retain only a single peg hole, the presence of multiple holes on this piece suggests it was not preserved for display, but remained in practical use. Each shortening likely reflected the needs or preferences of successive owners, adapting the sword's mounting to suit actual combat use.

The oldest one

A koshi-bi (腰樋), a type of groove carved into the lower part of a sword blade, typically running along one side from the base (*nakago-moto*) upward toward the middle of the blade.

Futasuji-hi (二筋樋), or "twin grooves," a pair of parallel grooves carved symmetrically along both sides of the blade.



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

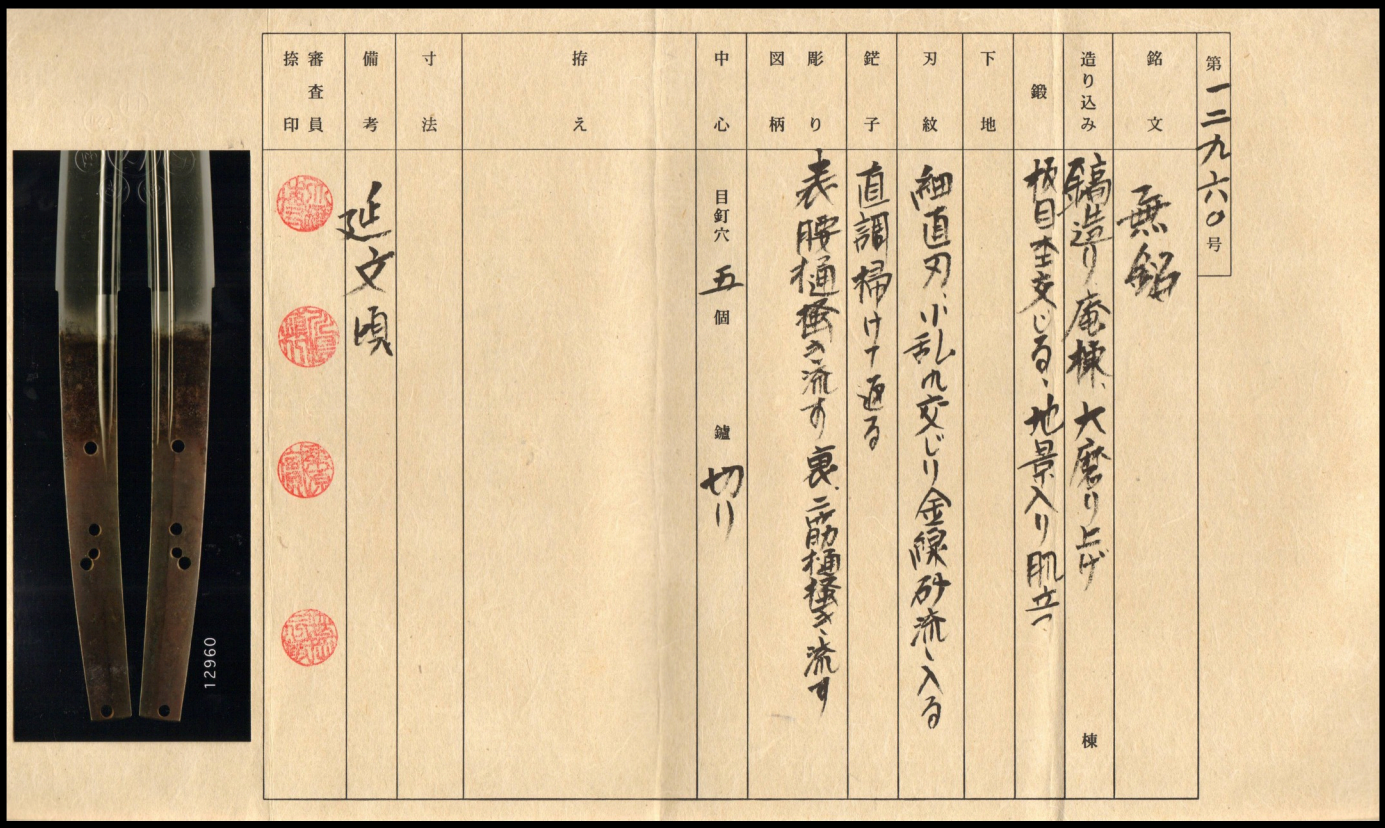
Issued in the 6th year of Reiwa (2024), August 23rd

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Ko-Kongôbyôe

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 4-sun 4-bu han (74.1cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku
Certificate of Authenticity

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

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Den Chikuzen Kongôbyôe Moritaka

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 4-sun 4-bu amari kore ari (74.1cm)

Issued in 6th year of Reiwa (2024), December 15th

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)

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

無銘
Mumei
Unsigned

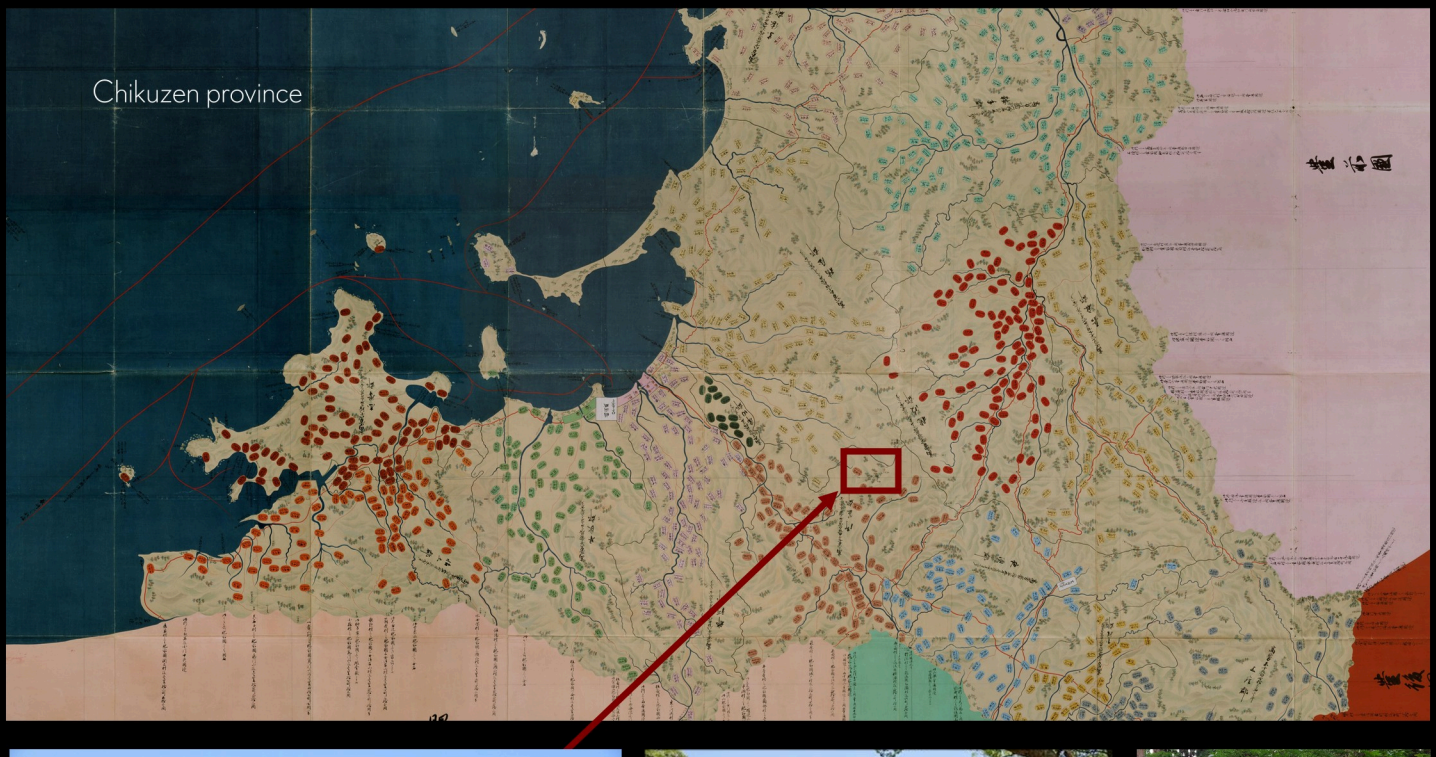
古金剛兵衛
Ko-Kongôbyôe
Ko-Kongôbyôe

時代延文頃
Jidai Enbun goro
Around Enbun period (1356~1361)

刃長貳尺四寸四分半有之
Hachô 2-shaku 4-sun 4-bu han kore ari
Blade length 74.1 cm

令和七乙巳年卯月吉日誌之
Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Uzuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the fourth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (April 2025)

The origin of Ko-Kongôbyôe



Mt. Hôman

Kamado Shrine

yamabushi

Mt. Hôman in *Chikuzen* was a sacred center for *yamabushi* (mountain ascetics) and the site of intensive *Shugendô* practice. At its base lies *Kamado Shrine*, a spiritual landmark deeply tied to the ascetic tradition.

It is in this environment that the *Kongôbyôe* school, founded by *yamabushi*-smiths, took root – combining martial craftsmanship with religious devotion. *Moritaka*, the school's principal figure, is commemorated by a stone monument near the shrine, attesting to his legacy as a master swordsmith and spiritual practitioner.

刀工金剛兵衛源盛高発祥之地

Birthplace of *Kongôbyôe Minamoto Moritaka*

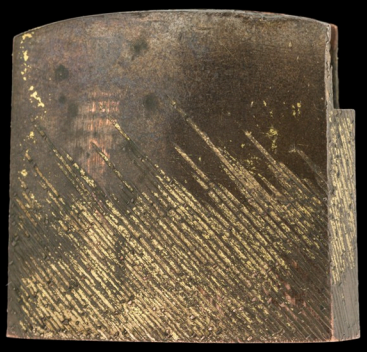
A powerful *Nambokuchô* period *kissaki with a hakikake* (sweeping) *boshi.*

mokume-hada
inazuma, mini bolts of lightening
The *jihada* proudly showcases large pools of *itame* and *mokume-hada* that can be seen even in the hardened *yakiba* area.

Wow. Now that is *jihada.*

A ***hamon*** based on ***suguha*** with ***ko-midare*** , ***kinsuji*** and ***sunagashi***.

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

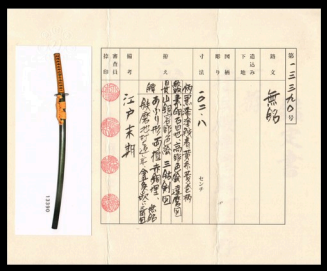


copper ***habaki*** with
rainfall filemarks

Aogai-mijin-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
(青貝微塵塗鞘打刀拵)

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered with
mother-of-pearl decoration

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)

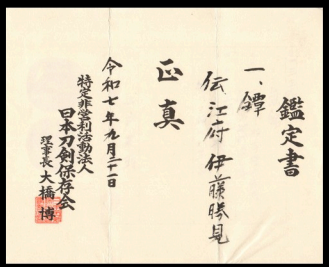


NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

This *tsuba* was crafted by *Itô Katsumi (伊藤勝見)* in the late *Edo* period. Born in 1829, *Katsumi* was trained in metal engraving under *Tanaka Kiyotoshi* (田中清寿). In 1860, he succeeded as the 10th head of the *Itô* family in Edo, producing fittings for both the *Tokugawa Shogunate* and the Imperial Household.

The *tsuba*'s primary motif is a triangle – not a mere geometric figure, but one rich in spiritual meaning. It is thought to represent the Threefold Awakening (*sangaku*) in Buddhism: hearing the *Dharma* (*mon*), contemplation (*sô*), and realization (*shû*). As this piece accompanies a sword forged by a *yamabushi* swordsmith, the triangle may reflect the ascetic path toward enlightenment – where spiritual practice and martial readiness are inseparable.

Through both symbolism and execution, the piece resonates with the inner strength and clarity pursued by warrior-monks.


鑑定書

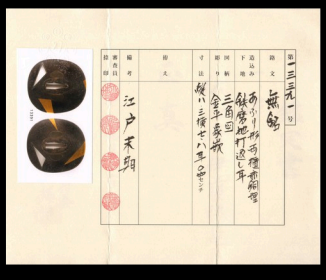
一、鐔

伝 江府 伊藤勝見

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)

goko-rei

sanko-zuka

mokugyo

This *fuchi* is signed by *Toshihisa* (利寿), likely a minor and little-known metalworker. It features Buddhist motifs including a wooden fish (*mokugyo*), a three-pronged vajra handle (*sanko-zuka*), and a five-pronged ritual bell (*goko-rei*), each holding symbolic meaning in Esoteric Buddhism:

Mokugyo: A sutra-chanting instrument symbolizing alertness and the ongoing path to enlightenment.

Sanko-zuka: A three-pronged vajra handle representing spiritual force and the cutting of illusion.

Goko-rei: A ritual bell with a five-pronged vajra grip, evoking the five wisdoms and spiritual awakening.

These motifs reflect the sword's roots in *yamabushi* culture and its embodiment of disciplined spiritual power.

(Toshi) 利

(hisa) 寿

(kaô) 花押

Kashira
depicting *Daruma*

Bodhidharma, known in Japan as ***Daruma Daishi***, was a 5th–6th century Indian monk credited with bringing Zen Buddhism to China and, by extension, to East Asia. A symbol of unwavering spiritual focus and perseverance, he is often portrayed as a stern, bearded figure in deep meditation.

In Japanese culture, Bodhidharma inspired the creation of the ***Daruma doll*** – a round, red, limbless figure weighted at the bottom to return upright when tilted. This design reflects the Zen teaching of resilience: "Fall seven times, rise eight." The ***Daruma doll*** has become a popular symbol of determination, goal-setting, and recovery, embodying the same stoic spirit that made ***Daruma Daishi*** a revered icon among monks and warriors alike.

Daruma Daishi

Daruma doll

The ***tsuka*** (hilt) is wrapped in a ***hishi-maki*** style using gold braids over ***samekawa*** (ray skin) that has been lacquered in black.

sanko-ken

Fudô-Myôô

Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) depict a vajra-hilted sword (***sanko-ken***), an iconographic weapon associated with ***Fudô Myôô***, the Immovable Wisdom King.

As ***Fudô***'s sword cuts through ignorance and delusion, the motif symbolizes spiritual strength, unwavering resolve, and protection – qualities deeply revered in the martial and ascetic traditions.

Congratulations David.

Warm regards,
Pablo

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

safe, extra large cloth for adding oil to the blade

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJKA502 SOLD

A KO-MIHARA KATANA

UNSIGNED, NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (EITOKU ERA: 1381~1384)

Swordsmith:	***Ko-Mihara School*** *(attribution, o-suriage mumei)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 69.9cm **Curvature:** 1.6cm **Moto-haba**: 2.74cm **Weight:** 700g
Jihada:	*Beautifully forged itame, mokume and nagare-hada with exquisite chikei*
Hamon:	*Wide suguha with bright nioguchi, deep nioi and ko-nie with kinsuji and sunagashi*
Certificate:	**59th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken** *(designated as an Important sword)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Jô-saku** (*Ko-Mihara Masahiro is ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Tanzan-sensei** (*Tanobe Michihiro*)
Included:	Shirasaya, fabric bag, kit, booklet, description

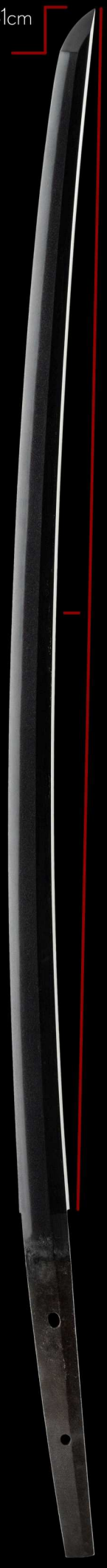
Ko-Mihara refers to the *Mihara* school that flourished in *Bingo* province (present-day *Hiroshima*) from the late *Kamakura* to the *Nanbokuchô* periods. Bingo province was renowned for producing high-quality iron and the strong reflection of the *Yamato* tradition is a result of the migration of skilled *Yamato* smiths to the region. This samurai sword is a classic beauty - an elegant masterpiece from the *Ko-Mihara* school that will appeal to the discerning collector with an eye for quality and keen detail. The wide *suguha-hamon* beaming over its exquisitely forged *jihada* is blessed with bountiful *chikei* and *kinsuji* displaying a quiet confidence. The NBTHK summed it up brilliantly in the sword's *jûyô tôken zufu* certificate stating '*the dignified form [of this sword] carries a sense of strength, while the minute activities along the edge offer refined taste and quiet beauty.*' That is exactly right.

Saki-kasane: 4.4mm

Moto-kasane: 6.1mm

Nakago: 19.5cm

Omosa: 700g



Kissaki: 2.81cm

Saki-haba: 1.76cm

Nagasa: 69.9cm

Sori: 1.5cm

Moto-haba: 2.74cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

"*Ko-Mihara*" (古三原) refers to the *Mihara* school that flourished in the *Mihara* area of *Bingo* Province (present-day eastern *Hiroshima* Prefecture) from the late *Kamakura* to the *Nanbokuchô* periods.

The lineage began with the founder *Masaie* (正家) around the Shôchû era (1324~1326) in the late *Kamakura* period, followed by his son *Masahiro* (正広); works from the *Muromachi* period onward are distinguished as "*Sue-Mihara*." *Bingo* Province was renowned since ancient times for producing high-quality iron, providing the ideal foundation for forging superior swords. Additionally, the presence of many manors owned by major temples and shrines from the capital fostered active cultural exchange with the *Kinai* region, particularly *Yamato* Province. The strong reflection of the *Yamato* tradition in the *Mihara* school's style resulted from these connections and the migration of *Yamato* smiths to the region. Their style is characterized by a straight temper line (*suguha*) that deeply reflects *Yamato* traditions, with a grain pattern (*jigane*) often mixed with *masame*. Master swordsmiths such as *Masaie* and *Masahiro* are well-known within the school and *Tanobe-sensei* cites in his *sayagaki* that this particular sword is reminiscent of their fine workmanship.

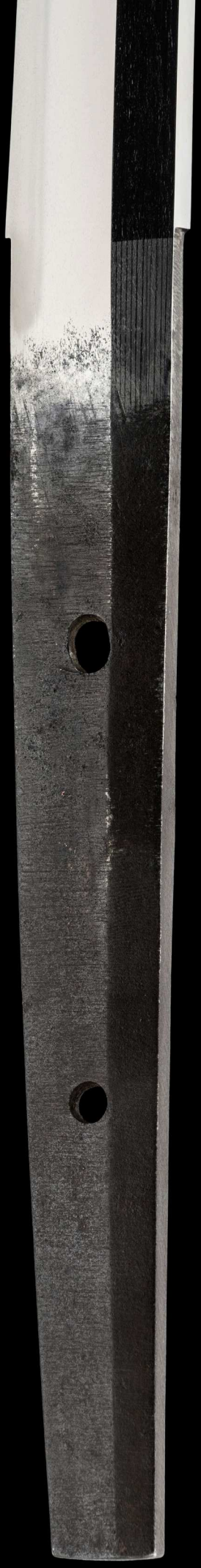
This katana proudly displays the shape and overall quality of the warring *Nanbokuchô* period. '*Jihada* lovers' will adore its exquisitely forged *itame* mixed with *ko-itame* and *nagare-hada*. The *hamon* is a clear and wide *suguha* mixed with *gunome* and plenty of *ko-nie* with iconic *Yamato-den kuichigai-ba* to enjoy. The *bôshi* is *ko-maru* and the *kissaki* itself is very healthy indeed.

This samurai sword is a classic beauty - an elegant masterpiece from the *Ko-Mihara* school that will appeal to the eye of a collector with an admiring taste for detail. This is not a showy Bizen blade - this is a sword with a quiet confidence for it knows what it stands for. Quality. In fact, the NBTHK summed it up brilliantly in the sword's *jûyô tôken zufu* certificate by stating:

'The dignified form carries a sense of strength, while the minute activities along the edge offer refined taste and quiet beauty.'

Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
ujka502 - A Ko-Mihara Katana

uniquejapan.com/ujka502-video



Location: *Bingo province*
School name: *Ko-Mihara School*

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

The term ***ô-suriage*** refers to a sword that has been significantly shortened from its original length by cutting the ***nakago*** (tang) to the point where the original signature of the swordsmith is completely lost.

During the ***Kamakura*** and ***Nanbokuchô*** periods, ***samurai*** primarily engaged in cavalry warfare, wielding long ***tachi*** from horseback. However, as combat evolved into mass infantry battles and close-quarters fighting indoors, there was a growing demand for shorter, more manageable blades. This practical need was further amplified during the ***Edo*** period by the ***Tokugawa*** Shogunate's strict edicts (***Hatto***) governing the permissible length of swords. To continue carrying a treasured family heirloom while remaining within the law, many ***samurai*** chose to have their masterpieces shortened.

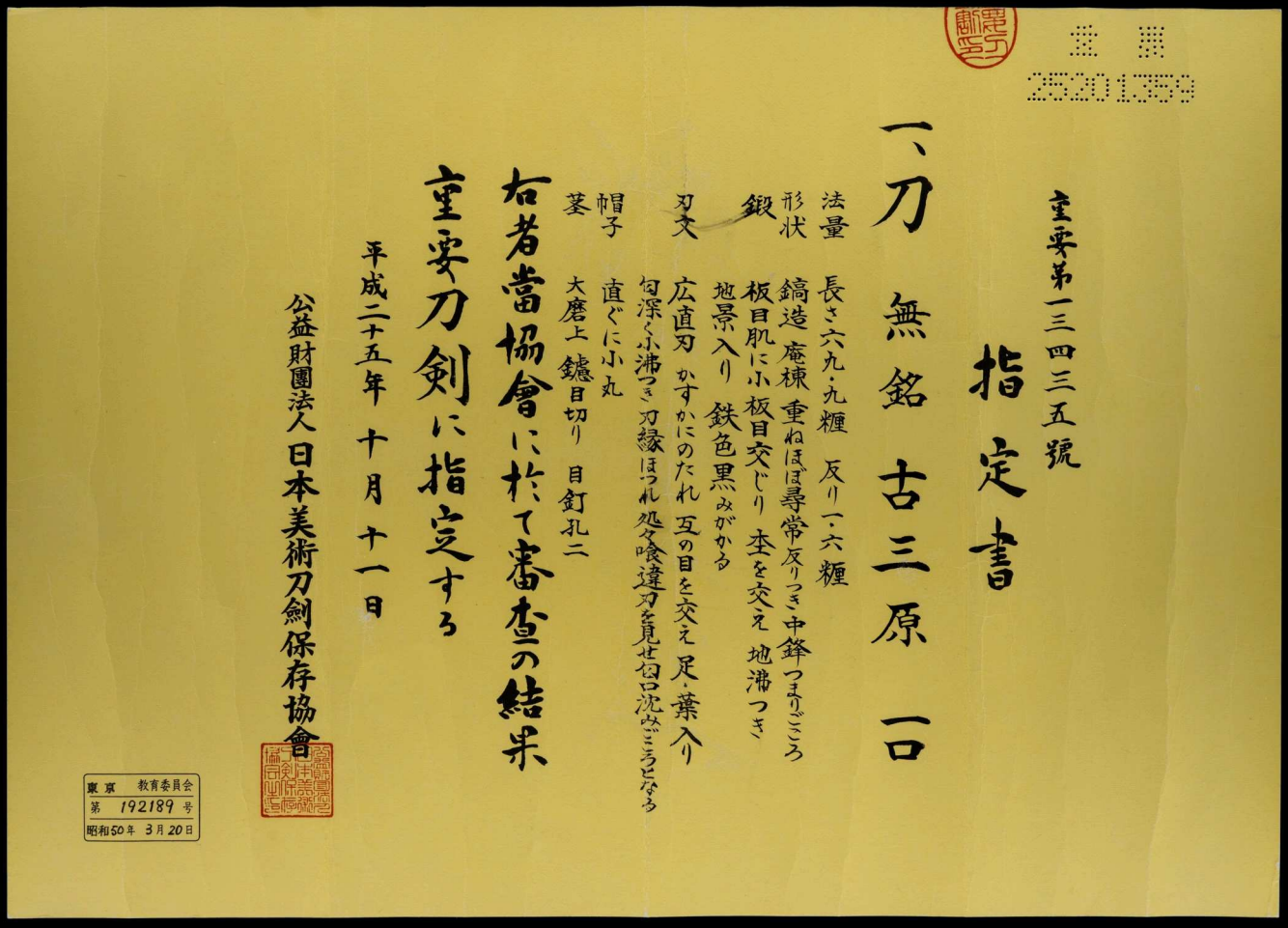
These two historical forces – the evolution of combat tactics and legal restrictions – became the primary drivers behind the transformation of legendary blades into the ***ô-suriage*** form we see today.

(*ura*, reverse)

During the *Tokugawa* period, the shogunate enforced a strict dress code for the *samurai* class, which included a standardized length for swords known as *jô-sun*. The standard length for a *katana* was typically set at *2-shaku 3-sun 5-bu* (approx. 71.2cm). This blade remains remarkably close to that prestigious standard.

A close look at the *nakago-jiri* (the tip of the tang) reveals a horizontal, flat cut known as *kiri-jiri*. This distinctive feature suggests a high probability that the sword was shortened during the *Keichô* era (1596~1615) to align with the official regulations of the time.

kiri-jiri



重要第一三四三五號

指定書

一、刀　無銘　古三原　一口

法量　長さ六九・九糎　反り一・六糎
形状　鎬造　庵棟　重ねほぼ尋常　反りつき　中鋒つまりごころ
鍛　板目肌に小板目交じり　杢を交え　地沸つき　地景入り　鉄色黒みがかる
刃文　広直刃　かすかにのたれ　互の目を交え　足・葉入り　匂深く小沸つき　刃縁ほつれ処々喰違刃を見せ匂口沈みごころとなる
帽子　直ぐに小丸
茎　大磨上　鑢目切り　目釘孔二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
重要刀剣に指定する

平成二十五年　十月　十一日

公益財團法人　日本美術刀剣保存協會

東京　教育委員会
第　192189　号
昭和50年　3月20日

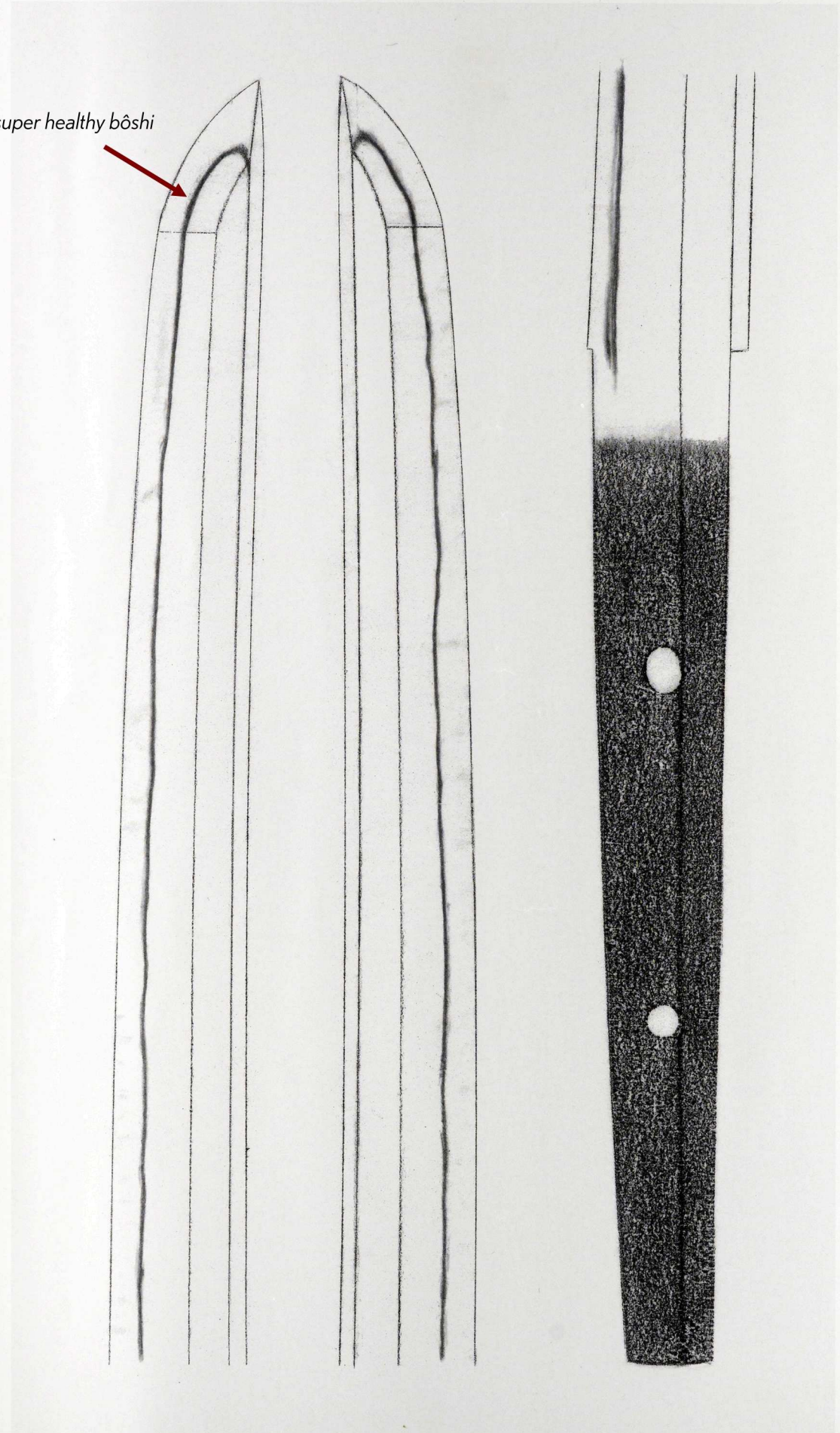
Jûyô Certificate No. 13425
Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation
Katana, mumei: Ko-Mihara (古三原)

Measurements
nagasa 69.9 cm, sori 1.6 cm

Description
Keijo: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, ordinary thickness, moderate curvature, rather tight *chû-kissaki*
Kitae: *itame* that is mixed with *ko-itame* and *mokume*, accompanied by *ji-nie*, *chikei*, the steel in rather dark tone
Hamon: wide straight (*hiro-suguha*) with a faint *notare*, mixed with *gunome*, accompanied by *ashi* and *yô*, deep *nioi* with *ko-nie*, some *hotsure* on the *hamon* edges, occasionally displaying *kuichigai-ba*, and the *nioiguchi* tends to appear somewhat subdued.
Bôshi: straight with a small round turn-back (*komaru*)
Nakago: *ô-suriage*, horizontal file marks, two *mekugi-ana*

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

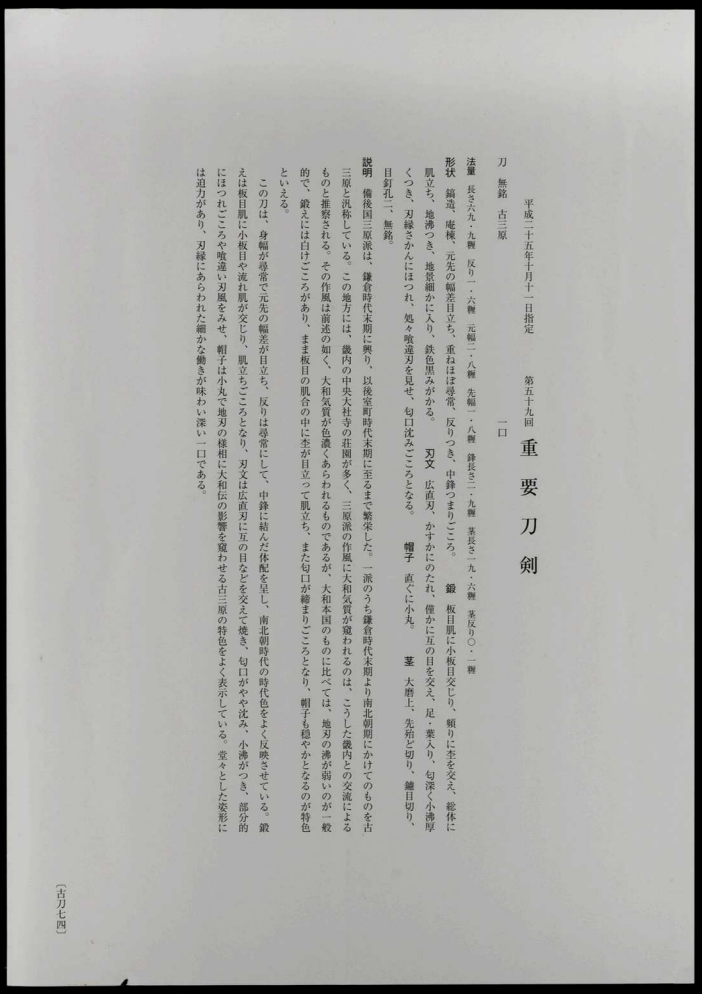
October 11, 2013
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK



刀 無銘 古三原

Jûyô Tôken oshigata

Jûyô Tôken zufu certificate translation



平成二十五年十月十一日指定　第五十九回　重要刀剣

刀　無銘　古三原　一口

法量　長さ六九・九糎　反り一・六糎　元幅二・八糎　先幅一・八糎　鋒長さ二・九糎　茎長さ一九・六糎　茎反り〇・一糎

形状　鎬造、庵棟、元先の幅差目立ち、重ねほぼ尋常、反りつき、中鋒つまりごころ。　**鍛**　板目肌に小板目交じり、頗る杢を交え、総体に肌立ち、地沸つき、地景細かに入り、鉄色黒みがかる。　**刃文**　広直刃、かすかにのたれ、僅かに互の目を交え、足・葉入り、匂深く小沸厚くつき、刃縁さかんにほつれ、処々喰違刃を見せ、匂口沈みごころとなる。　**帽子**　直ぐに小丸。　**茎**　大磨上、先栗尻と切り、鑢目切り、目釘孔一、無銘。

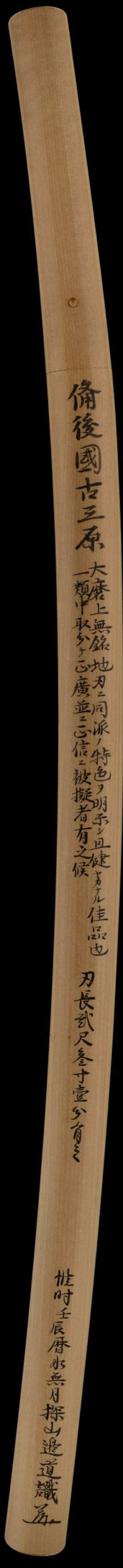
説明　備後国三原派は、鎌倉時代末期に興り、以後室町時代末期に至るまで繁栄した。一派のうち鎌倉時代末期より南北朝期にかけてのものを古三原と汎称している。この地方には、畿内の中央大社寺の荘園が多く、三原派の作風に大和気質が窺われるのは、こうした畿内との交流によるものと推察される。その作風は前述の如く、大和本国のものに比べては、地刃の沸が弱いのが一般的で、殿えには白けごころがあり、まま板目の肌合の中に杢が目立って肌立ち、また匂口が締まりごころとなり、帽子も穏やかとなるのが特色といえる。

この刀は、身幅が尋常で元先の幅差が目立ち、反りは尋常にして、中鋒に結んだ体配を呈し、南北朝時代の時代色をよく反映させている。鍛えは板目肌に小板目や流れ肌が交じり、肌立ちごころとなり、刃文は広直刃に互の目などを交えて焼き、匂口がやや沈み、小沸がつき、部分的にほつれごころや喰違い刃風をみせ、帽子は小丸で地刃の様相に大和伝の影響を窺わせる古三原の特色をよく表示している。堂々とした姿形には迫力があり、刃縁にあらわれた細かな働きが味わい深い一口である。

〔古刀七四〕

Mihara (三原) school of *Bingo* province arose toward the end of the *Kamakura* period and flourished until the late *Muromachi* period. Among its lineage, works from the late *Kamakura* to *Nanbokuchô* periods are collectively referred to as "*Ko-Mihara* (古三原)." The region contained numerous estates belonging to major temples and shrines of the Kinai area, and it is believed that the strong *Yamato* influence visible in Mihara workmanship resulted from this cultural and economic exchange. While the style bears distinct *Yamato* characteristics, in comparison to smiths of *Yamato* proper, Mihara blades generally show a somewhat weaker ***nie*** activity, a whitish tone in the ***jihada***, and prominent ***mokume*** standing out among the ***itame*** grain. The ***nioiguchi*** tends to be tight, and the ***boshi*** is usually gentle traits regarded as typical of the school.

This blade displays a well-proportioned ***sugata*** with normal width and a clear taper toward the tip, a moderate curvature, and a ***chû-kissaki*** features that well reflect the style of the *Nanbokuchô* period. The forging shows ***itame*** mixed with ***ko-itame*** and ***nagare-hada***, appearing somewhat prominent. The ***hamon*** is a broad ***suguha*** mixed with ***gunome***, having a slightly subdued ***nioiguchi*** with attached ***ko-nie***, occasional ***hotsure*** and ***kuichigai-ba*** tendencies, and a ***komaru boshi***. Altogether, it clearly manifests the characteristics of *Ko-Mihara* workmanship influenced by the *Yamato* tradition. The dignified form carries a sense of strength, while the minute activities along the edge offer refined taste and quiet beauty.



備後國古三原
Bingo no kuni Ko-Mihara
Ko-Mihara school from Bingo province

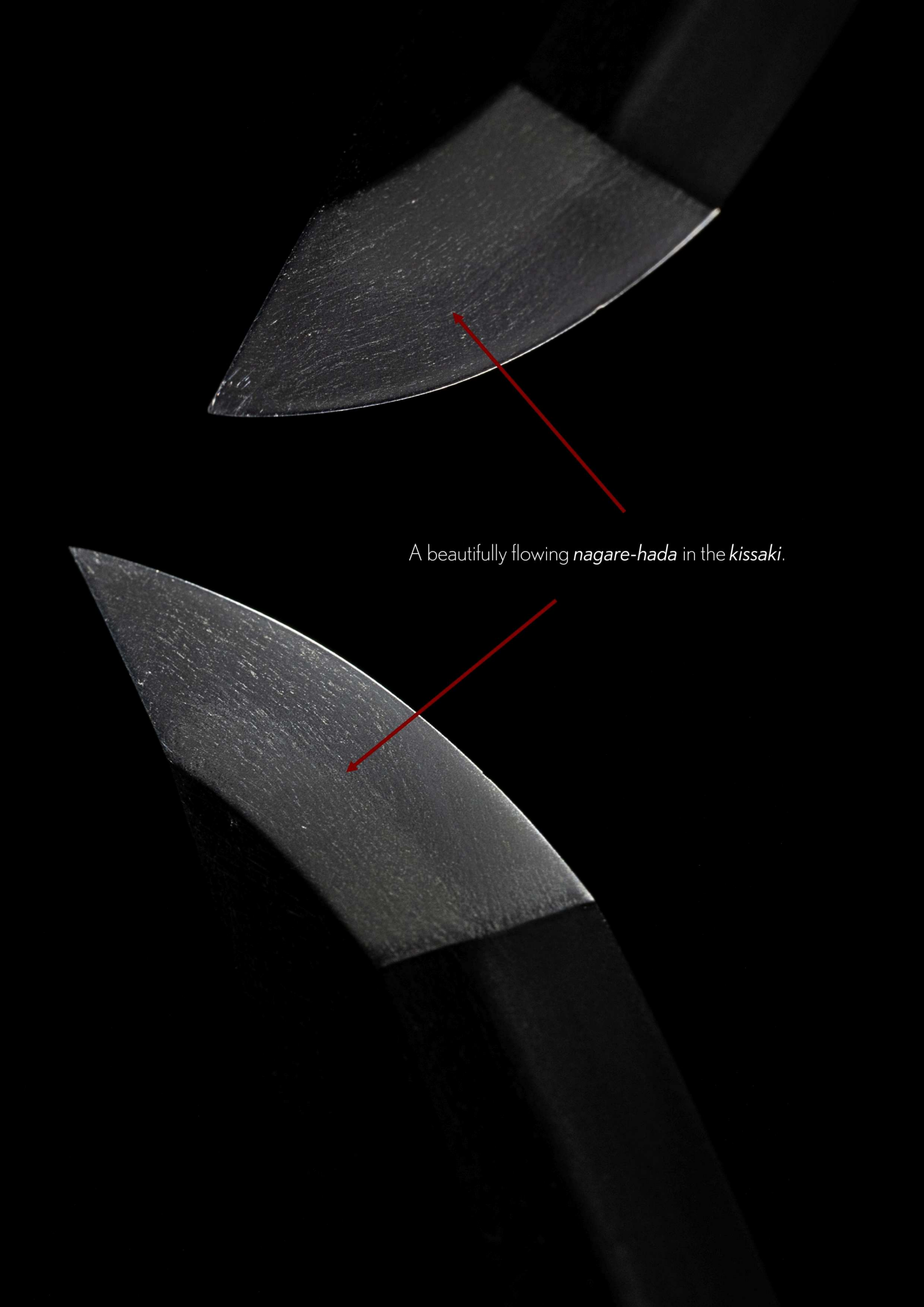
大磨上無銘也地刃ニ同派ノ特色ヲ明示シ且健ヤカナル佳品也一類中取分ケ正廣並ニ正信被擬者有之候

Ô-suriage mumei nari ji-ba ni dôha no tokushoku o meiji shi katsu sukoyaka naru kahin nari ichirui chû toriwake Masahiro narabi ni Masanobu higisha kore ari sôrô

[This blade is] ***ô-suriage*** and unsigned. It clearly exhibits the characteristics of the [Ko-Mihara] school in its ***jigane*** and ***hamon***. It is healthy and fine work. Among this lineage, it is particularly reminiscent of ***Masahiro*** or ***Masanobu***.

刃長弐尺参寸壹分有之
Hachô 2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu kore ari
Blade length ~69.9 cm

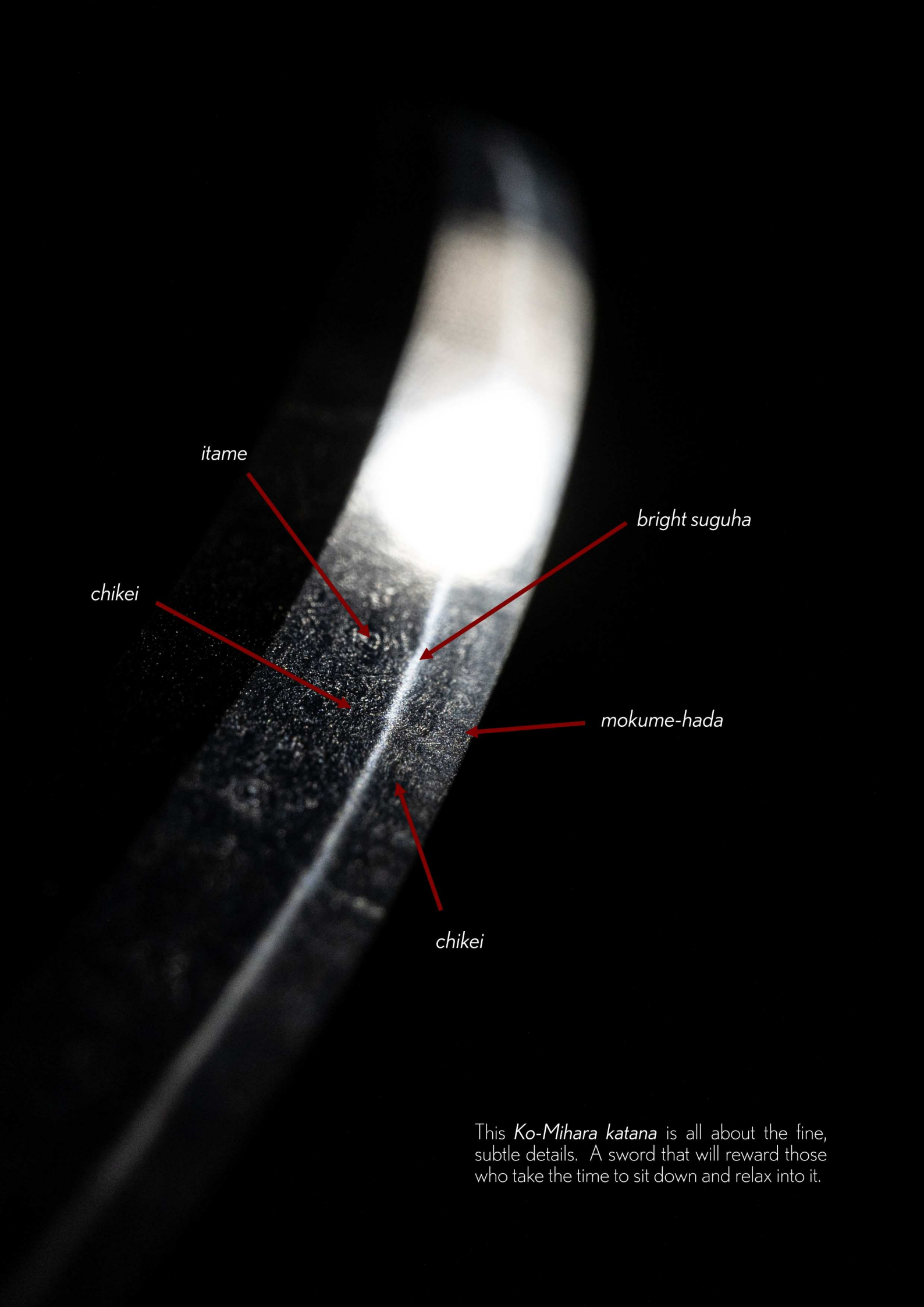
惟時壬辰暦水無月探山邉道識（花押）
Kore toki mizunoe-tatsudoshi minazuki Tanzan Hendô shirusu + kaô
Written by ***Tanzan*** [Tanobe Michihiro] in the sixth month in the Year of the Dragon (June 2012) + monogram



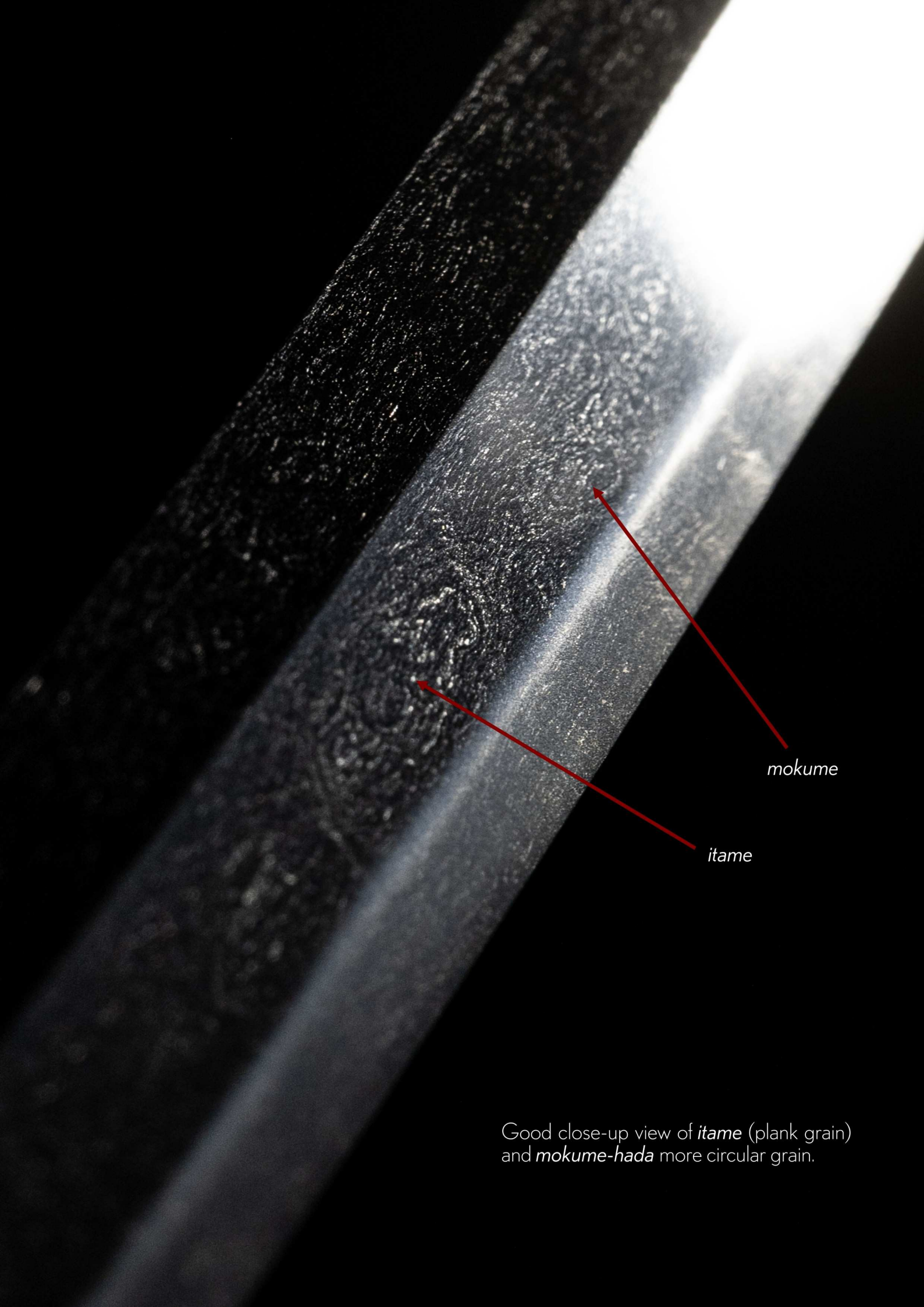
A beautifully flowing *nagare-hada* in the *kissaki*.

A clean, consistent ***suguha*** is only possible on a superbly forged foundation - and this blade has exactly that. A proud example of the ***Ko-Mihara*** school at the highest echelon.

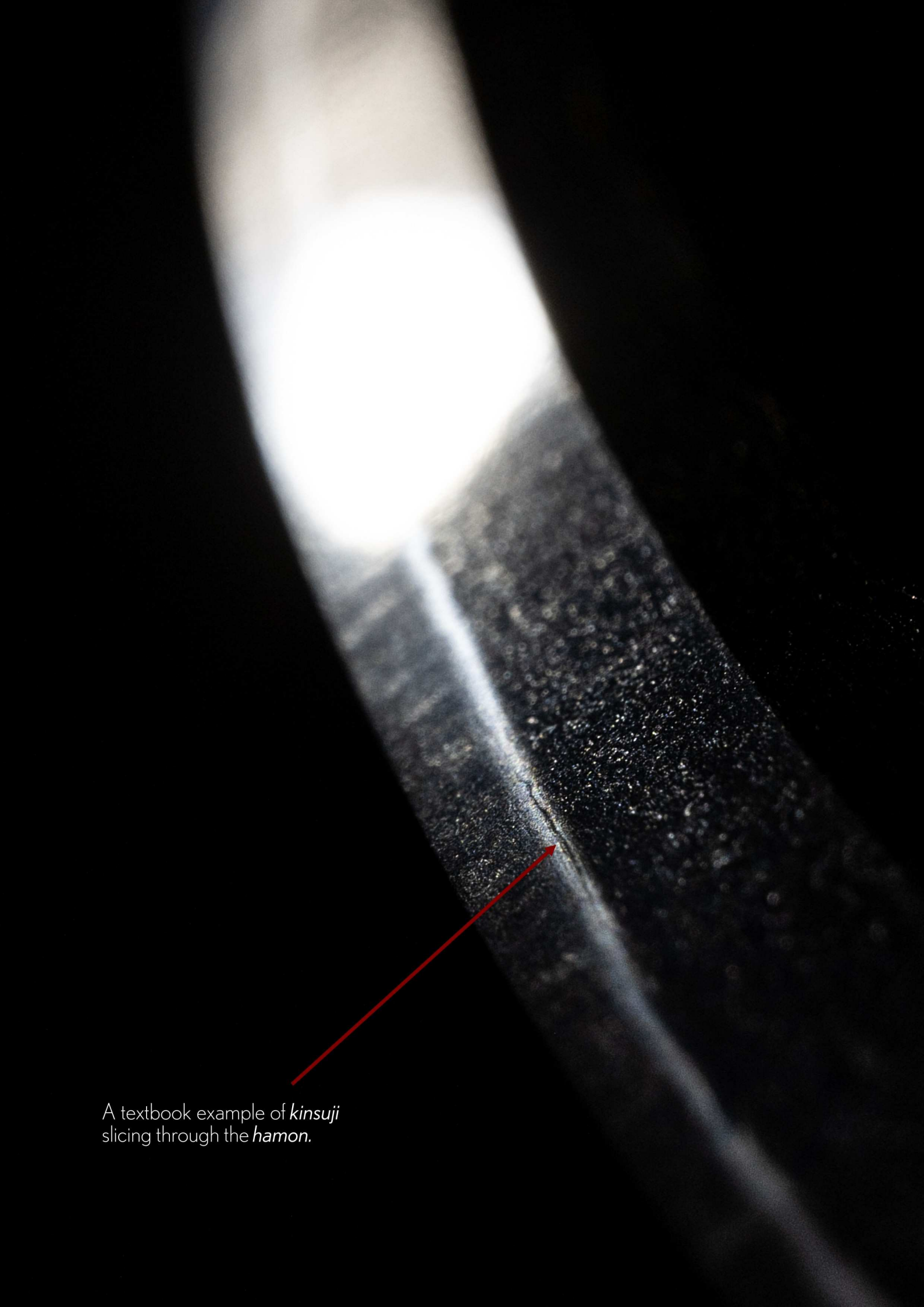
A river of *chikei* accentuates the blades's beautiful *nagare-hada.*



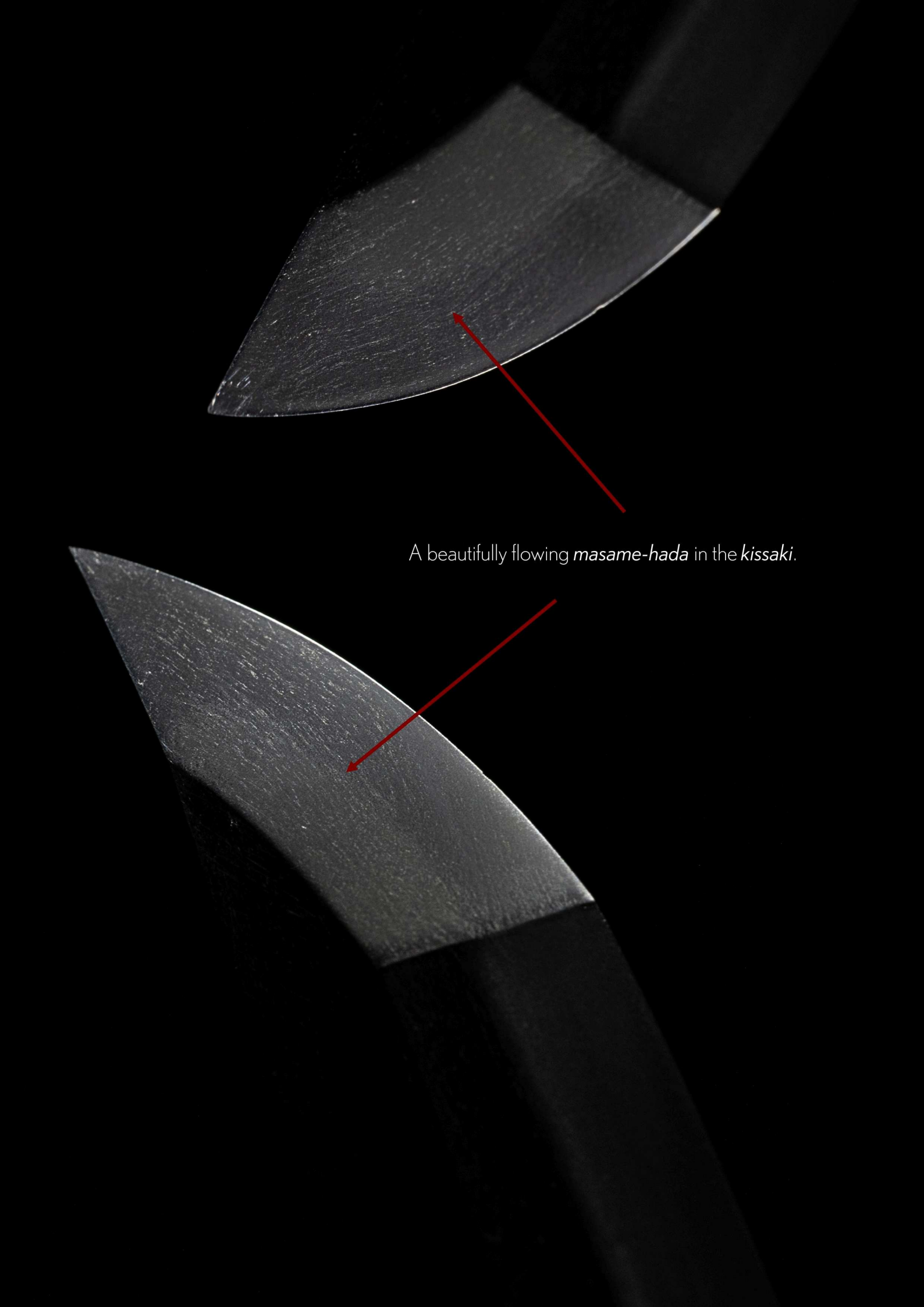
This *Ko-Mihara katana* is all about the fine, subtle details. A sword that will reward those who take the time to sit down and relax into it.



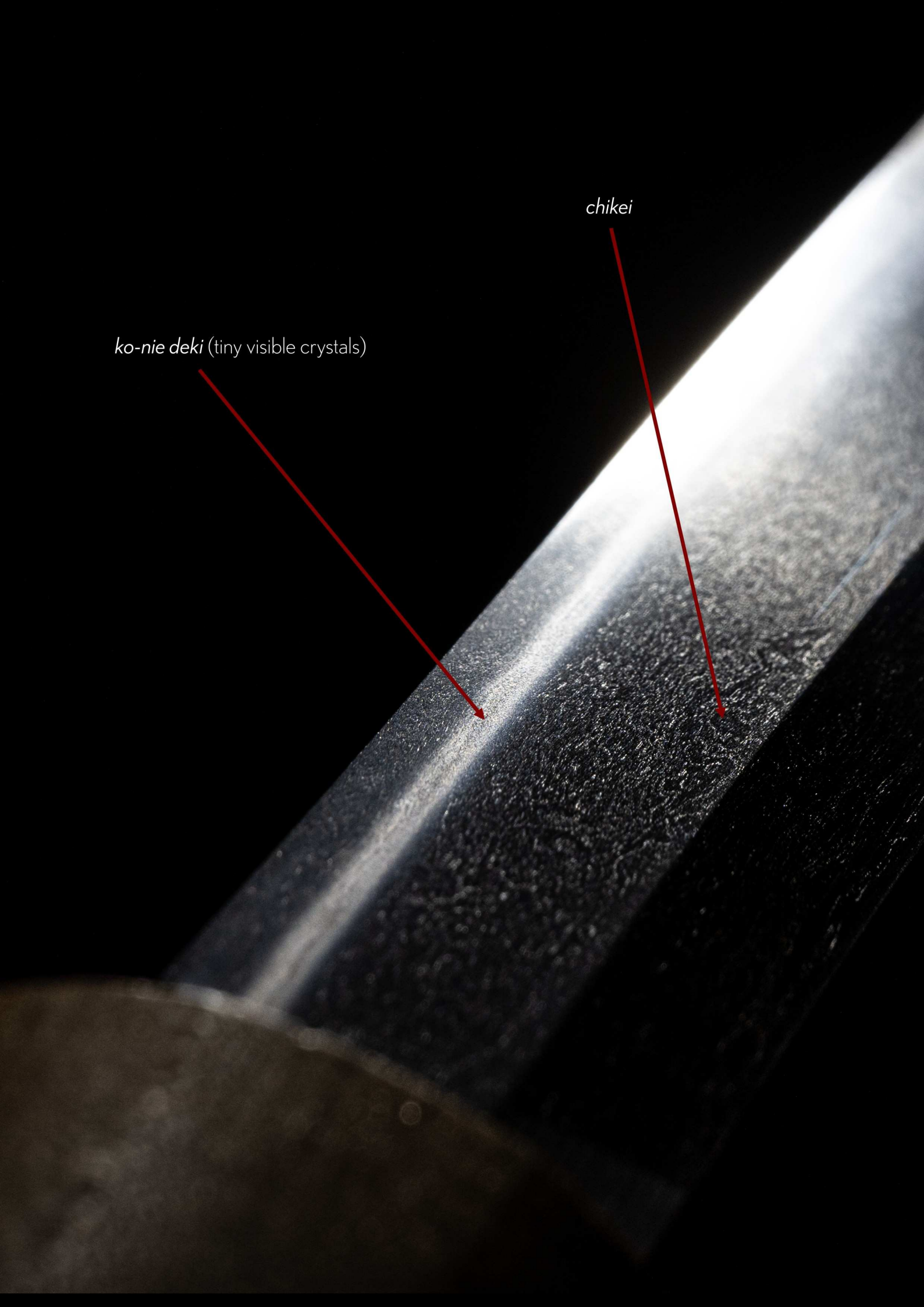
Good close-up view of ***itame*** (plank grain) and ***mokume-hada*** more circular grain.

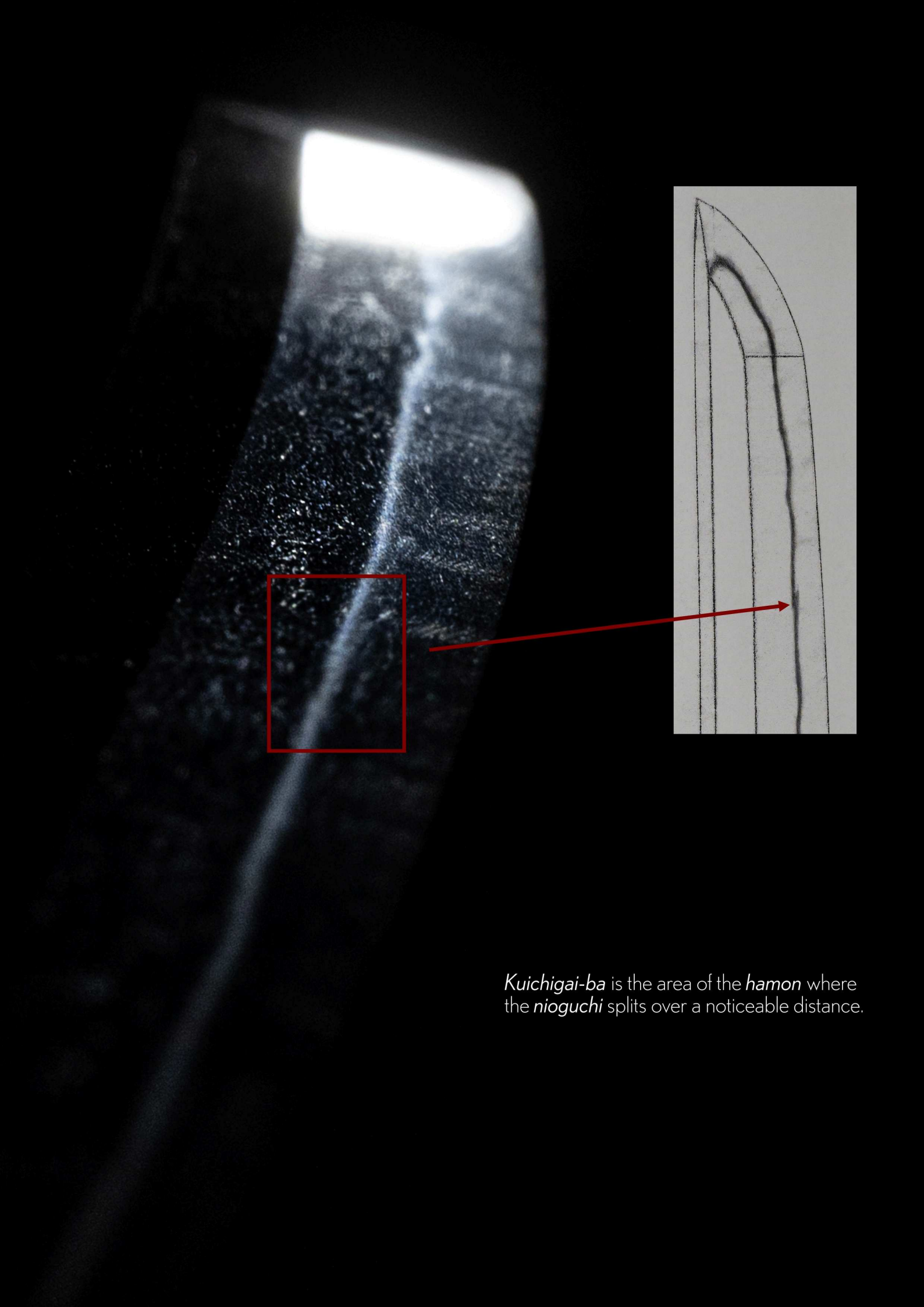


A textbook example of ***kinsuji*** slicing through the ***hamon.***

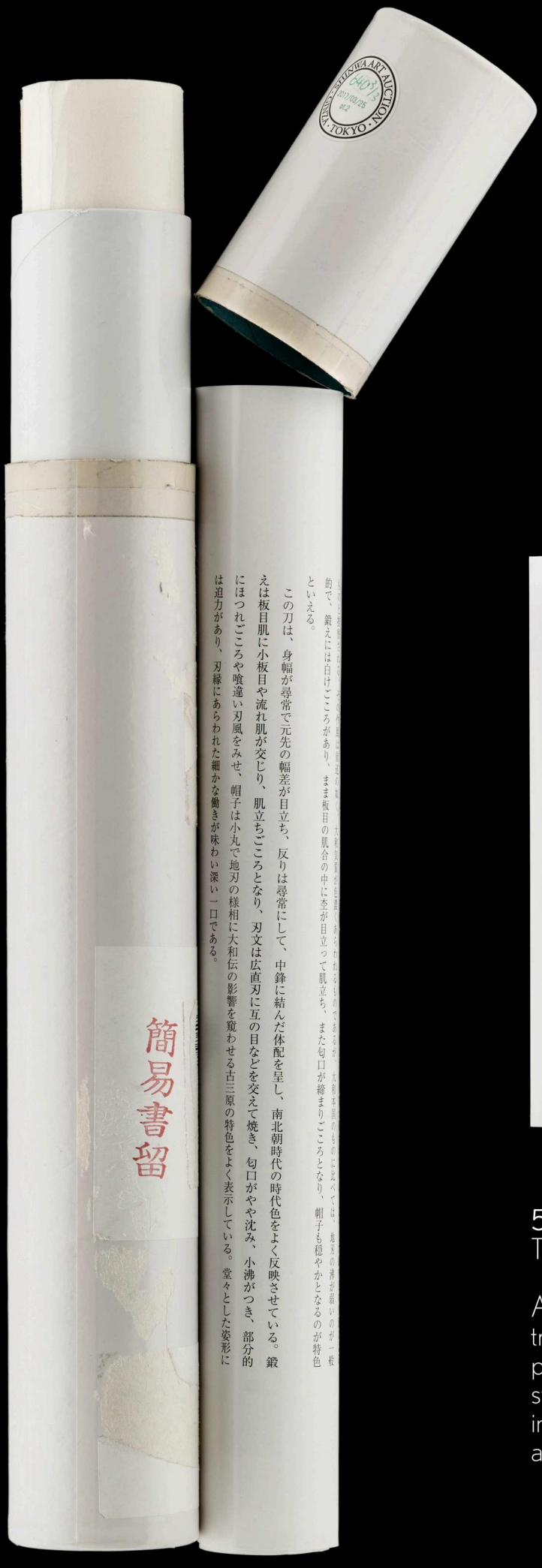


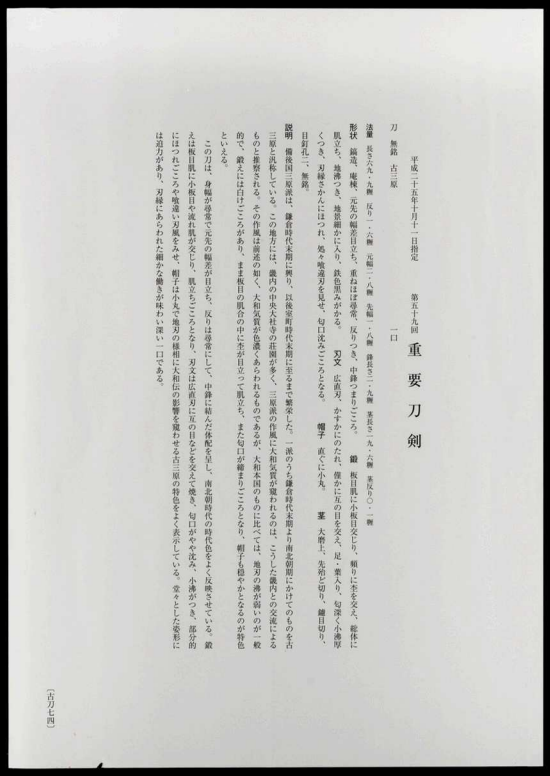
A beautifully flowing *masame-hada* in the *kissaki*.


chikei
ko-nie deki (tiny visible crystals)



Kuichigai-ba is the area of the ***hamon*** where the ***nioguchi*** splits over a noticeable distance.





平成二十五年十月十一日指定　第五十九回　**重要刀剣**

刀　無銘　古三原

法量　長さ六九・九糎　反り一・六糎　元幅二・八糎　先幅一・八糎　鋒長さ二・九糎　茎長さ一九・六糎　茎反り〇・一糎

形状　鎬造、庵棟、元先の幅差目立ち、重ねほぼ尋常、反りつき、中鋒つまりごころ。　**鍛**　板目肌に小板目交じり、頻りに杢を交え、総体に肌立ち、地沸つき、地景細かに入り、鉄色黒みがかる。　**刃文**　広直刃、かすかにのたれ、僅かに互の目を交え、足・葉入り、匂深く小沸厚くつき、刃縁さかんにほつれ、処々喰違刃を見せ、匂口沈みごころとなる。　**帽子**　直ぐに小丸。　**茎**　大磨上、先殆ど切り、鑢目切り、目釘孔二、無銘。

説明　備後国三原派は、鎌倉時代末期に興り、以後室町時代末期に至るまで繁栄した。一派のうち鎌倉時代末期より南北朝期にかけてのものを古三原と汎称している。この地方には、畿内の中央大社寺の荘園が多く、三原派の作風に大和気質が窺われるのは、こうした畿内との交流によるものと推察される。その作風は前述の如く、大和気質が色濃くあらわれるものであるが、大和本国のものに比べては、地刃の沸が弱いのが一般的で、鍛えには白けごころがあり、まま板目の肌合の中に杢が目立って肌立ち、また匂口が締まりごころとなり、帽子も穏やかとなるのが特色といえる。

この刀は、身幅が尋常で元先の幅差が目立ち、反りは尋常にして、中鋒に結んだ体配を呈し、南北朝時代の時代色をよく反映させている。鍛えは板目肌に小板目や流れ肌が交じり、肌立ちごころとなり、刃文は広直刃に互の目などを交えて焼き、匂口がやや沈み、小沸がつき、部分的にほつれごころや喰違い刃風をみせ、帽子は小丸で地刃の様相に大和伝の影響を窺わせる古三原の特色をよく表示している。堂々とした姿形には迫力があり、刃縁にあらわれた細かな働きが味わい深い一口である。

〔古刀七四〕

59th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken Certificate
Traditionally rolled in protective tube.

All information will be precisely translated for the new caretaker. A printed and bound description of the sword from this catalogue will also be included along with a sword stand and a Unique Japan maintenance kit.

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

gold ***habaki*** with
vertical lines that harmonize
with its ***suguha hamon***

"The dignified form carries a sense of strength, while the minute activities along the edge offer refined taste and quiet beauty."

59th NBTHK Tôken Certificate
October 11, 2013

Congratulations Dan.

Warm regards,
Pablo

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

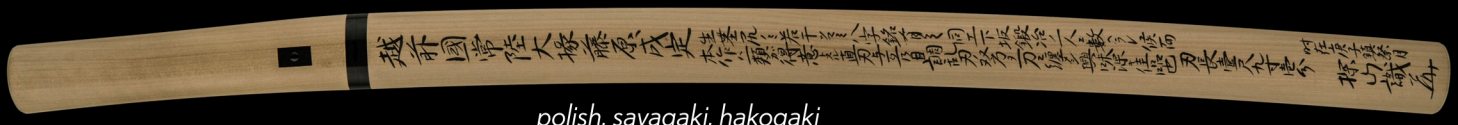
* Professional polishing (standard to ***Jûyô***-level quality)
* **Shirasaya** making (standard to premium with horn fittings)
* **Habaki** fabrication (gold, silver, copper in any design)
* **Koshirae** restoration (tightening, scabbard repair, lacquer refinishing)
* **Tsuka-maki** (silk or leather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

Custom Work & Storage

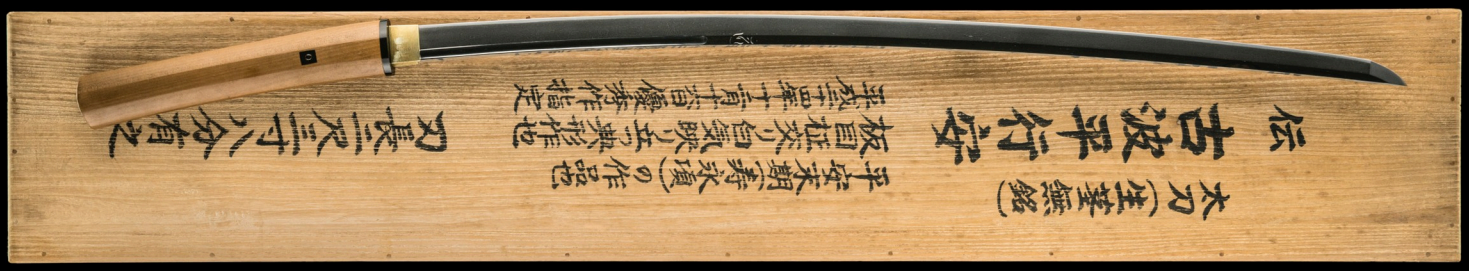
* Museum-quality custom koshirae projects
* Presentation boxes ***(otoshi)*** for ***tsuba, menuki, fuchi-kashira, mitokoromono, etc.***
* Storage boxes with ***hakogaki*** (humidification options available)

Consignment Sales

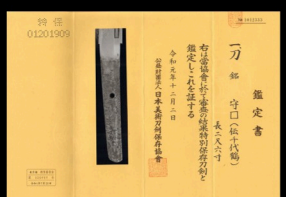
* Sell your swords through Unique Japan (qualifying conditions apply)

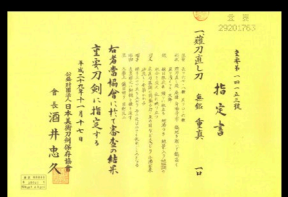


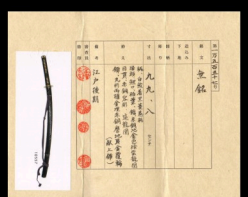
polish, sayagaki, hakogaki

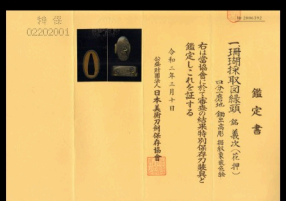


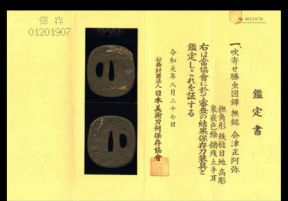
tsuka-maki

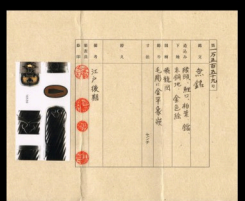








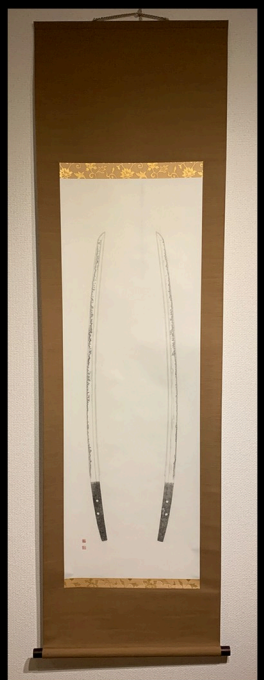




All NBTHK and NTHK-NPO Shinsa authentication services

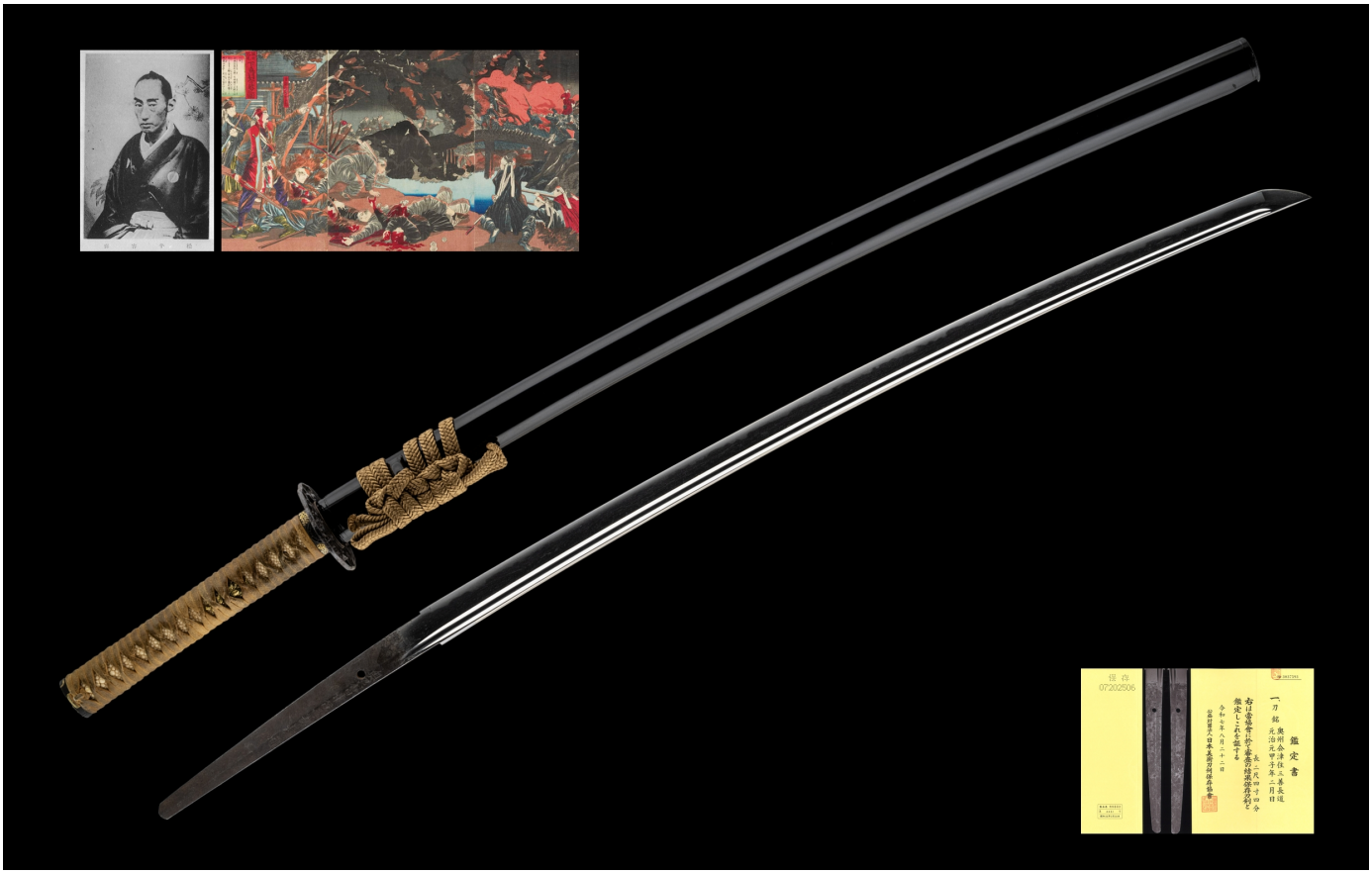
habaki creations

otoshi boxes



oshigata scrolls

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA509

SOLD

A HACHIDAI NAGAMICHI KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, SHINSHINTÔ PERIOD (GENJI ERA: FEBRUARY 1864)

Swordsmith:	***Ôshû Aizu-jû Miyoshi Nagamichi*** *(奥州会津住三善長, 8th gen.)*
Measurements:	**Length:** 73.9cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 2.82cm **Weight:** 635g
Jihada:	*Nagare-hada mixed with itame-hada with chikei*
Hamon:	*Gunome-midare mixed with tobiyaki, kinsuji and sunagashi*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(sword Worthy of Preservation)*
Fujishiro rank:	**Chujô-saku** (*ranked as an above average swordsmith*)
Included:	Edo koshirae, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description

This long and very curvy katana is by *hachidai* (eighth-generation) ***Miyoshi Nagamichi***, a member of a prestigious lineage of swordsmiths that served the *Aizu* clan from the early Edo period through the *Meiji* era. Hachidai served as official smith to the *Matsudaira* family of the *Aizu* domain, eventually earning the title of *Aizu Katana-kaji Tôryô* - Head of the *Aizu* Swordsmiths. This sword bears a *nakago* date inscription from the first year of the *Genji* era (February 1864) - just four years before the *Boshin* War, which would bring the *Aizu* domain to its tragic end and close the Edo period entirely. This sword was the property of a former police officer who is now a retired *iaidô* (drawing sword) master and was used for decades. Minor scratches and natural patina has formed on the word from actual use. The accompanying *koshirae* also carries the weight of years of genuine training. The *tsuka* (hilt) in particular has developed a unique character from decades of being gripped. A brilliant set of *koshirae* that balances quiet beauty with honest, rugged practicality.

Kissaki: 3.55cm

Saki-haba: 1.93cm

Moto-haba: 2.82cm

Nagasa: 73.9cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

Sori: 1.80cm

Nakago: 24.0cm

Omosa: 635g

This work is by the eighth-generation Miyoshi *Nagamichi* (三善長道), a member of a prestigious lineage of swordsmiths that served the *Aizu* clan from the early Edo period through the *Meiji* era. The first-generation *Nagamichi* was the son of *Miyoshi Masanaga* (三好政長), a disciple of *Umetada Myôju* (埋忠明寿). Following his father's passing, he studied under his uncle *Nagatoshi* (長俊) and the great master of *Ôsaka Shintô*, *Tsuda Sukehiro* (津田助広). He also mastered the art of cutting under the renowned sword-tester *Yamano Kanjûrô Hisahide* (山野勘十郎久英). His blades were so exceptionally sharp that he was praised as the "Kotetsu of *Aizu*" and the "*Masamune* of *Aizu*," earning the highest rank of *saijô-ôwazamono*.

Inheriting this lineage, the eighth-generation *Nagamichi* served as official smith to the Matsudaira family of the *Aizu* domain, eventually earning the title of "*Aizu Katana-kaji Tôryô*" – Head of the *Aizu* Swordsmiths – a testament to the trust he commanded.

This sword bears a *nakago* date inscription from the first year of the *Genji* era (1864) – just four years before the *Boshin War*, which would bring the *Aizu* domain to its tragic end and close the Edo period entirely. It is a blade forged at the edge of one world, before everything changed. It is a practical work with a unique provenance, having been used for many years by a former police officer who is now a retired *Iaidô* master. The *ji-gane* exhibits a refined *itame* grain, while the *hamon* is based on *gunome-midare* with frequent *sunagashi*, *kinsuji*, and *tobiyaki*, displaying a wealth of activity throughout the blade. Minor scratches from actual use are visible, but the piece offers numerous highlights as a Japanese sword. This work is accompanied by a *Hozon* certificate from the NBTHK.

The accompanying *koshirae* carries the weight of years of genuine training. The *tsuka* in particular has developed a unique character from decades of being gripped – a true martial tool, not a display piece. It features a polished iron *tsuba* with refined *sukashi* openwork of plum blossoms, a *fuchi-kashira* depicting a waterwheel, and *menuki* adorned with gold dragons. A mount that balances quiet beauty with honest, rugged practicality.

Location: *Aizu in Mutsu province*
Family name: *Miyoshi*
Swordsmith: *Nagamichi* (eighth generation)

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

奥 (Ô)
州 (shû)
會 (Ai)
津 (zu)
住 (jû)
三 (Mi)
善 (yoshi)
長 (Naga)
道 (michi)

Genji gan kinoe-nedoshi nigatsu hi

Crafted on a day in the second month in the first year of the ***Genji*** era, the Year of the Rat (February 1864).

(Gen) 元

(ji) 治

(gan) 元

(kinoe) 甲

(ne) 子

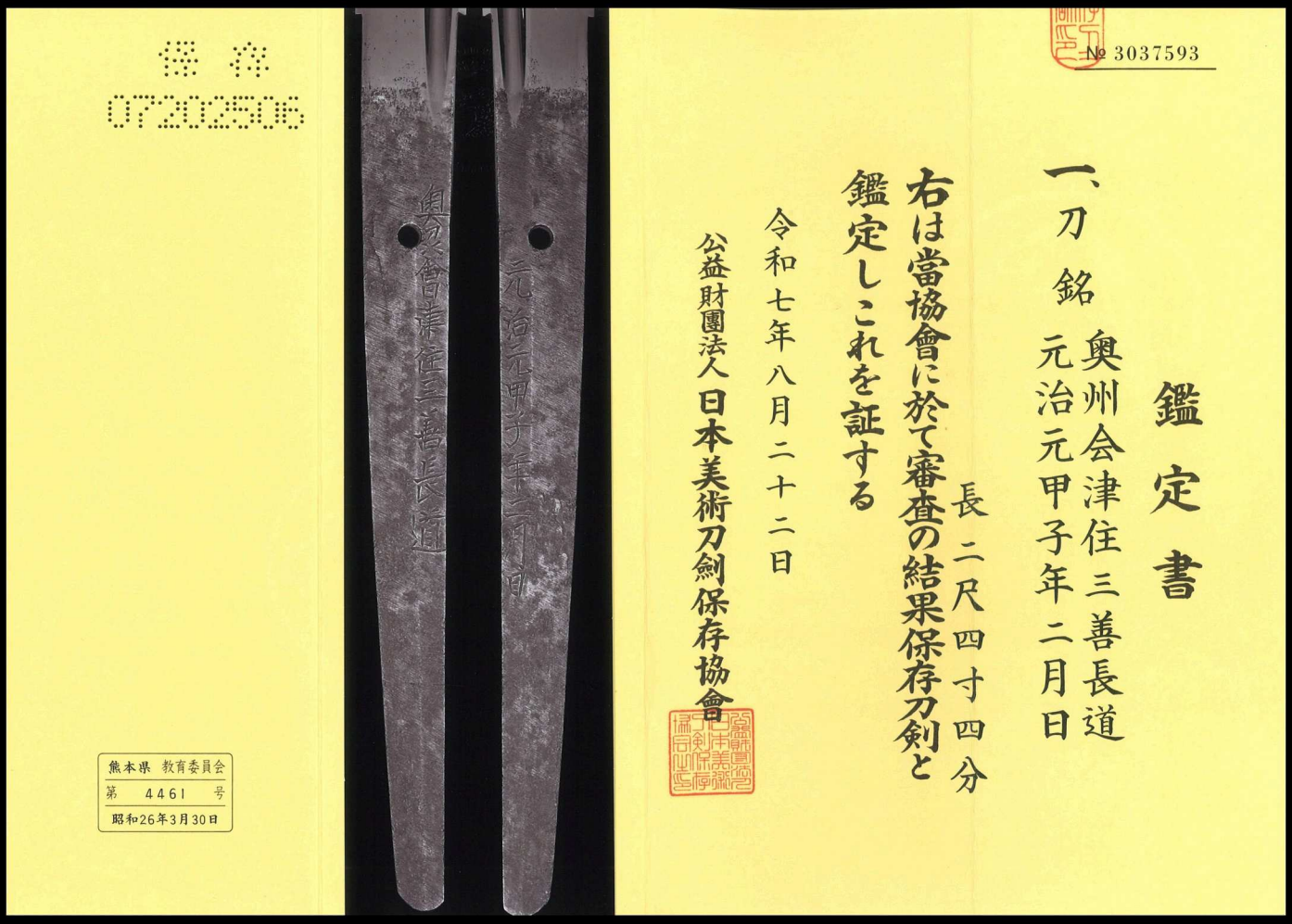
(doshi) 年

(ni) 二

(gatsu) 月

(hi) 日

The ***nakago*** terminates in a ***ha-agari kurijiri***, a form in which the rounded tip rises toward the cutting-edge side.



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 7th year of Reiwa (2025), August 22nd

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Ôshû Aizu-jû Miyoshi Nagamichi
Genji gan kinoe-nedoshi nigatsu-hi

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 4-sun 4-bu (73.9cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

A Blade Forged for Fate: The Genji 1864 Nagamichi

The first year of ***Genji*** era (1864) date inscription places this blade at the very end of the Edo period – one of the most turbulent stretches in Japanese history. The ***Ikedaya*** Incident and the ***Kinmon*** Rebellion had turned ***Kyôto*** into a battleground, and the demand for swords that could handle real combat had never been higher.

The eighth-generation ***Nagamichi*** was official smith to the ***Aizu*** domain, working under the direct patronage of ***Matsudaira Katamori*** – the ***Kyôto Shugoshoku*** – whose men were on the streets of ***Kyôto*** risking their lives to keep order. This was not a ceremonial commission. ***Nagamichi*** came from a lineage ranked ***saijô ôwazamono*** – supreme cutting ability – and at this moment in history, that ranking meant something very real.

Four years after this blade left the forge, the ***Aizu*** domain was destroyed in the ***Boshin War*** and the Edo period came to an end. Japan changed overnight. The samurai class that had carried swords like this one was abolished, and a new era – the Meiji – began dismantling everything that had come before.

This sword survived all of it, and it shows. The ***koshirae*** appears to be original and unchanged – the ***same*** fittings that accompa***nie***d this blade when it was made for active use. The steel almost certainly has not been polished since the Edo period. What you are looking at is not a sword that has been refreshed and reconditioned over the centuries. It is, as near as we can tell, frozen in time – a genuine working sword of the final samurai era, preserved exactly as it was.

Matsudaira Katamori

Boshin War

Koshirae

The *tsuba* is of polished iron with a *sukashi* carving of a plum tree – branches sparse, buds just forming, not yet in bloom. Early spring, before the flowers open. The plum blossoms first in Japan, while frost is still on the ground, which is precisely why it carries the associations it does – resilience, quiet optimism.

The craftsman chose an understated moment of beautiful potential.

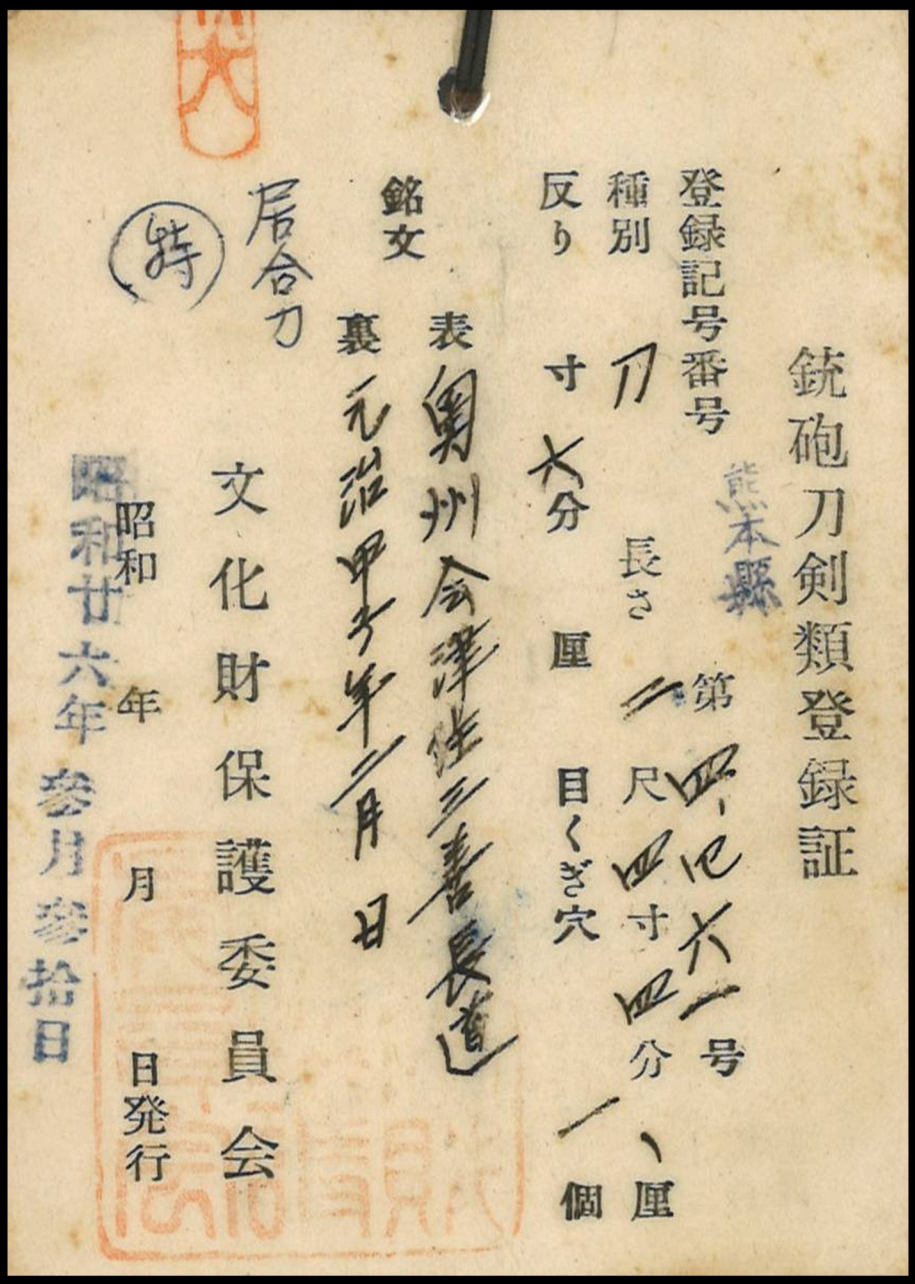
(reverse)

The *fuchi-kashira* features a *shakudô* base adorned with a meticulous *nanako* pattern, depicting a waterwheel alongside flowers and grass by a water's edge.

The design captures a tranquil scene of the Japanese countryside as seen below.

The *tsuka* is wrapped over white *samekawa*, and the wrap itself tells you something – worn smooth in the grip area from years of handling, the surface carrying the kind of patina that only comes from genuine use. This is not a sword that sat in a rack.

The *menuki* are gold dragons, visible through the wrap. Simple, high-quality, and entirely in keeping with a sword made under domain patronage.



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

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

One of the very first swords registered in Japan. It was number 1,461 sword registered in *Kumamoto prefecture,* former *Hizen province*.

Congratulations Kyle.

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJDI017

SOLD

A YOSHIKADO / MICHITOKI DAISHÔ

SIGNED, SHINTÔ EDO PERIOD (KANBUN: 1661-1673 & HÔEI: 1704-1711)

Swordsmiths:	***Seki Zenjô Yoshikado*** *(katana)* ***& Aizu Michitoki*** *(wakizashi)*
Measurements (k):	**Length:** 71.0cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 3.18cm **Weight:** 760g
Measurements (w):	**Length:** 51.3cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba:** 2.9cm **Weight:** 540g
Jihada:	*Well-forged itame and nagare-hada with plentiful chikei*
Hamon:	*Gunome-midare, bright nioguchi, kinsuji, yô, yahazuba, long ashi*
Certificate #1-2:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(wakizashi/katana Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #3:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(daishô tsuba is Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificates #4-8:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** *(fk, kozuka, koshirae, 2 x menuki designated Authentic)*
Ranking:	**Jô-saku & Wazamono** *(Yoshikado ranked a superior smith, made sharp swords)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** *(shodô artist)*
Included:	Shirasaya x 2, daishô koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

This brilliant *daishô* consists of a katana by ***Musashi no Kami Yoshikado*** paired with a wakizashi by ***Wakasa no Kami Michitoki***. Yoshikado was active in the Mito domain of Hitachi province from the Kan'ei era (1624~1644) through the *Enpô* era, while Michitoki flourished around the *Shôtoku* era. Two smiths, different generations, brought together in one magnificent union. A wonderful custom daishô koshirae, produced by Unique Japan, is unified throughout in black, its most distinctive feature the *togidashi-zame*, polished ray-skin, that wraps the lower portion of each saya with quiet elegance. The matching copper *ganseki habaki*, the paired *Aizu Shôami* iron tsuba, the stunning crane and tortoise menuki, and the *kozuka* bearing a design of Mount Fuji together form an ensemble that is as culturally rich as it is inviting. A daishô worthy of the name.

Saki-kasane: 4.4mm

Moto-kasane: 6.2mm

Nakago: 14.8cm

Omosa: 540g

Kissaki: 3.78cm

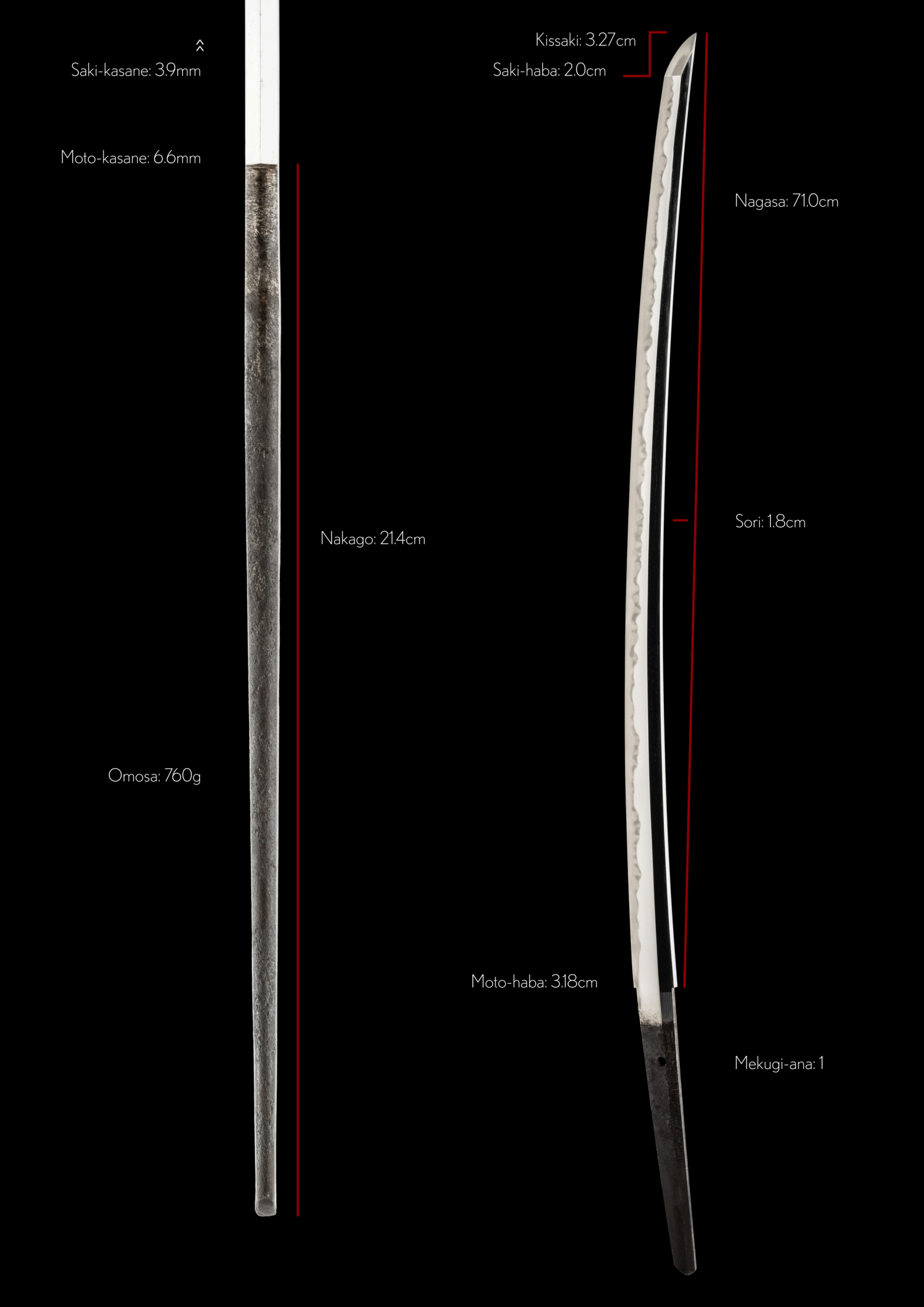
Saki-haba: 2.02cm

Nagasa: 51.3cm

Sori: 1.3cm

Moto-haba: 2.9cm

Mekugi-ana: 1


Saki-kasane: 3.9mm
Moto-kasane: 6.6mm
Nakago: 21.4cm
Omosa: 760g
Kissaki: 3.27cm
Saki-haba: 2.0cm
Nagasa: 71.0cm
Sori: 1.8cm
Moto-haba: 3.18cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

This *daishô* consists of a *katana* by *Musashi no Kami Yoshikado* paired with a *wakizashi* by *Wakasa no Kami Michitoki*.

Musashi no Kami Yoshikado was a smith active in the *Mito* domain of *Hitachi* province from the *Kan'ei* era (1624-1644) through the *Enpô* era (1673-1681). He trained under *Ômura Kaboku*, a figure of unusual background who was both a physician and a swordsmith, and served as private retained smith to *Tokugawa Mitsukuni*, the second *daimyô* of the *Mito* domain. Around the *Enpô* era he changed his name to *Bokuden*. Among *shintô* smiths he is ranked as *jôsaku*, with a cutting-sharpness rating of *ryô-wazamono*.

Given that this blade bears the signature "*Musashi no Kami Yoshikado*," it is presumed to predate *Enpô* 4 (1676), likely dating to around the *Kanbun* era (1661-1673). The blade measures 71.0 cm in length, with deep *sori*, a pronounced difference between *moto-haba* and *saki-haba*, and a *chû-kissaki*. The *ji-hada* is composed overall of a fine, tight *ko-itame*, with *itame* appearing near the *monouchi* and *utsuri* standing out. The *hamon* is a *chôji-midare* with thick nie, a bright *nioiguchi*, and *sunagashi*, producing a strikingly brilliant effect. An NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate is included.

The *wakizashi* was made by *Wakasa no Kami Michitoki*, a smith of around the *Shôtoku* era (1711-1716) who trained first under the 1st generation *Miyoshi Nagamichi* and later studied under the third-generation *Iga no Kami Kinmichi*, who held the title of *Nihon Kaji Sôshô*, Grand Master of Japanese Smiths. After receiving the title *Wakasa no Kami*, he was permitted, alongside his teacher *Kinmichi*, to carve a chrysanthemum crest into the *nakago*, suggesting that he may have produced blades for the imperial court. He is ranked as *wazamono*.

This blade's *nakago* likewise bears a chrysanthemum crest. The *ji-hada* is a *ko-itame* through which *masame* flows, giving the surface a somewhat rough, standing texture. The *hamon* is a *gunome-midare* with a bright *nioiguchi* and thick *nie*, accompanied by *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. The soft, billowing nie along the edge of the *hamon* are especially beautiful.

The *koshirae* is a modern custom-made *daishô-koshirae*. The overall scheme is unified in black, within which the *togidashi-zame* (polished ray-skin) at the bottom area of the *saya* lends the piece its distinctive character. The *habaki*, matching for both *katana* and *wakizashi*, are of copper *ganseki* (rock-textured) form. The *tsuba* are a matched *daishô* pair in iron by *Aizu Shôami*. The *menuki* depict a crane and tortoise, and the *kozuka* bears a design of Mount Fuji, together forming a work rich with motifs that highlight the breadth of Japanese culture.

Location: *Aizu in Iwashiro province*
Title name: *Wakasa no Kami* (Lord of Wakasa province)
Family name: *Fujiwara*
Swordsmith: *Michitoki* (first generation)

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

Chrysanthemum crest

若 (Waka)

狭 (sa, no)

守 (Kami)

藤 (Fuji)

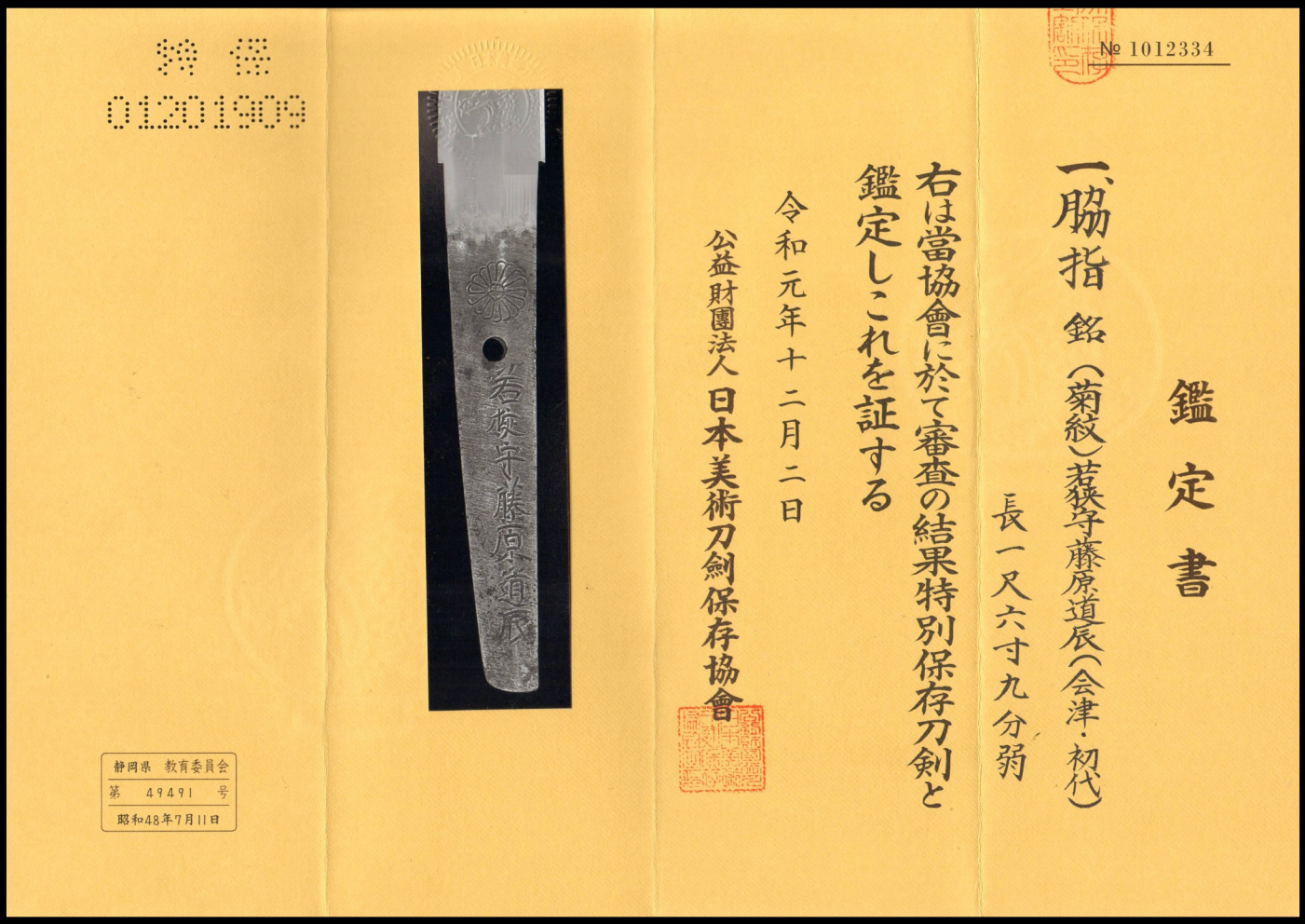
原 (wara)

道 (Michi)

辰 (toki)

Ha-agari kurijiri - a form in which the rounded tip of the ***nakago*** rises toward the cutting-edge.

(***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 1st year of Reiwa (2019), December 2nd

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)
(Kikumon)
Wakasa no Kami Fujiwara Michitoki
(Aizu Shodai)

Nagasa (length)
1-shaku 6-sun 9-bu jaku (51.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Location: *Hitachi province*
Family name: *Zenjô Kaneyoshi*
Title name: *Musashi no Kami* (Lord of Musashi province)
Swordsmith: *Yoshikado* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
takanoha-yasurime (hawk-feather file marks)

関 (Seki)

善 (Zen)

定 (jô)

兼 (Kane)

吉 (yoshi)

家 (ke)

武 (Mu)

蔵 (sashi, no)

守 (Kami)

吉 (Yoshi)

門 (kado)

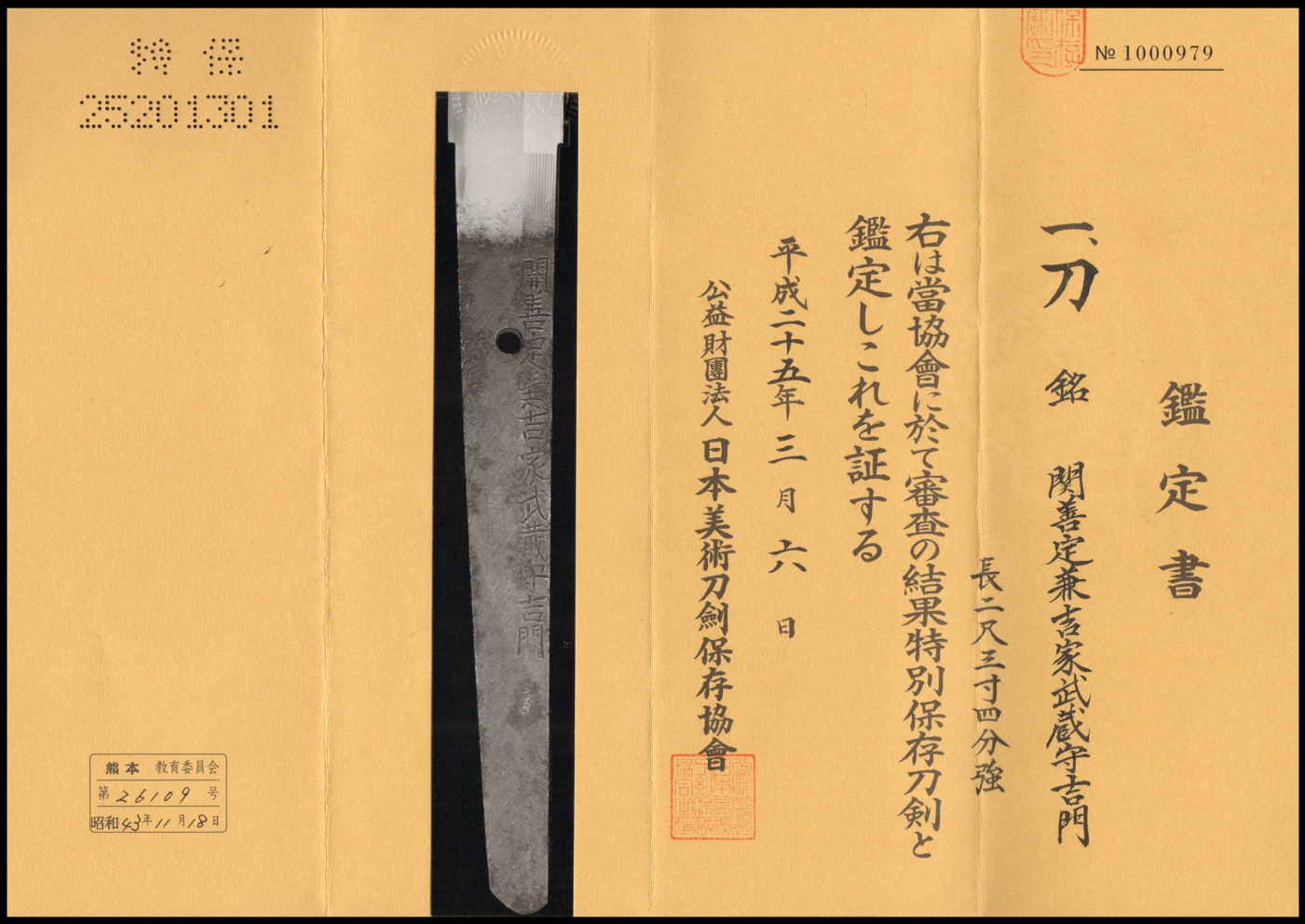
The *Zenjô Kaneyoshi* lineage traces its origins to *Zenjô Kaneyoshi*, active at the end of the *Nanbokuchô* period, and stands as the largest of the the seven schools of *Seki* in *Mino* province.

Although Yoshikado was active primarily in *Hitachi* province, he was born in *Mino*, and it is said that he inscribed his origins in his signature out of pride in his own roots.

The nakago bears *taka-no-ha yasurime*, a herringbone-pattern file finish resembling the overlapping feathers of a hawk's wing, formed by filing at alternating diagonal angles from the center ridge outward toward each edge.

Ha-agari kurijiri - a form in which the rounded tip of the ***nakago*** rises toward the cutting-edge.

(***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 25th year of Heisei (2013), March 6th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Seki Zenjô Kaneyoshi-ke Musashi no Kami Yoshikado

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

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

菊紋
Kikumon
Chrysanthemum crest

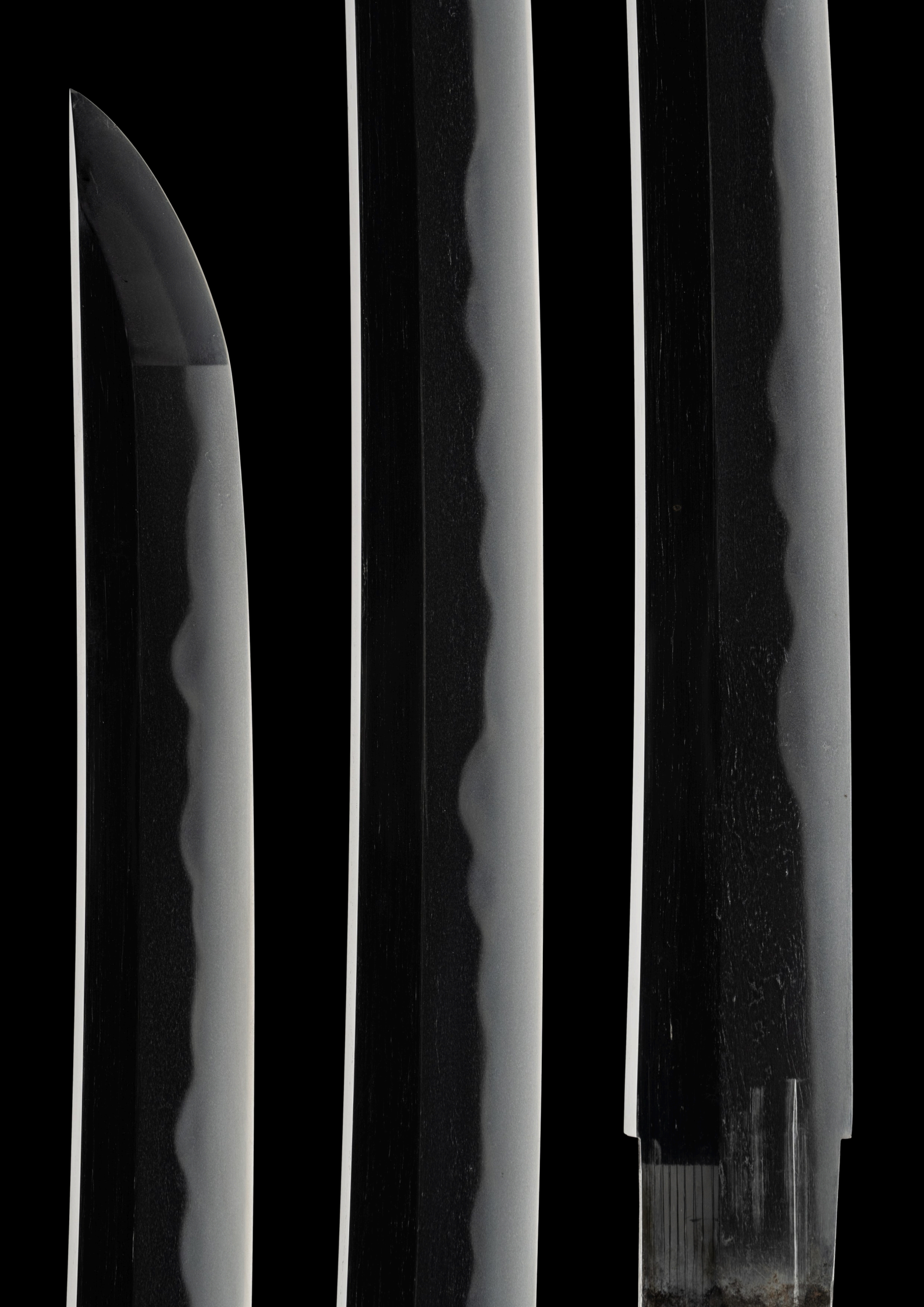
若狭守藤原道辰
Wakasa no Kami Fujiwara Michitoki
Wakasa no Kami Fujiwara Michitoki

時代正徳頃
Jidai Shôtoku goro
Around Shôtoku period (1711-1716)

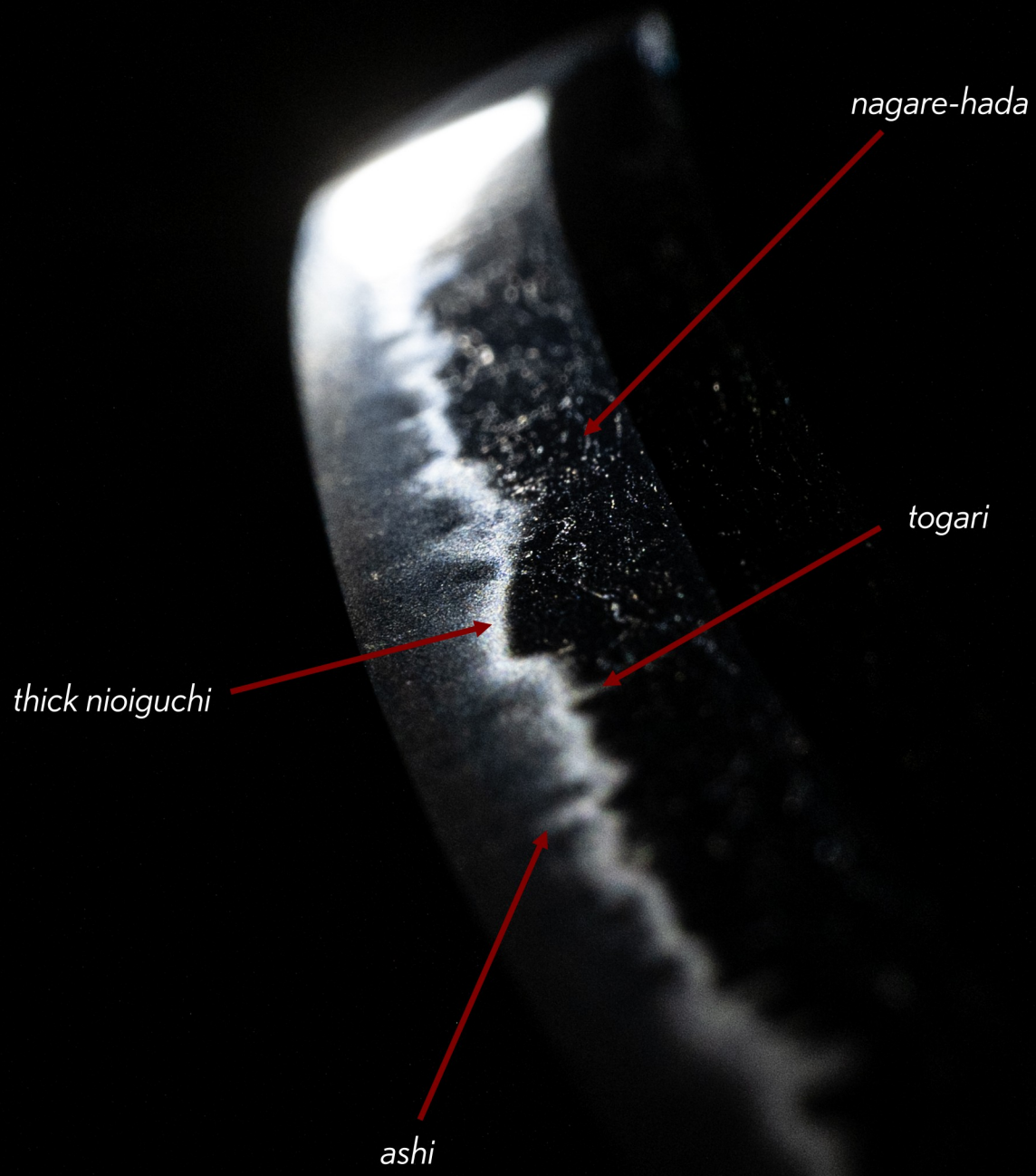
武蔵守吉門ト大小ヲ成ス
Musashi no Kami Yoshikado to daishô o nasu
Daishô with Musashi no Kami Yoshikado

長壱尺六寸九分弱有之
Nagasa 1-shaku 6-sun 9-bu jaku kore ari
Blade length 51.3 cm

令和八丙午年皐月吉日誌之
Reiwa hachi hinoe-umadoshi Satsuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the fifth month in the eighth year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Horse (May 2026)



Standing tall and sharp.



Some areas of the hamon point, known as ***togari***. Overall the ***nioiguchi*** (crystals that make up the hamon) is quite thick.

A wavy ***nagare-hada*** matches the hamon pattern rather beautifully.

The ***Michitoki wakizashi*** carries a classic ***gunome-midare hamon***. It's bright and consistent with long flares of ***ashi*** (legs) extending from the hamon.

Dark lines of ***nie*** crystals that cut through the hamon are known as ***kinsuji.*** In this photo, we see two lines running parallel to each other, quite rare.

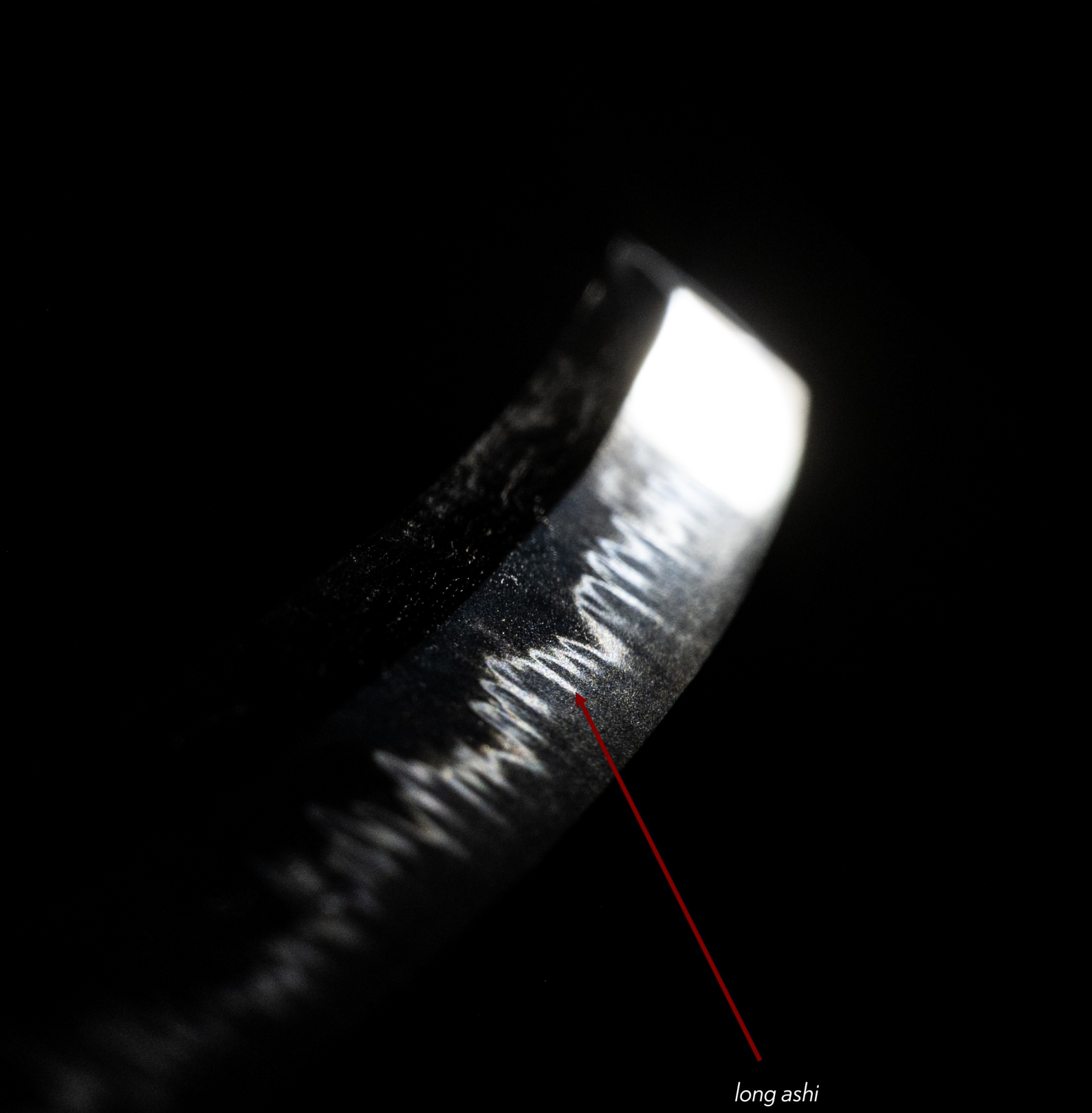
関善定兼吉家武蔵守吉門
Seki Zenjô Kaneyoshi-ke Musashi no Kami Yoshikado
Musashi no Kami Yoshikade from the Kaneyoshi Family of the Zenjô School in Seki

時代寛文頃
Jidai Kanbun goro
Around Kanbun period (1661~1673)

若狭守道辰ト大小ヲ成ス
Wakasa no Kami Michitoki to daishô o nasu
Daishô with Wakasa no Kami Michitoki

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

令和八丙午年皐月吉日誌之
Reiwa hachi hinoe-umadoshi Satsuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the fifth month in the eighth year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Horse (May 2026)

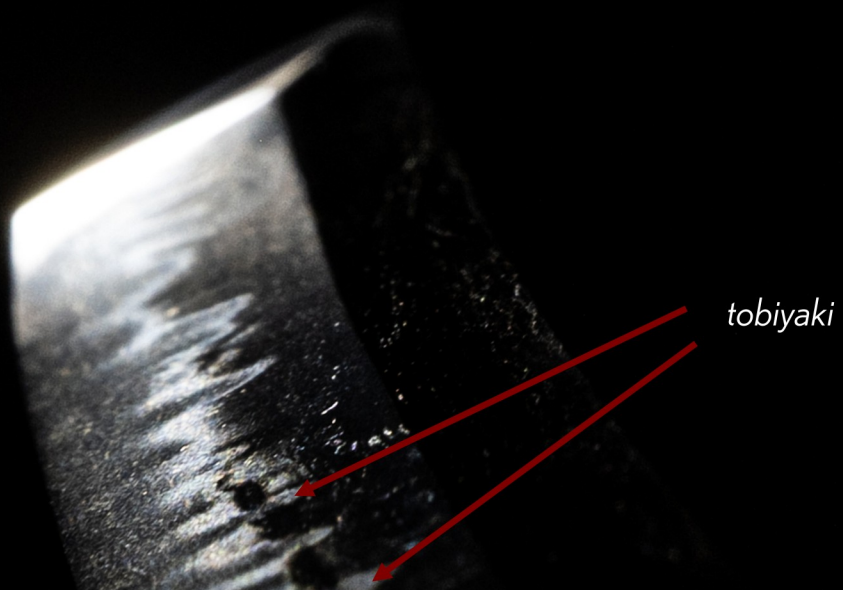


This is also a ***gunome-midare hamon*** making both swords compliment one another from a temper line point of view.

The katana has longer, more pronounced ***ashi*** (legs) and in general a hamon that is more undulating.

This glorious hamon features depictions of ***yahazu-ba***, dove-tail shaped wavy ***midare*** elements that resemble arrow notches known as ***yahazu***.

As ***Yoshikado*** forged in the Mino tradition, many areas of the hamon will show pointed ***togari.***



Another prominent feature is the presence of *tobiyaki*, tempered spots in the *ji* (body) of the katana.

Look up...way up!

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

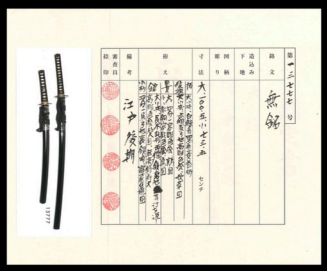
Daishô copper ***habaki*** with
ganseki (rock) texture

Koshi-sambu same nurikomi kuro-ro saya daisho-uchigatana-koshirae
(腰三分鮫塗込黒呂鞘大小打刀拵)

Daishô-uchigatana-koshirae
with a glossy black lacquered ***saya***,
the lower third of which is finished in
polished ray-skin

The ***daishô***, restricted to ***samurai*** class wear, emerged as a defining symbol of their status. This paired-sword tradition gained prominence near the close of the *Muromachi* period (1336-1573), with surviving examples dating to the late sixteenth century. A 1629 edict formalized the ***daishô*** requirement for ***samurai*** on official duties. However, this tradition ended during the *Meiji* period when an 1871 edict removed the ***samurai***'s obligation to wear ***daishô***, followed by an 1876 public sword ban.

These reforms effectively ended both the daishô tradition and the ***samurai*** class itself.



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

The *saya* is wrapped in *korozame*, a type of ray-skin, lending it a splendid finish.

Because the surface is meticulously polished down until every trace of unevenness disappears, each individual granule takes on a shape reminiscent of a flower petal.

(reverse)

dai

shô

保存

No 4016385

鑑定書

一 高士清遊図大小鐔 無銘 会津正阿弥
木瓜形鉄地 鋤出彫
象嵌色絵 鋤残耳

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

令和元年十一月二十六日

公益財団法人 日本美術刀剣保存協會

NBTHK Hozon Certificate

dai

The ***Shôami*** school is said to have originated among armor-makers around the ***Daiei*** era (1521-1528). The character "***ami***", used by masters such as ***Hon'ami*** in polishing and appraisal or ***Zeami*** in Noh, denoted artistic mastery, and ***Shôami*** likely earned recognition in much the same way as a leading lineage of metalworkers. Its influence spread nationwide through the ***Edo*** period, and this ***daishô tsuba*** belongs to the ***Aizu Shôami*** branch, founded by ***Shôami Jirôhachi*** around the ***Kan'ei*** (1624-1644) era in service to the ***Aizu*** domain.

shô

This ***daishô tsuba***, worked in a richly textured iron ground, depicts noble scholars at elegant leisure, an image reflecting the ***Edo***-period ideal of the union of martial and literary accomplishment. The modest inlaid color decoration carries a restraint evocative of ***wabi-sabi***, while the playful touch of forming the ***hitsu-ana*** within the contour of a rocky outcrop adds visual interest. An NBTHK Hozon Certificate is included.

№ 4016385

鑑定書

一、高士清遊図大小鐔 無銘 会津正阿弥
木瓜形 鉄地 鋤出彫
象嵌色絵 鋤残耳

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

令和元年十一月二十六日

公益財團法人 日本美術刀劍保存協會

NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

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

One, Daishô-Tsuba

Depicting a noble scholar at leisure

Mumei (unsigned)
Aizu Shôami

Multiple lobed shape, iron, largely carved ground,
relief with color accents, rim which remains raised after carving

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

The *daishô fuchi-kashira* is the work of the *Môgarashi* school, based in *Hikone* in *Ômi* province. Founded by *Sôten*, the school produced more than twenty metalworkers.

This piece depicts autumn grasses and flowers rendered dynamically on a *shakudô nanako* ground, its color accents adding a further note of splendor.

Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt)

The ***menuki*** depict a crane on the ***katana*** and a tortoise on the ***wakizashi***. The crane ***menuki*** is the work of ***Hamano Shôzui***, founder of the ***Hamano*** school and a highly celebrated metalworker in ***Edo***, while the tortoise is by ***Matsushitatei Motohiro*** of ***Kyoto***.

Cranes and tortoises are celebrated in Japan as symbols of longevity, and paired together they have long been favored as an auspicious motif, their exquisite carving by these two leading metalworkers also speaking to the refined taste of the sword's owner.

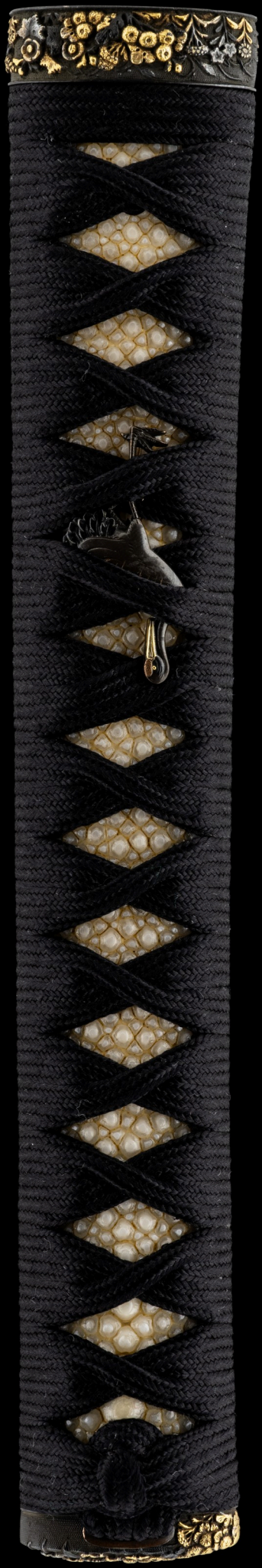
Kozuka (utility knife)

The ***kozuka*** is a utility knife fitted into the ***saya*** of the ***wakizashi***.

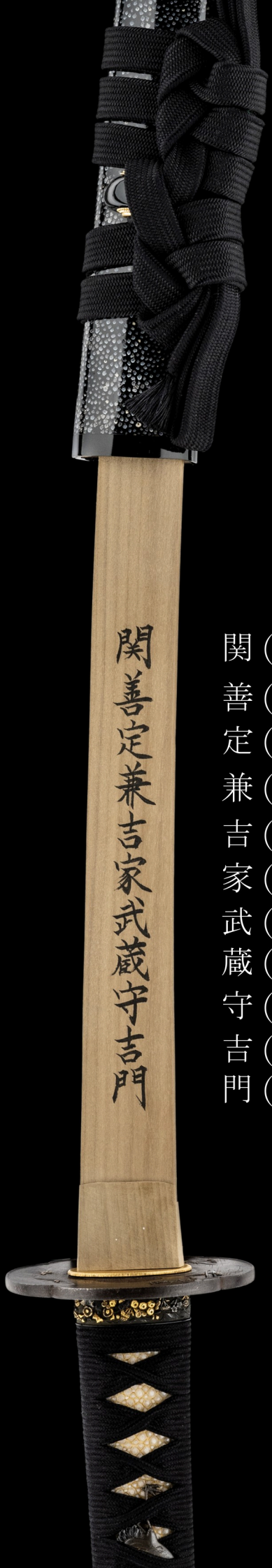
This is the work of ***Akagiken Motonaga***, crafted around the late ***Edo*** period. The ***Akagiken*** school were metalworkers based in ***Mito***; its founder, ***Motozane***, studied under the ***Yokoya*** school while also emulating the style of the ***Nara*** school, resulting in a manner that blends elements of both traditions.

This kozuka is worked in ***shibuichi*** with a silver-plated reverse, depicting a dragon rising above Mount Fuji. Particularly striking is its handling of depth, seen in the subtle touch of silver iroe applied to the summit of Fuji.

The pairing of Fuji and a dragon is a common motif, among which the most celebrated example is likely that by ***Katsushika Hokusai***.



The *daishô tsuka* (hilts) are covered with white samekawa (ray skin) and wrapped in hishimaki style with black *ito*.



関 (Seki)
善 (Zen)
定 (jô)
兼 (Kane)
吉 (yoshi)
家 (ke)
武 (Mu)
蔵 (sashi, no)
守 (Kami)
吉 (Yoshi)
門 (kado)

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

若 (Waka)
狭 (sa, no)
守 (Kami)
藤 (Fuji)
原 (wara)
道 (Michi)
辰 (toki)

Daishô koshirae bags
with phoenix theme

Congratulations Mel.

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJKA495

SOLD

A SUKESADA KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, SUE-KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI (TENBUN ERA: AUG 1555)

Swordsmith:	***Bizen no kuni jû Osafune Sukesada saku*** (備前国住長船祐定作)
Measurements:	**Length:** 70.3cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 2.0cm **Moto-haba:** 3.01cm **Weight:** 800g
Jihada:	*Well-forged itame-hada with mokume-hada with midare-utsuri and chikei*
Hamon:	*Fine mixture of gunome-chôji-midare with suguha, sunagashi, kinsuji and yô*
Certificate #1-2:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(sword and koshirae Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #3:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)*
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

This blade was crafted by ***Osafune Sukesada*** of Bizen, a region that led the nation in both quality and quantity of production. It is said that as much as seventy percent of all surviving masterwork blades originated from Bizen. This curvy katana has been dated to August 1555, toward the end of the *Muromachi* period, well into the turmoil of the violent *Sengoku jidai*. This sword retains its *ubu-nakago* and a length exceeding 70 cm and a healthy weight of 800g. The *hamon* is a *gunome-chôji-midare* with a bright *nioiguchi*, accompanied by *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and falling leaves of *yô*. Its brilliant Edo-period koshirae features a *saya* lacquered in black with a lovely 'wrinkled' *shibo-gawa* finish, fitted with a matching set of fittings, while the *tsuka* is wrapped in the classic manner over white *samekawa* with a superb black-lacquered leather, a colour scheme that reads as formal yet represents lavish workmanship for its period. The *tsuba* is decorated with twin dragons and the menuki depict a set of well-crafted *shishi*. Both the blade and koshirae come with NBTHK Hozon Certificates. This is a fine samurai sword that will fairly soon celebrate its 500th birthday.

Saki-kasane: 4.6mm

Moto-kasane: 6.3mm

Nakago: 20.0cm

Omosa: 800g

nice weight

Kissaki: 3.8cm

Saki-haba: 2.13cm

Nagasa: 70.3cm

Sori: 2.0cm

Moto-haba: 3.01cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

This blade was crafted by *Osafune Sukesada* (長船祐定), one of the most celebrated names in the Bizen tradition and among the most recognised signatures in all of Japanese swordsmithing.

Sukesada hailed from *Bizen* province, a region renowned since ancient times as a kingdom of the sword, blessed with abundant iron resources and a tradition of forging that produced more fine blades than anywhere else in Japan. It is said that as much as seventy percent of all surviving masterwork blades originated from Bizen, and among its schools the Osafune school was so highly regarded that the term "*Osafune-mono*" became synonymous with quality. It is worth noting that "Sukesada" functioned less as the name of a single individual than as a prestigious brand name passed down within the school, with as many as sixty different smiths signing their work with it across the generations.

This katana has been dated to August 1555, toward the end of the Muromachi period and well into the turmoil of the *Sengoku jidai*. With *daimyô* across the country locked in constant struggle for supremacy, demand for battle-ready swords had reached unprecedented heights, and it was against this backdrop that the name *Sukesada* came into full command.

Although a *kotô* blade, this sword retains its *ubu-nakago* and a length exceeding 70 cm. It shows deep sori with a tendency toward *koshi-zori*, and a *chû-kissaki* with a slightly elongated point. The forging is a vigorous *itame* with pronounced flowing grain, mixed with clear *mokume-hada*, and displays *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *gunome-chôji-midare* with sections of gunome-midare and suguha, a bright *nioiguchi*, accompanied throughout by *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and falling leaves of *yô*. The blade is accompanied by an NBTHK Hozon Certificate.

The Edo period koshirae features a saya lacquered in black with a lovely wrinkled *shibo-gawa* finish, fitted throughout with a matching set of fittings, while the tsuka is wrapped in the classic manner over white *samekawa* with superb black-lacquered leather, a colour scheme that reads as formal yet represents lavish workmanship for its period. The tsuba is decorated with twin dragons and the *menuki* depict *shishi*, both among the most popular motifs of the time and further testament to its authenticity as a period piece. The koshirae too is accompanied by an NBTHK Hozon Certificate.

Tenbun nijûyonen hachigatsu kichijitsu
Dated on a lucky day in the eighth month in the 24th year of Tenbun era (August 1555)

(Ten) 天
(bun) 文
(nijû) 廿
(yo) 二二
(nen) 年
(hachi) 八
(gatsu) 月
(kichi) 吉
(jitsu) 日

Kanji used to represent the number four

In Japan, the number four tends to be avoided. Four is pronounced "*shi*," the same as the word for death, and is therefore considered inauspicious.

For this reason, instead of writing the character for four, the practice here is to write two twos in succession to represent it. This attention to good fortune, extended even to a small detail like this, reflects a distinctly Japanese sensibility. When your life depends on your sword, you leave nothing to chance.

四 four

二二 two twos

Ha-agari kurijiri - a form in which the rounded tip of the nakago rises toward the cutting-edge.

Location: *Bizen province*
Family name: *Ôsafune*
Swordsmith: *Sukesada*

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

備 (Bi)

前 (zen, no)

國 (kuni)

住 (jû)

長 (Osa)

舩 (fune)

祐 (Suke)

定 (sada)

作 (saku)

鑑定書

一、刀　銘　備前国住長船祐定作
天文廿二年八月吉日
長二尺三寸二分

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

令和七年五月二十八日

公益財團法人日本美術刀剣保存協會

№ 3037240

兵庫県 教育委員会
第 97815 号
昭和58年11月27日

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 7th year of Reiwa (2025), May 28th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Bizen no kuni jû Osafune Sukesada saku
Tenbun nijûyonen hachigatsu kichijitsu

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu (70.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

備前国住長船祐定
Bizen no kuni jû Osafune Sukesada
Osafune Sukesada, a resident of Bizen province

天文廿二年八月吉日
Tenbun nijûyonen hachigatsu kichijitsu
On a lucky day in the eighth month in the 24th year of the Tenbun era (August 1555)

刃長貳尺参寸二分有之
Hachô 2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu kore ari
Blade length 70.3 cm

令和八丙午年水無月吉日誌之
Reiwa hachi hinoe-uma doshi Minazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the sixth month of the eighth year of the Reiwa era, the Year of the Horse (June 2026)

The final years of Tenbun era, at the height of the Sengoku turmoil

Battle of Miyajima in 1555

The year 1555, in which this blade was forged, fell at the height of the ***Sengoku*** period's turmoil.

Since the outbreak of the ***Ônin War***, Japan had spent nearly a century locked in an age of constant conflict among rival warlords. The authority of the ***Muromachi*** shogunate had long since become nominal, and ***daimyô*** across the country fought continuously to expand their domains on the strength of their own arms alone. The blade was forged in the twenty fourth year of ***Tenbun*** era, precisely the period when this ***Sengoku*** momentum reached its peak. That October saw the ***Battle of Miyajima***, in which ***Môri Motonari*** defeated ***Sue Harukata*** at ***Itsukushima***, a turning point that reshaped the balance of power across the ***Chûgoku*** region. This blade was forged in the shadow of that battle.

This unending warfare drove demand for swords to unprecedented heights. From mass produced ***kazu-uchimono*** to individually commissioned blades for high ranking warriors, smiths across the country worked without rest to meet demand at every level. Among them, the ***Osafune*** school of ***Bizen*** commanded particular trust from ***Sengoku daimyô,*** owing to its combination of high output and consistent quality.

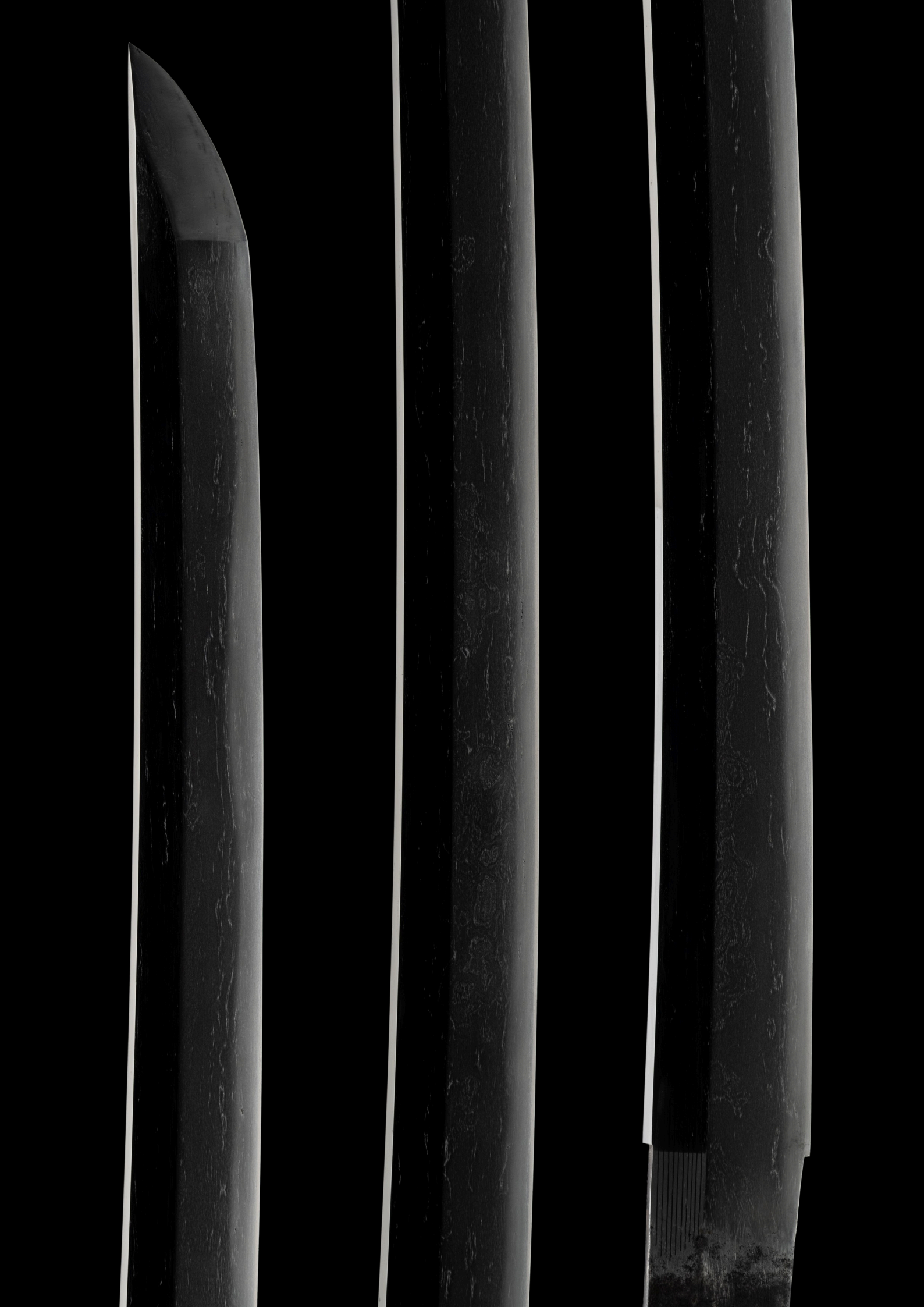
The warlords who defined this era included ***Môri Motonari***, who was steadily consolidating his power in this period; ***Hôjô Ujiyasu***, who held sway in the eastern provinces; ***Takeda Shingen*** of ***Kai***; and ***Uesugi Kenshin*** of ***Echigo***. Each of these men poured resources into building armies prepared for real combat, and it was smiths such as those of ***Bizen***, supplying dependable fighting swords in quantity, who helped make that possible.

Môri Motonari

Hôjô Ujiyasu

Takeda Shingen

Uesugi Kenshin



A textbook example of ***mokume-hada***, folded to resemble the rounded grain of wood.

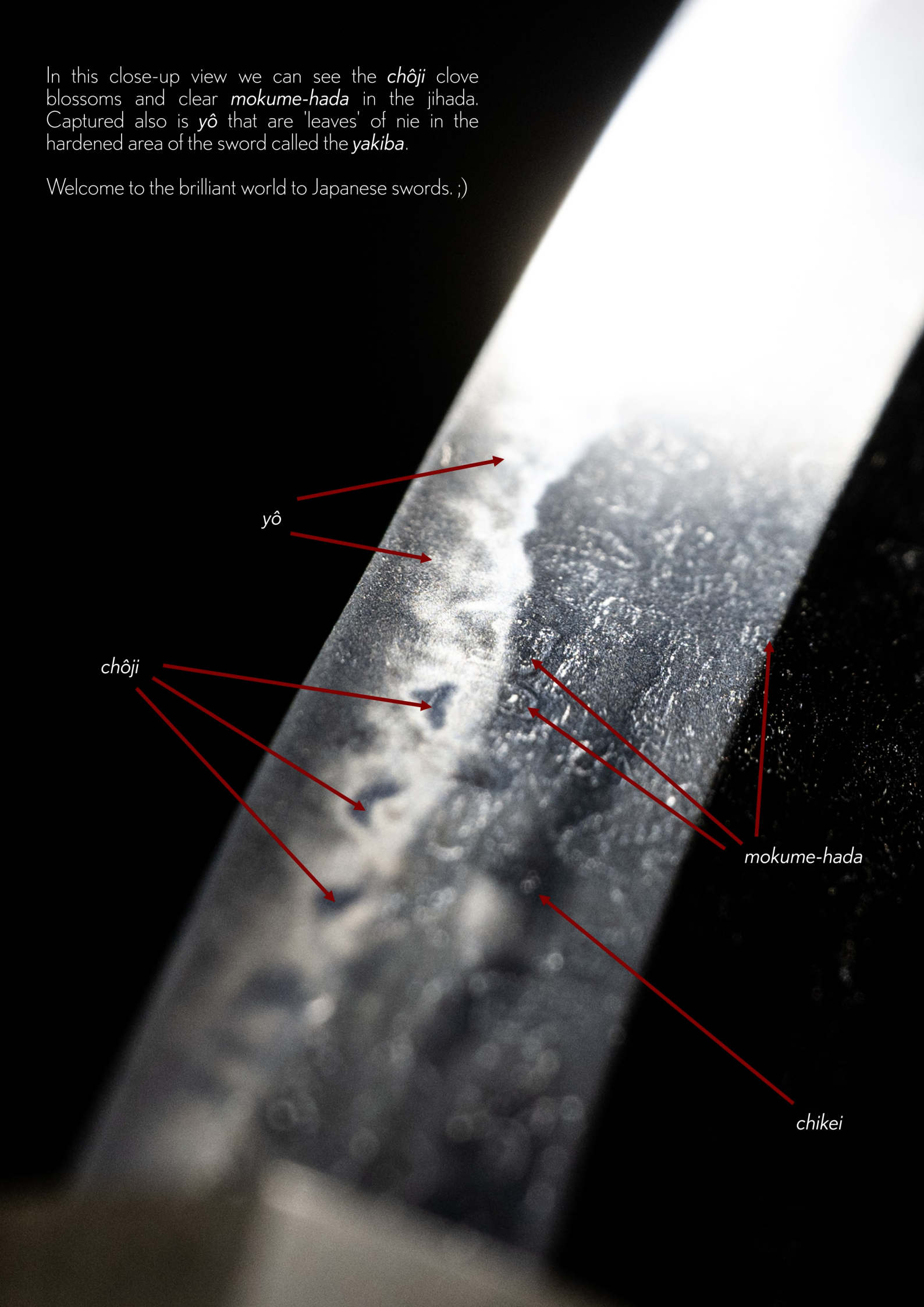
This section displays classic ***Bizen gunome-chôji-midare*** where the temper line (***hamon***) resembles a cluster clove blossom buds.

Thick, dark channels of ***chikei*** weave through the ***jigane***, steel.

mokume-hada
itame-hada
Itame-hada is where the grain pattern is more oval-shaped.
An island of *mokume-hada*

In this close-up view we can see the ***chôji*** clove blossoms and clear ***mokume-hada*** in the jihada. Captured also is ***yô*** that are 'leaves' of nie in the hardened area of the sword called the ***yakiba***.

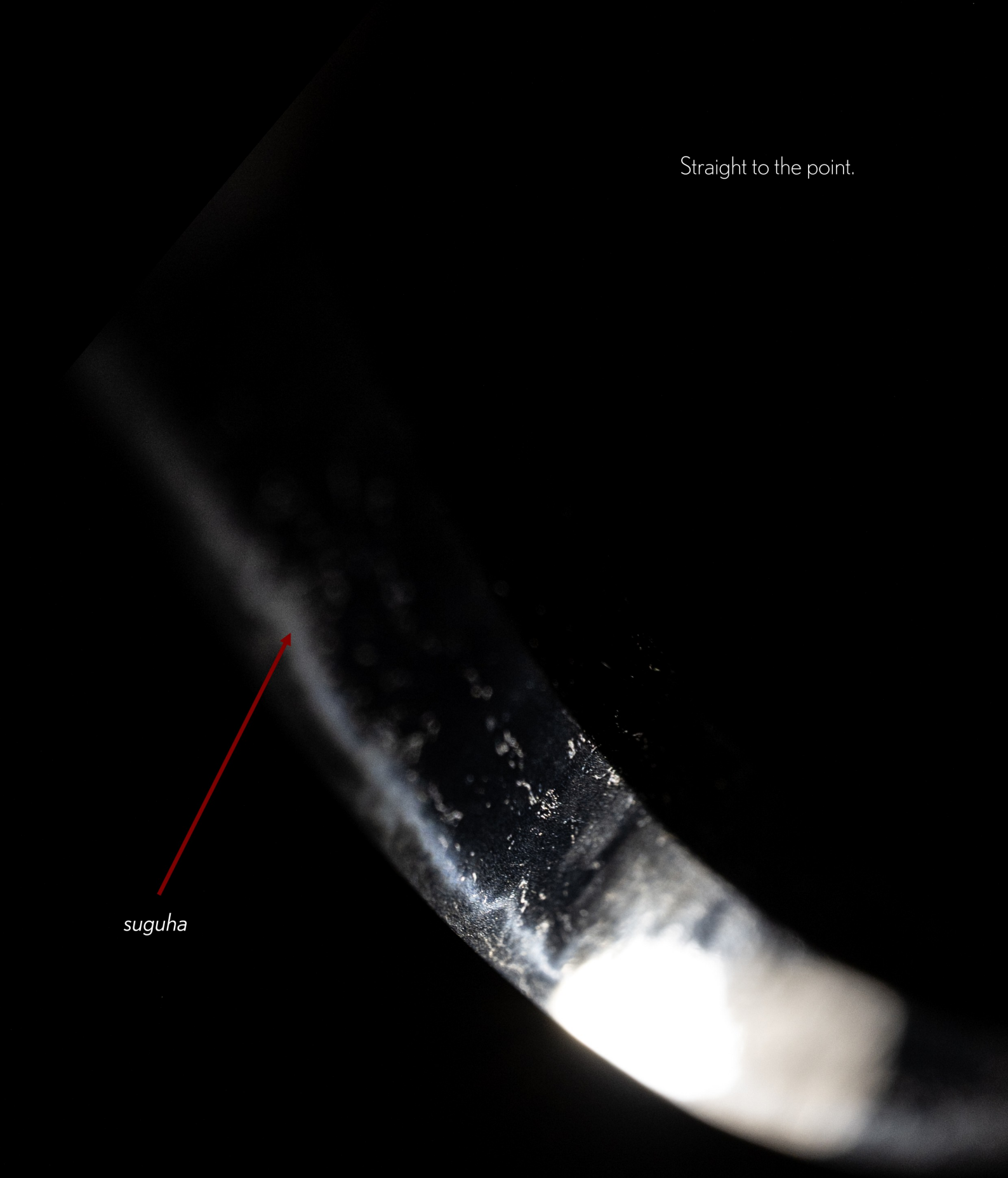
Welcome to the brilliant world to Japanese swords. ;)



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

It is much loved and appreciated feature of swords, particular those made in the Bizen tradition in the Koto period. The type of ***utsuri*** is called ***midare-utsuri*** - a smokey pattern that billows towards the ***shinogi*** (ridge line).

Straight to the point.



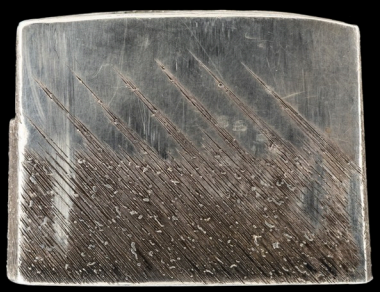
Here the ***hamon*** is more straight, referred to as ***suguha.***

Sunagashi is captured nicely here. The word means '***streams of sand***' or '***flowing sand***', which is an accumulation of ***nie*** crystals that resemble the marks left behind by a broom sweeping over sand.

Here the ***hamon*** demonstrates a more irregular wave pattern that does not include clove blossoms (***chôji***), therefore it is referred to as ***gunome-midare***.

Ground Control to Major Tom...
midare-utsuri

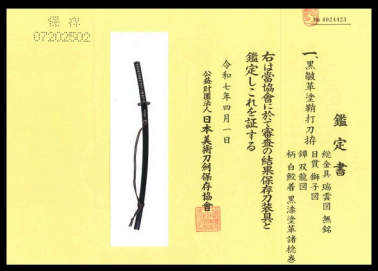
Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



silver ***habaki*** with
diagonal file marks
depicting falling rain

Kuro-shibokawa-nuri saya uchigatana-koshirae
(黒皺革塗鞘打刀拵)

Uchigatana-koshirae lacquered in black with unique texture like wrinkled leather



保存
07202502

4024423

鑑定書

一、黒皺革塗鞘打刀拵
総金具 瑞雲図 無銘
目貫 獅子図
鐔 双龍図
柄 白鮫着 黒漆塗革諸捻巻

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

令和七年四月一日

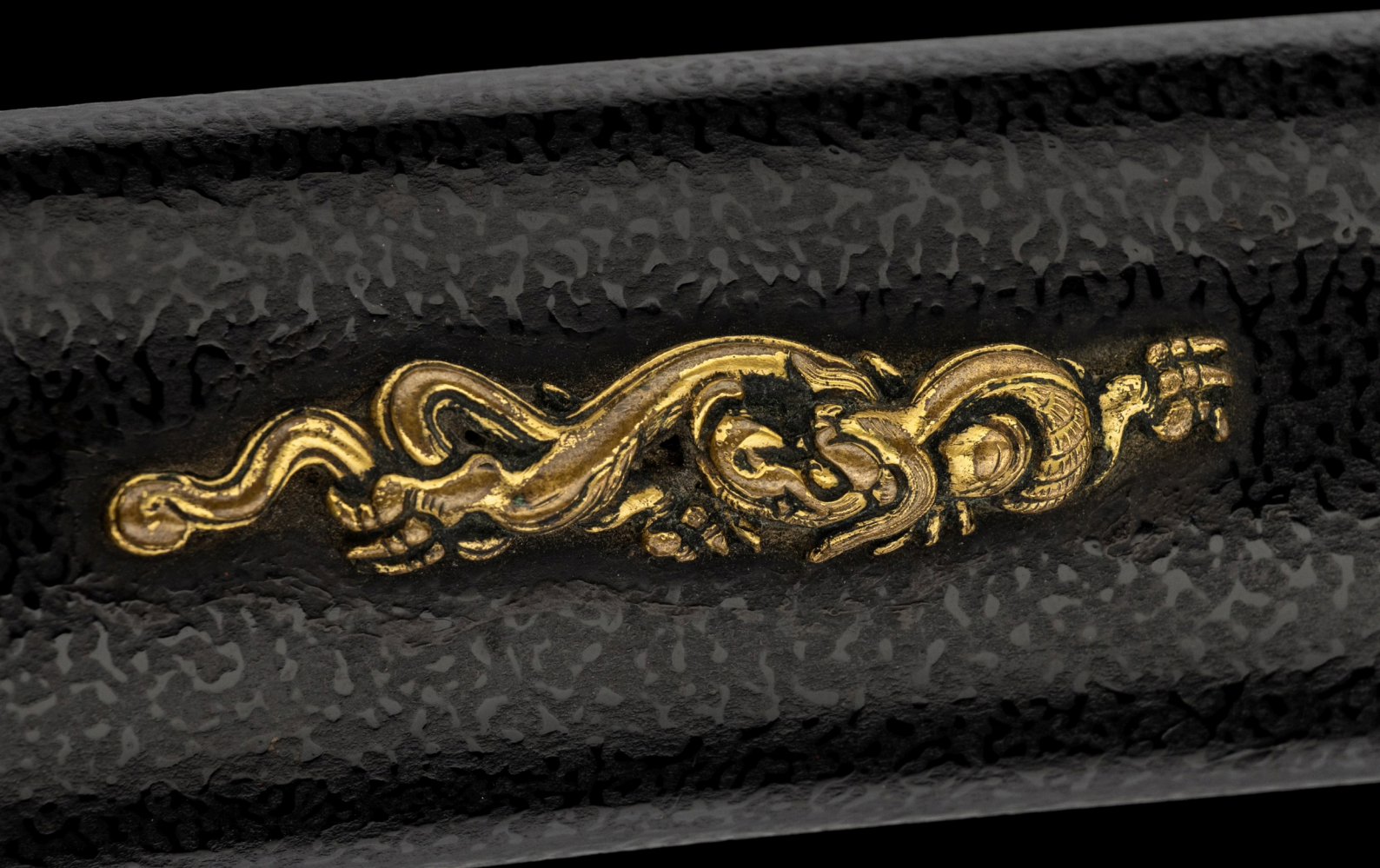
公益財團法人 日本美術刀剣保存協會

NBTHK Hozon Certificate
Certificate of Authenticity

A wonderful matching koshirae set of fittings with a pattern of ***zuiun*** (auspicious clouds).

Zuiun (auspicious clouds) is a traditional motif that abstracts the "lucky clouds" said to appear as an omen of good fortune to come. Long used in ***kimono***, Buddhist art, and other crafts, the motif carries wishes for rising fortune and abundance.

Zuiun is also frequently paired with ***dragons*** in decorative design. On this piece, the dragon adorning the ***saya***, the fittings rendered with ***zuiun***, and the very texture of the ***saya***'s lacquer, likely finished with the ***zuiun*** motif in mind, together read almost like a single unified painting.



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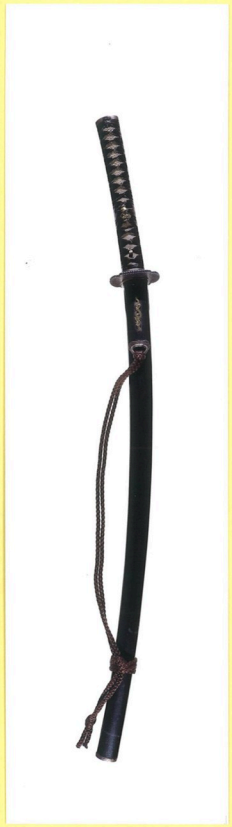
№ 4024423



鑑定書

一、黒皺革塗鞘打刀拵　総金具瑞雲図無銘
　　目貫獅子図
　　鐔双龍図
　　柄白鮫着黒漆塗革諸捻巻

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

令和七年四月一日

公益財團法人日本美術刀劍保存協會

NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 7th year of Reiwa (2025), April 1st

One,

Uchigatana-koshirae laquered in black with unique texture resembling wrinkled leather

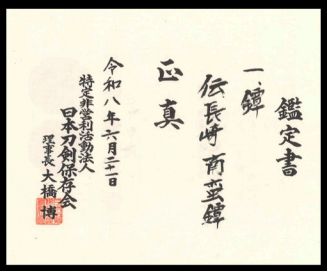
Sô-kanagu: matching set of fittings depicting auspicious clouds, unsigned
Menuki: depicting shishi
Tsuba: depicting paired dragons
Tsuka: white samekawa wrapped with black-lacquered leather in Morohineri-maki style

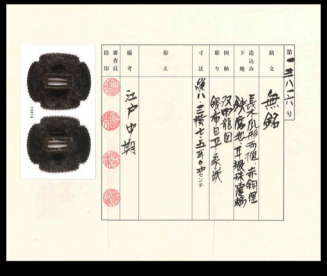
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

This *tsuba* is known as a *Nanban-tsuba*. The type originated as an imitation of foreign tsuba brought to Japan aboard Dutch ships, produced by metalworkers in *Hirado*, *Nagasaki*. *Nanban tsuba* are typically large in size and decorated with silver *nunome zôgan*, a technique used to render motifs and patterns onto the iron surface.

This *tsuba* is no exception, bearing a design of a rain dragon executed in silver *nunome zôgan* on an iron ground. It was likely dazzling in appearance when first made, but with the silver now worn away and the iron showing the corrosion that comes with age, it has taken on a subdued, weathered charm befitting its years. This is *wabi-sabi* in its truest sense, the beauty found in impermanence, in things that are imperfect and worn by time. The area surrounding the *nakago-ana* is known as the *seppa-dai*, and here its distinctly squared shape is a further hallmark by which a *Nanban tsuba* can be identified.

Time has done its work. And the result is magnificent.

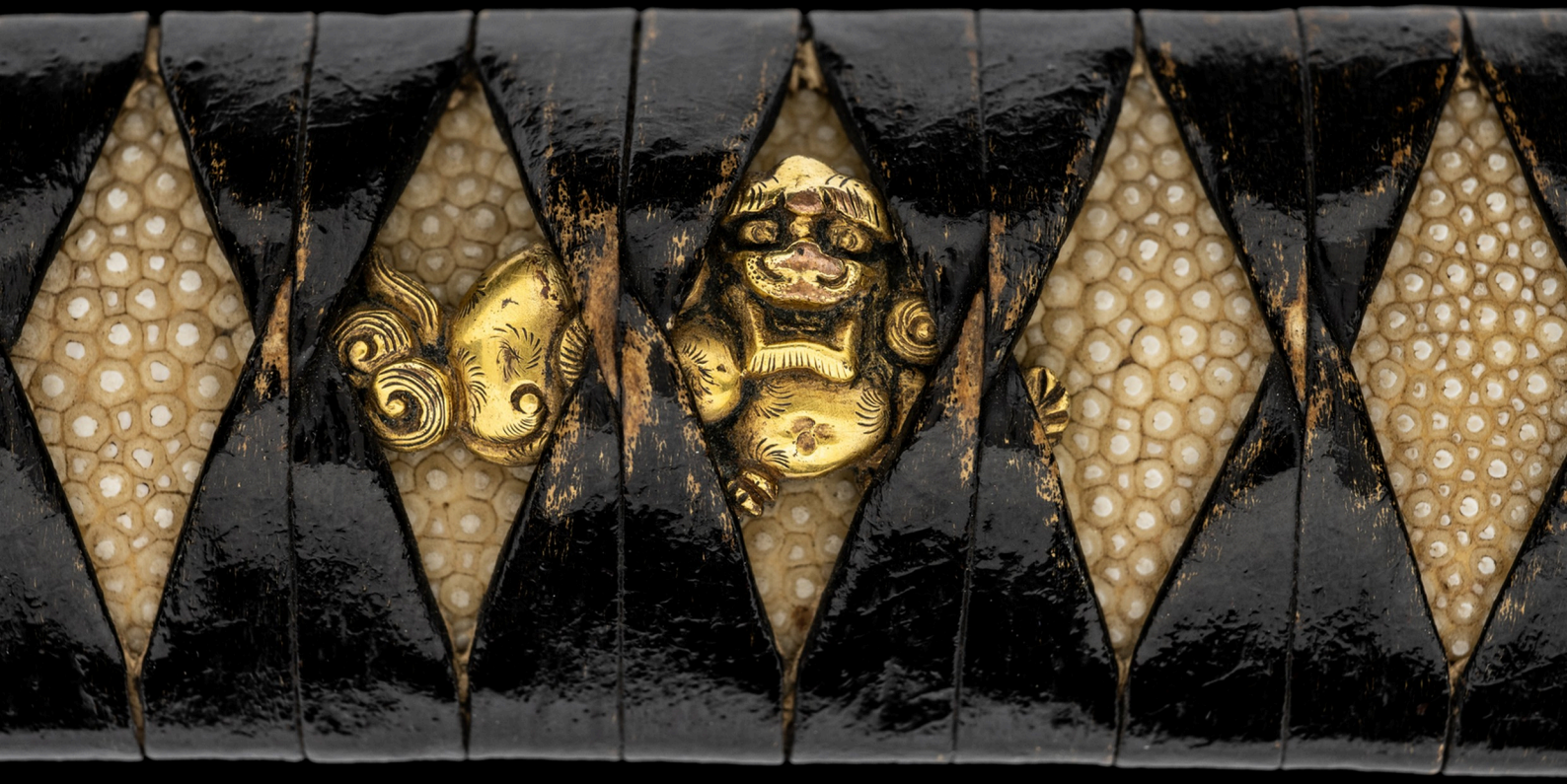




(reverse)

mimi (rim)

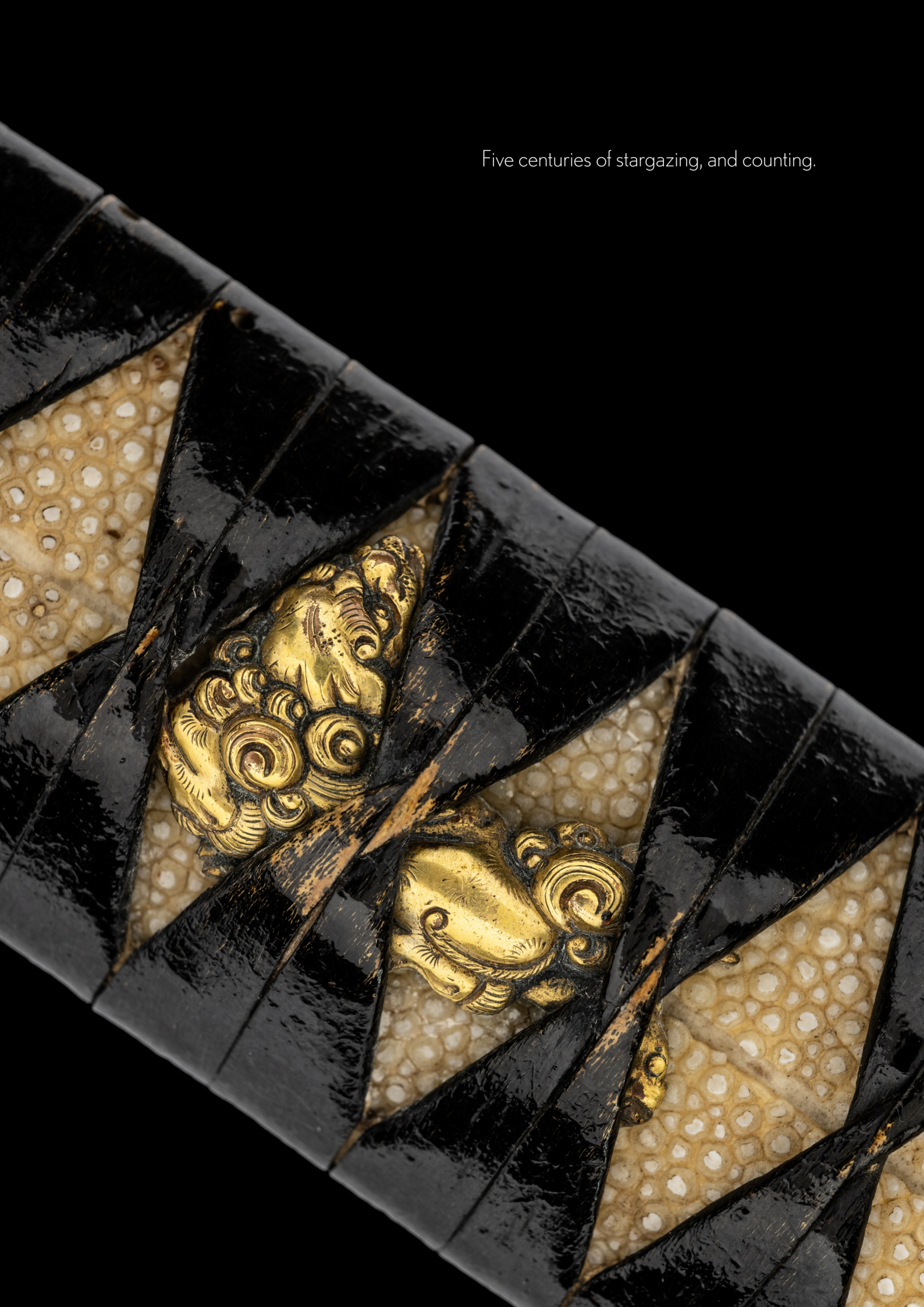
Rather than the silk more commonly seen, the ***tsuka*** (hilt) is wrapped in leather lacquered in black. The fading of this lacquer alone gives it a strong sense of age.

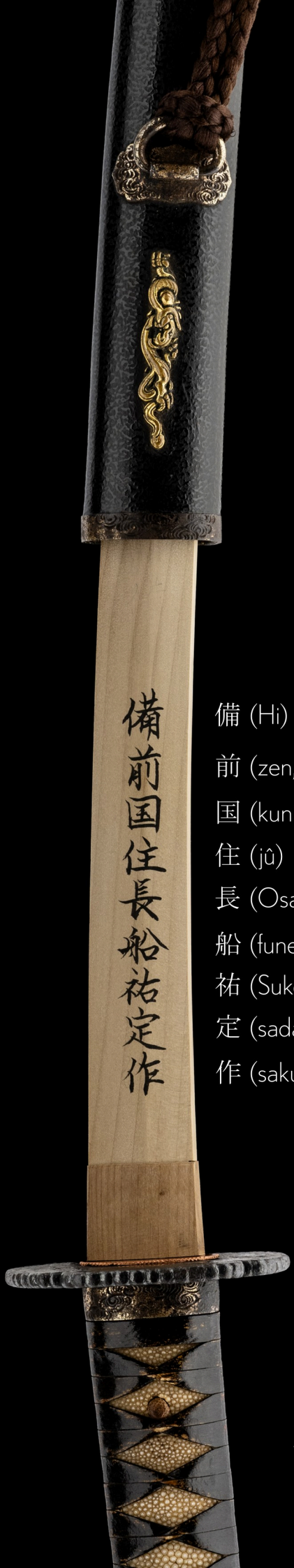


The ***menuki*** depict a ***shisa lion,*** though the front-facing design is unusual and immediately commanding. Even hidden beneath the ***tsuka-ito***, their presence is strongly felt.

The curled mane of the lion is carved in remarkably fine detail, a clear testament to the craft of the Edo period. When you grip this ***tsuka***, you are holding history in your hands.

Five centuries of stargazing, and counting.





備 (Hi)
前 (zen, no)
国 (kuni)
住 (jû)
長 (Osa)
船 (fune)
祐 (Suke)
定 (sada)
作 (saku)

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

Congratulations Matt.

Warm regards,
Pablo

Flying to Japan?

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

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Meetings are held at our studio near **JR Meguro station** - only minutes away from all major hotels in downtown Tokyo.

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

ITEM# UJTA069

SOLD

A KANENORI TANTÔ

SIGNED, KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI (TENBUN~EIROKU ERAS: 1532~1570)

Swordsmith:	***Kanenori*** (兼法, *shodai*, first generation)
Measurements:	**Length:** 27.6cm **Sori:** 0.2cm **Moto-haba:** 2.39cm **Weight:** 150g
Jihada:	*Well-forged mokume-hada with nagare-hada, icy ji-nie, plenty of chikei*
Hamon:	*Spectacular hitatsura hamon in gunome-midare, kinsuji, sunagashi & mega tobiyaki*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira & kozuka certified as Authentic)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)*
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

This special tantô is signed by ***Shodai Kanenori*** – a master *Mino-den* swordsmith active during the *Tenbun* to *Eiroku* eras known for his *tantô* and extended *sunnobi tantô.* Kanenori travelled from Mino to Echizen by way of a special invitation in 1536 from *Asakura Takakage*. Kanenori went on to lead the forming of the *Echizen-Seki* school. The sword's spectacular *Sôshû*-inspired *hitatsura hamon* is composed of a bright *gunome-midare* with impressive islands of *tobiyaki* scattered across the blade. The beautiful accompanying *koshirae* is finished in *aogai-mijin-nuri,* decorated with lovely *kurikata* and *saguri* and features a hilt is carved and lacquered black with golden *shisa* lion *menuki*. The *Gotô* family and *Shoami* school fittings confirm this was a piece intended for private, high-ranking use. All told, this is a wonderful Mino-den tantô that will surely delight its new caretaker.

Moto-kasane: 4.6mm

Nakago: 9.42cm

Omosa: 150g

Nagasa: 27.6cm

Sori: 0.2cm

Moto-haba: 2.39cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

The *Mino*-den tradition traces its roots to *Yamato*, but its character shifted decisively after *Shizu Saburô Kaneuji* (志津三郎兼氏) - a student of *Masamune* (正宗) - relocated to *Mino* in the early *Nanbokuchô* period, grafting *Sôshû-den* influence onto the school.

Several generations of *Kanenori* (兼法 and 兼則) swordsmiths worked in *Mino* province during the *Sengoku-jidai* (warring late Muromachi period), satiating the demand for dependably sharp blades across Japan. This particular blade was crafted by *shodai Kanenori* who, in 1536, travelled from *Mino* to *Echizen* by way of a special invitation from *Asakura Takakage.* Kanenori went on to lead the forming of the *Echizen-Seki* school, and a swordsmith particularly versed for his *tantô* and *sunnobi tantô* (*ko-wakizashi*).

That lineage is evidently visible here. The *jigane* is a tough *mokume-hada* mixed with *nagare-hada* and a spectacular *Sôshû*-inspired *hitatsura hamon* that is composed of a bright *gunome-midare* and numerous islands of *tobiyaki* that harden the full width of the blade. There is also impressive amounts of sparkling *nie* and *sunagashi*. This is a sword that literally comes alive under the light. The blade also displays meaningful *horimono* comprising of carved *goma-hashi* and *koshi-bi* that point back to the ancestral *Yamato*-den tradition and its Buddhist associations.

The *koshirae* is of a quality consistent with *daimyô* ownership. The scabbard is finished in gorgeous *aogai-mijin-nuri* using finely selected green mother-of-pearl and finished with a lovely *kurikata* and *saguri*. The unique hilt is carved and lacquered black rather than wrapped in silk and proudly displays protective golden *shisa* lion *menuki*. The *tsuba* is deliberately understated to keep the overall line clean. The *Gotô* family and *Shoami* school *shakudô* fittings confirm this was a piece intended for private, high-ranking use.

All told, this is a wonderful and historically-rich *Mino-den tantô* with terrific energy and rightfully accompanied with a *Tokubetsu Hozon* certificate from the NBTHK. It will delight its new caretaker each time it is handled with care and respect.

Watch Pablo's YouTube presentation of
UJTA069 - A Kanenori Tantô

uniquejapan.com/ujta069-video

Location: *Mino province*
School name: *Seki school*
Swordsmith: *Kanenori*

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
higaki-yasurime (crisscross file marks)

兼 (Kane)

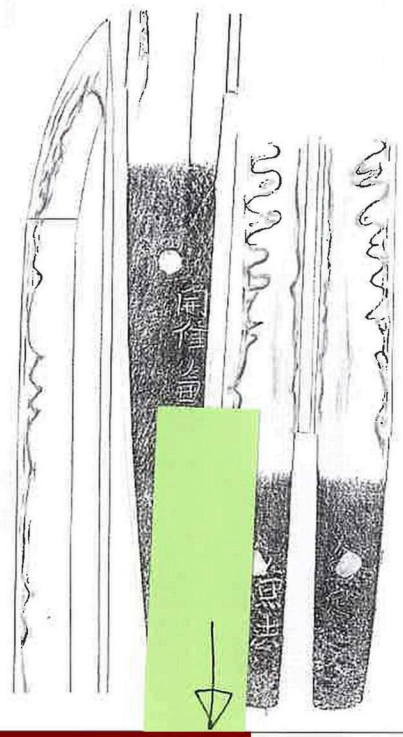
法 (nori)

Big confident signature.
500 years and going strong.

する。掲出の「濃州関住藤原奥州守兼法」（長さ二尺一寸）の銘作は、平成三年に実見したもので、室町前期まで遡る年代作と鑑じられる。直刃に互の目を交じえた作が一般関物の風を脱した古雅な作行きを示す。明応八年紀がある兼法銘は奥州守銘より太めで「濃州関住兼法作」と切る。奥州守銘は細鑿であるが、力感がある。

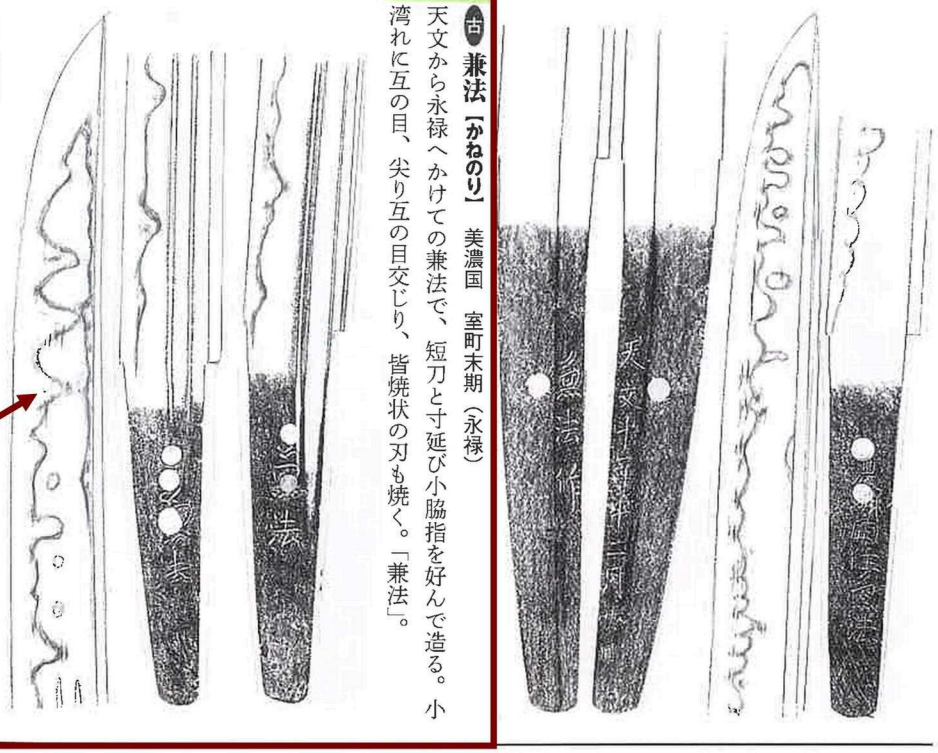
古 **兼法【かねのり】** 美濃国　室町末期（大永）
関住。兼常門。大永ころという。三代兼定との合作がある。「兼法」「関住兼法」。

古 **兼法【かねのり】** 美濃国　室町末期（天文）
天文六年から十二年紀までがある兼法は関からのち越前へ移住する。天文五年に朝倉孝景に招かれて越前松岡に移り、朝倉家滅亡後は柴田勝家に仕えて一乗谷に移ると伝える。天文七年紀に「濃州関住兼法作」銘があり、天文十年紀に「越前一乗住兼法作」がある。「濃州関住兼法」「兼法」「兼法作」。



古 **兼法【かねのり】** 美濃国　室町末期（永禄）
天文から永禄へかけての兼法で、短刀と寸延び小脇指を好んで造る。小湾れに互の目、尖り互の目交じり、皆焼状の刃も焼く。「兼法」。

古 **兼法【かねのり】** 美濃国　室町末期（天正）
美濃関の鍛冶は各地へ分派して、なかでも兼法一門の動きははげしく越



hitatsura hamon

Entry from *Tomei Taikan* (Japanese sword reference book)

古　兼法（かねのり）　美濃国　室町末期（天文）

天文六年から十二年紀でがある兼法は、関から越前松岡に移り、朝倉家滅亡後は柴田勝家に仕え、天文十五年紀に越前一乗谷に移り、銘「越前一乗兼法作」一兼法。

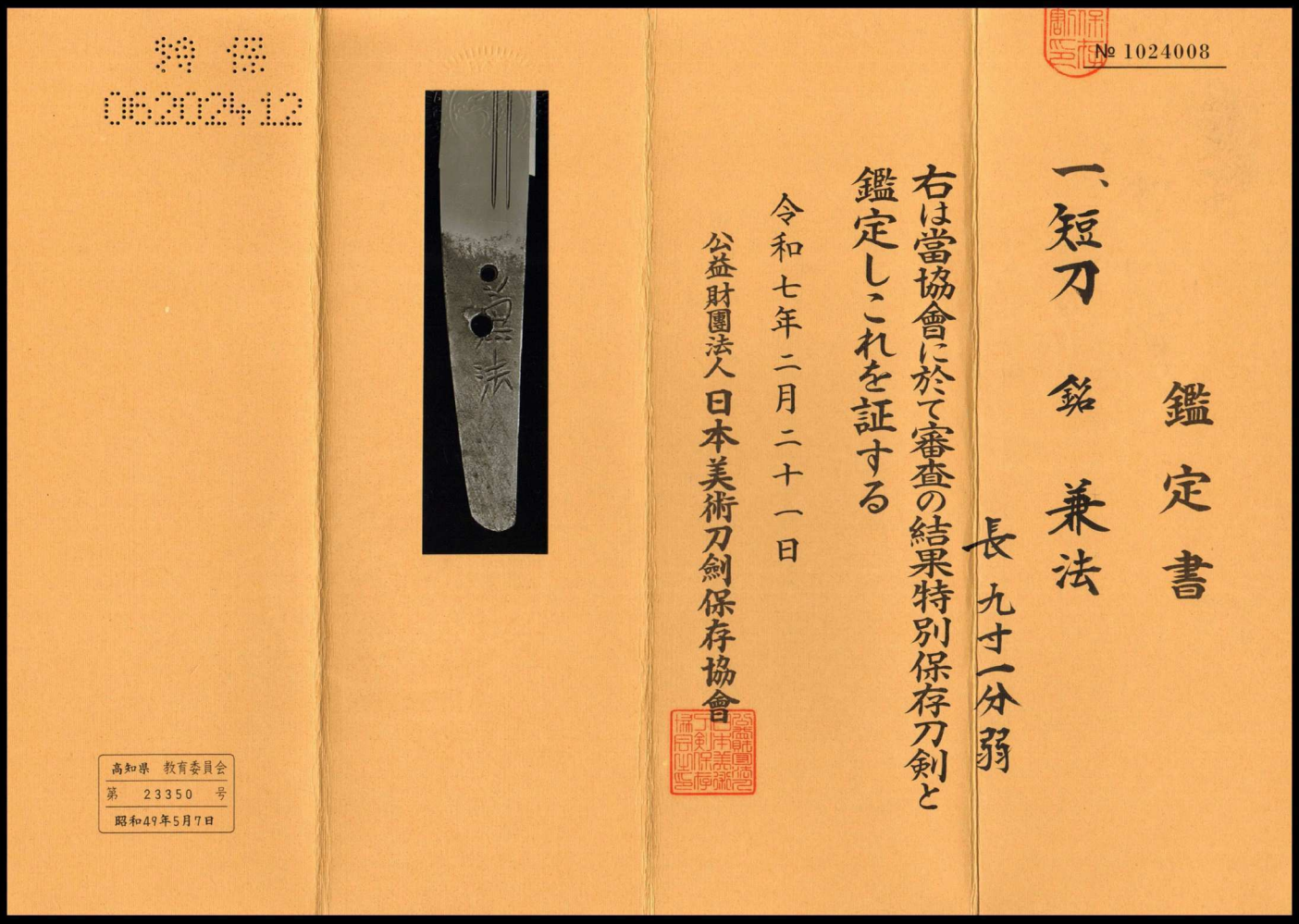
"The *Kanenori* for whom dated signatures exist from the 6th to 12th year of *Tenbun* moved from *Seki* to *Matsuoka* in *Echizen* province. After the fall of the *Asakura* family he entered the service of *Shibata Katsuie*, and in the 15th year of *Tenbun* moved to *Ichijôdani* in *Echizen*. His signature reads: '*Echizen Ichijô-jû Kanenori* saku' – one [example of] *Kanenori*."

higaki
(criss-cross file marks, Mino style)

kurijiri (chestnut shaped) *nakago-jiri* with the cutting edge side slanting more steeply.

(*ura*, reverse)

ha agari kurijiri nakagojiri



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, Tanto

Mei (signature)
Kanenori

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

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

兼法
Kanenori
Kanenori

刃長七寸三分強有之
Hachô 7-sun 3-bu kyô kore ari
Blade length 22.3 cm

時代天文乃至永禄頃
Jidai Tenbun naishi Eiroku goro
Around Tenbun ~ Eiroku periods
(1532~1570)

令和七乙巳年水無月吉日誌之
Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Minazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the sixth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (June 2025)

KANENORI 兼法 – *Tenbun* Era (1532~1555)
Province of Origin: *Mino* (美濃), later relocated to *Echizen*
Personal name: *Kichi'emon* (吉右衛門)

Shodai (first generation) *Kanenori* (兼法) was trained within the local *Kanenori* school in *Seki*, *Mino* province - placing him within the *Sue-Seki* tradition. He was not born into *Echizen*; he was invited there.

That invitation came from tenth generation *Asakura Takakage* (朝倉孝景, 1493~1548). In 1536 (fifth year of *Tenbun* era) the *shugo* military governor of *Echizen* province, who brought him to *Matsuoka* (松岡) – a location roughly eight kilometers northeast of *Fukui*. A dated blade signed "*Echizen Ichijô-jû Kanenori saku*" (越前一乗住兼法作) confirms that by *Tenbun* 10 (1541) at the latest, he had settled in *Ichijôdani*, the Asakura clan's fortified valley capital, one of the great cultural and political centres of *Sengoku* Japan.

When the *Asakura* fell – their defeat at the hands of *Oda Nobunaga* in 1573 effectively ended *Ichijôdani* as a functioning city – *Kanenori* passed into the service of *Shibata Katsuie* (柴田勝家), Nobunaga's powerful general who governed *Echizen* and *Kaga* from *Kitanoshô* Castle in *Fukui*. *Kanenori* effectively established what became the *Echizen-Seki* group, one of two major sword-forging streams in *Echizen* province during the *shintô* era (the other being the *Echizen-Shimosaka* group, associated with *Yasutsugu*). He was the foundational figure from whom a significant lineage descended:

The *Tenbun* era was a turbulent period of the *Sengoku* (warring States) period, and it was common for skilled smiths to relocate to serve powerful *daimyô*. This *Kanenori*'s move to *Kasugayama* placed him squarely in the orbit of one of the era's most powerful warlords. His role as a teacher who sent students across *Hokuriku* reflects both his skill and the demand for swords during this period of constant warfare.

Shodai Kanenori represents an important transitional moment in Japanese sword history: a *Seki*-trained smith carrying the full weight of *Mino*-den technique into a new province at the invitation of a powerful warlord, during the height of the *Sengoku* period. His blades were tools of a war-era court – made for *Asakura* retainers and later *Shibata* Katsuie's men – in one of the most politically charged corners of 16th-century Japan. The *Seki* pedigree underpins the metallurgical quality; the *Echizen* context gives the work its historical depth.

Asakura Toshikage (朝倉敏景, 1428–1481),
7th generation – founded Ichijôdani in 1471

The destructive *Onin* War began in 1467, prompting the *Kai* and *Asakura* Clans to invade *Echizen* Province (present-day Fukui prefecture). In 1471, the *daimyô* (feudal lord) *Asakura Toshikage* defeated the *Kai* Clan and established his castle town in the strategic *Ichijo* valley.

The word *dani* literally means "valley," with both the castle town and the surrounding area referred to as *Ichijodani*. The name "*Ichijo*" is derived from Buddhism, as the "one vehicle" which carries man to enlightenment. In fact, the original *Asakura-do* (hall) at the temple complex of *Kiyomizudera* in *Kyoto* was funded by *daimyô Sadakage Asakura*.

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

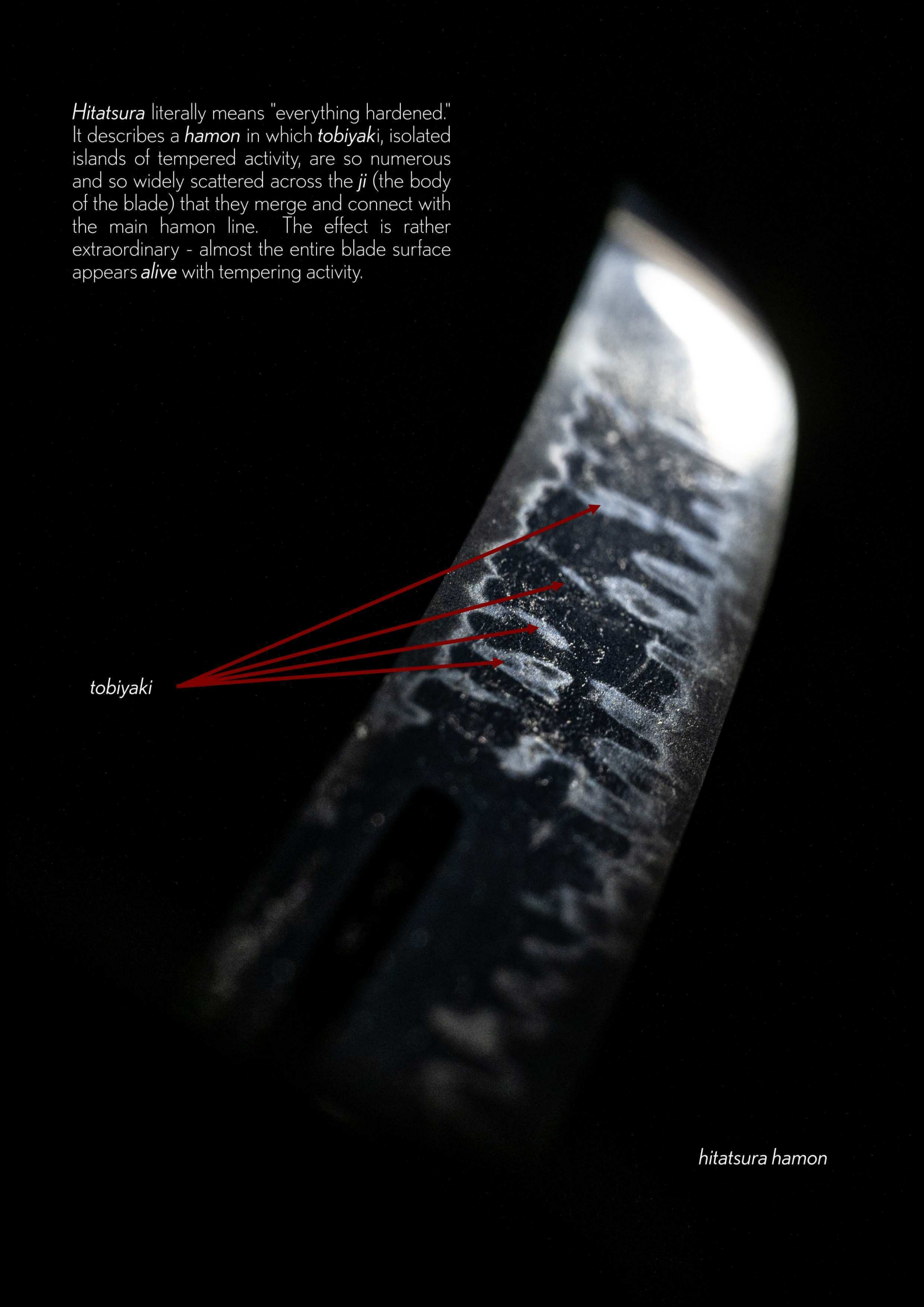
These double narrow short grooves with the same length and rounded top are symbolic of chopsticks used during *Goma* - a deeply spiritual Buddhist ceremony.

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

goma-hashi
(or *gomabashi*)

The late *Muromachi* period saw *Sue-Seki* (末関) - the latter-generation *Seki* smiths - produce swords in great quantities, crafted for war. The best of these, called *chûmon-uchi* (注文打, "made to order"), were elaborately crafted blades for high-ranking warriors and *daimyô*. These specially commissioned *Seki* swords sometimes carried the full drama of a *hitatsura hamon*.

Hitatsura literally means "everything hardened." It describes a ***hamon*** in which ***tobiyaki***, isolated islands of tempered activity, are so numerous and so widely scattered across the ***ji*** (the body of the blade) that they merge and connect with the main hamon line. The effect is rather extraordinary - almost the entire blade surface appears ***alive*** with tempering activity.



hitatsura hamon

Where Did Hitatsura Come From?

Hitatsura origins lie in the *Sôshû* tradition (*Sagami* province) of the *Nanbokuchô* period (1336~1392) – the great warring age, massive swords, and explosive metallurgical ambition.

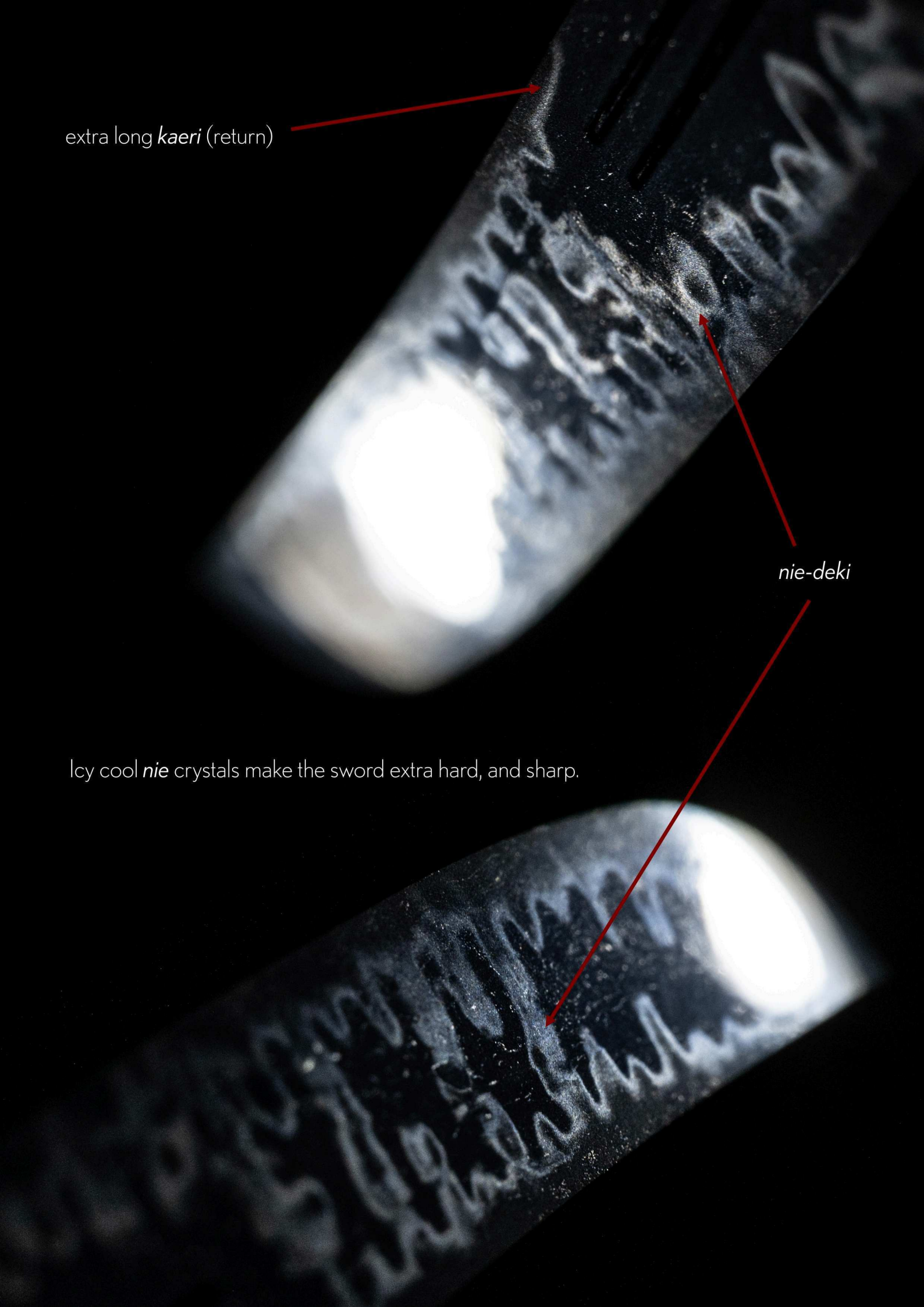
After grandmaster *Masamune* established *Sôshû*-den and his successor *Sadamune* refined it into calmer irregular patterns, the next generation pushed further. Specifically, *shodai Hiromitsu* (広光), considered the most skilled of Sadamune's followers, and *Akihiro* (秋広), also a Sadamune student, are the smiths credited with developing true *hitatsura*. Hiromitsu's production dates run from the *Kan'ô* (1350~1352) to the *Jôji* era (1362~1368); Akihiro's from *Jôji* to the *Eiwa* era (1375~1379).

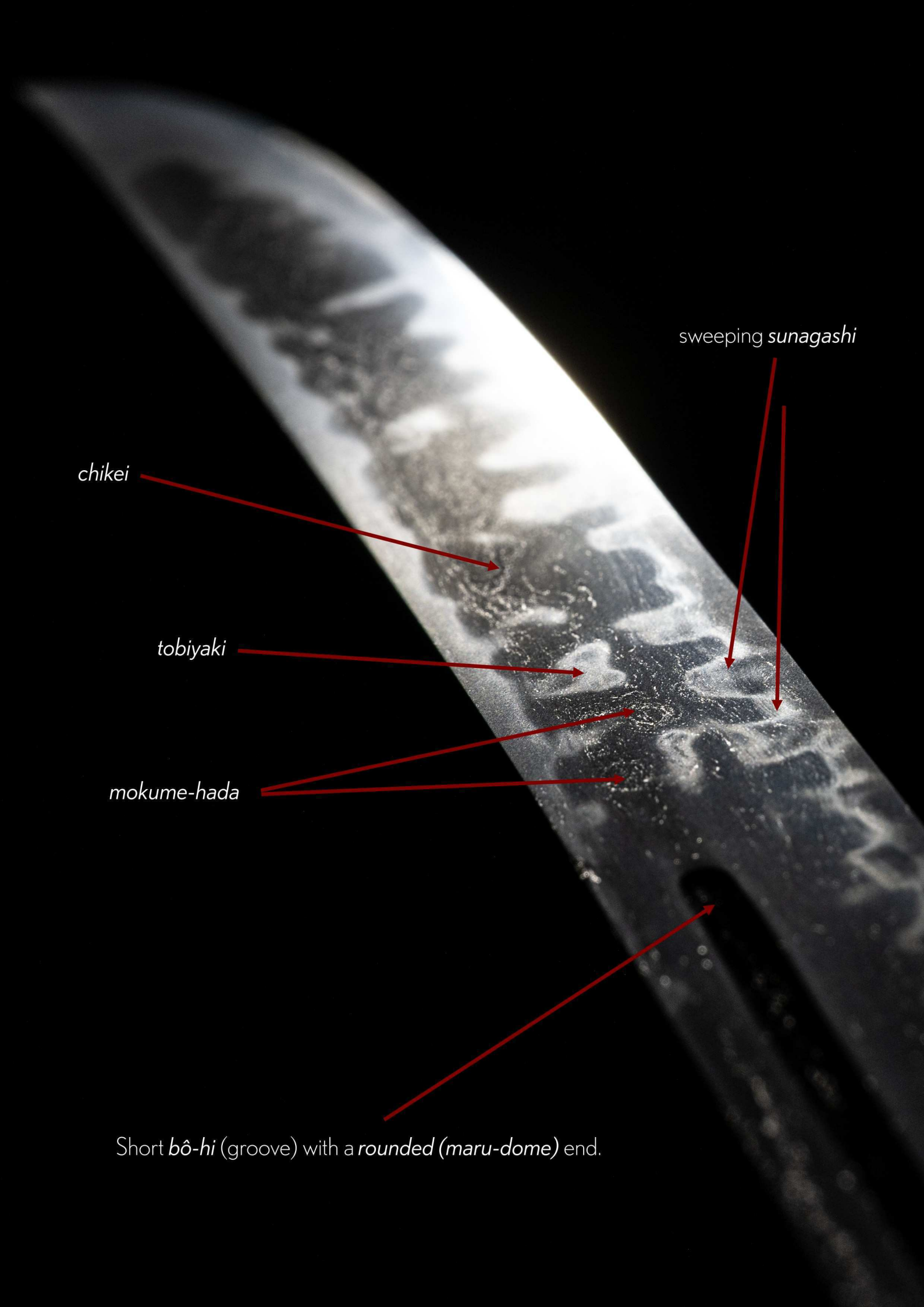
From *Sôshû*, the hitatsura pattern spread outward as smiths migrated across Japan during the political chaos of the era. Eventually it reached and was eagerly adopted in *Mino* province.

Technically, the ***hitatsura hamon*** is comprised of ***gunome-midare***, ***notare-midare***, and other undulating irregular ***hamon*** forms.

The hamon uniquely mirrors itself in much of the blade.

gunome-midare


extra long *kaeri* (return)
nie-deki
Icy cool ***nie*** crystals make the sword extra hard, and sharp.


sweeping *sunagashi*
chikei
tobiyaki
mokume-hada
Short ***bô-hi*** (groove) with a ***rounded (maru-dome)*** end.

Quite literally a masked ***bôshi*** (hat) in the ***kissaki*** (tip).

It's alive...it's ALIVE!!!

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

silver ***habaki*** with
copper ground

Aogai-mijin-nuri
chiisagatana-koshirae
(青貝微塵塗小さ刀拵)

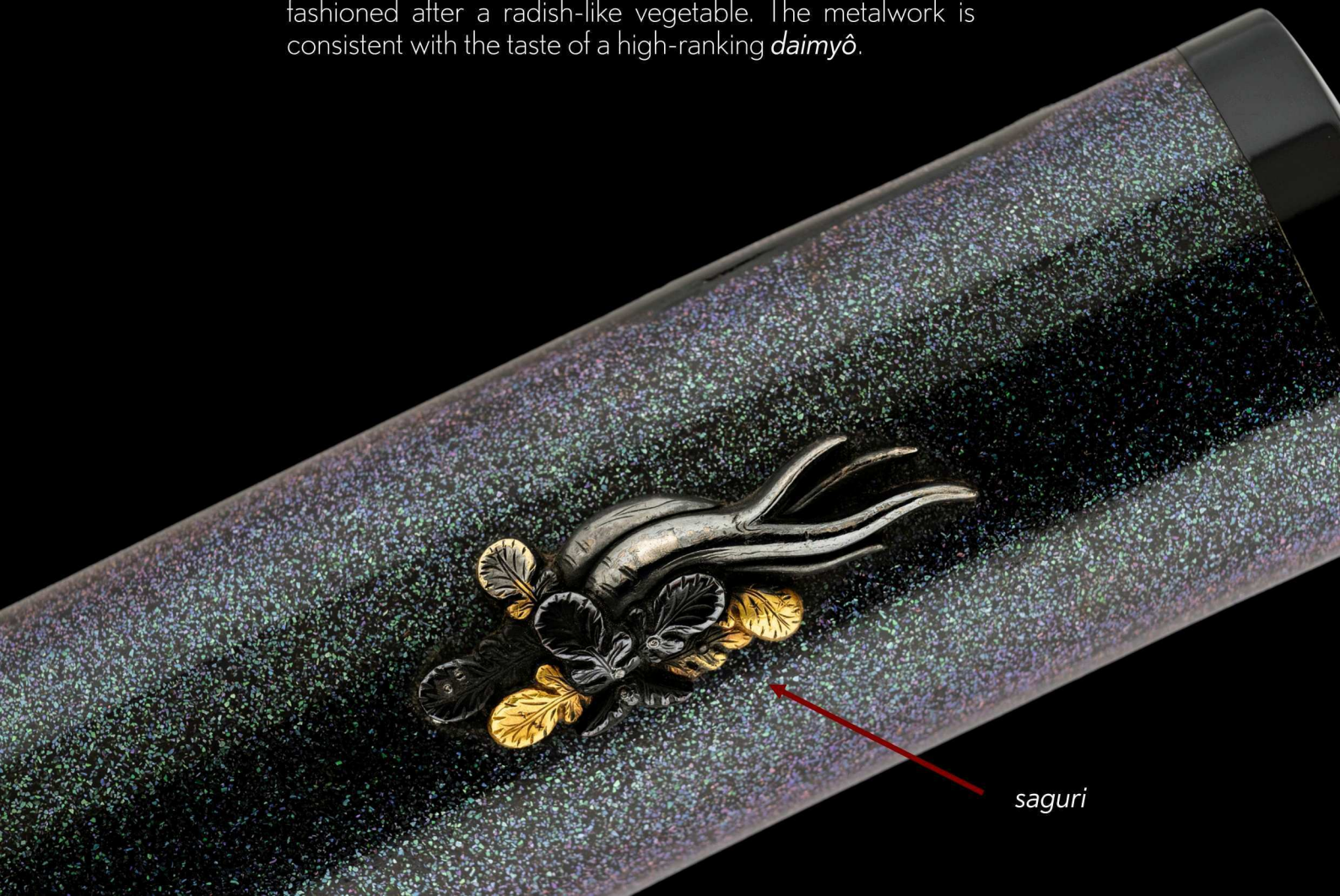
Chiisagatana-koshirae
decorated with mother-of-pearl

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

While ***kurikata*** and ***saguri*** are typically made from black horn, these components are also the work of a metalsmith.

The ***kurikata*** features a seashell motif, while the ***saguri*** is fashioned after a radish-like vegetable. The metalwork is consistent with the taste of a high-ranking ***daimyô***.



Kozuka (utility knife)

Fastened into a special notch built inside the *saya* (scabbard).

This *kozuka* is a work by the *Gotô* (後藤) school. The *Gotô* family was a lineage of master metalsmiths that served the era's most powerful figures – beginning with the *Ashikaga* in the *Muromachi* period, followed by *Oda Nobunaga*, *Toyotomi Hideyoshi*, and *Tokugawa Ieyasu* – continuing for seventeen generations into the *Meiji* era.

They primarily produced *mitokoromono* for the shogunate, and their style became known as *Oie-bori*, the "official family style." During the *Edo* period, strict protocols governed the formal attire of the *Shogun* and *daimyô*; it was the established protocol to use sword fittings crafted by the *Gotô* school for such special and important occasions.

Shisa (or shishi) lion, resembling a cross between a lion and a dog, shisa serve as protectors from certain kinds of evil. *Shishi* traditionally stand guard outside the gates of Japanese shinto shrines and buddhist temples. Shishi are depicted in pairs, one with mouth open and one with mouth shut. The shisa with the open mouth is said to scare off demons, and the closed mouth to shelter and keep in the good spirits.

While ***mekugi*** are typically crafted from bamboo or buffalo horn, this ***koshirae*** features a ***mekugi*** created by a metalsmith.

Such an inclusion is remarkably rare and resembles a pair of cufflinks.

mekugi

Fuchi-kashira
depicting seashells

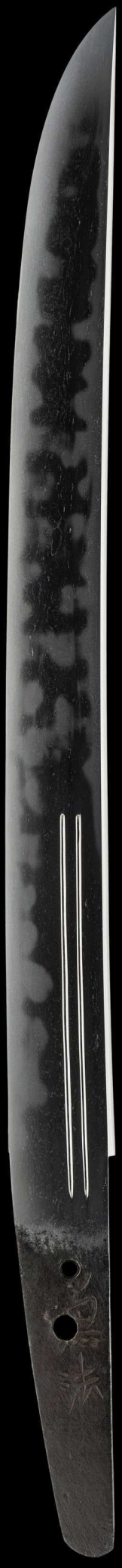
Shôami (正阿弥) school of *Kyoto*.

The base is crafted from ***shakudô*** with a fine ***nanako*** ground, featuring a motif of seashells. For centuries, shells have been treated as a form of treasure; consequently, they are cherished in Japanese culture as an auspicious pattern symbolizing abundance and fertility.

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho Certificate

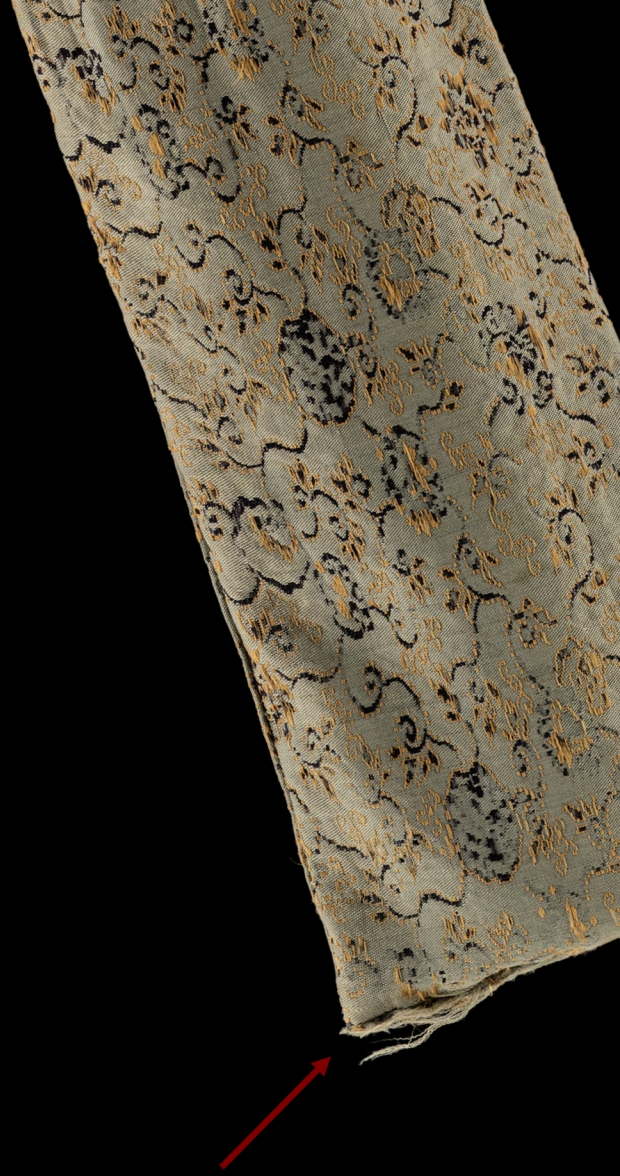
兼 (Kane)

法 (nori)



Tsunagi

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



Koshirae bag

This aged koshirae bag is normally an indication it was kept within a family for quite some time.

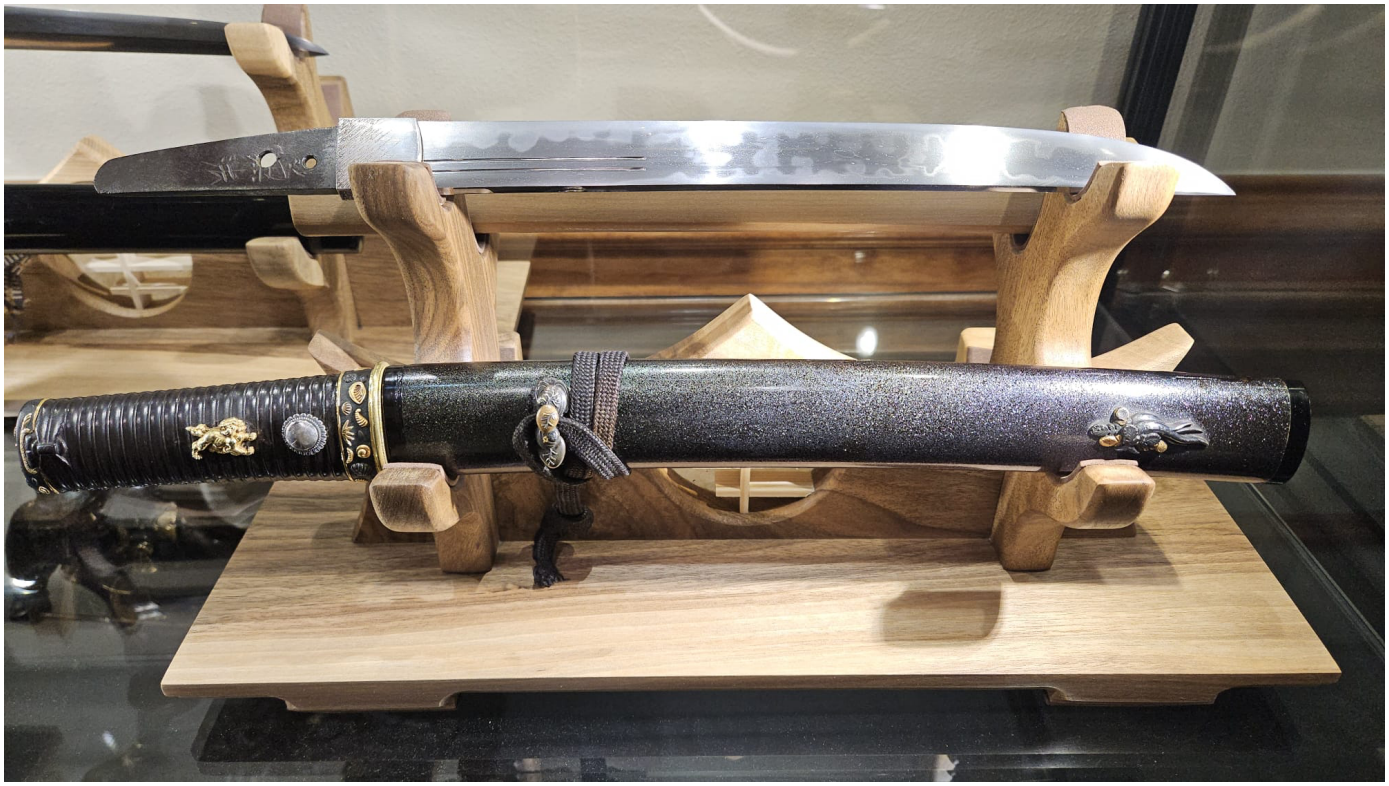
Congratulations David.

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

Arigato!

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



This catalogue is dedicated to my friend and close client, David.
Pictured here is ujta069 – A Kanenori Tantô proudly being displayed in his home.
Our long conversations on life and Japanese swords will stay with me always.
You are deeply missed, David.

Please join our VIP mailing list to be
informed of recently acquired swords.

Email us at service@uniquejapan.com

feel the history.™
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