



ITEM# UJDI012

A KANESHIGE 'TAMESHIGIRI' DAISHÔ

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

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

SOLD (*daishô koshirae in production*)

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



Saki-kasane: 4.6mm

Moto-kasane: 7.2mm

Omosa: 760g

Kissaki: 3.52cm

Saki-haba: 2.04cm

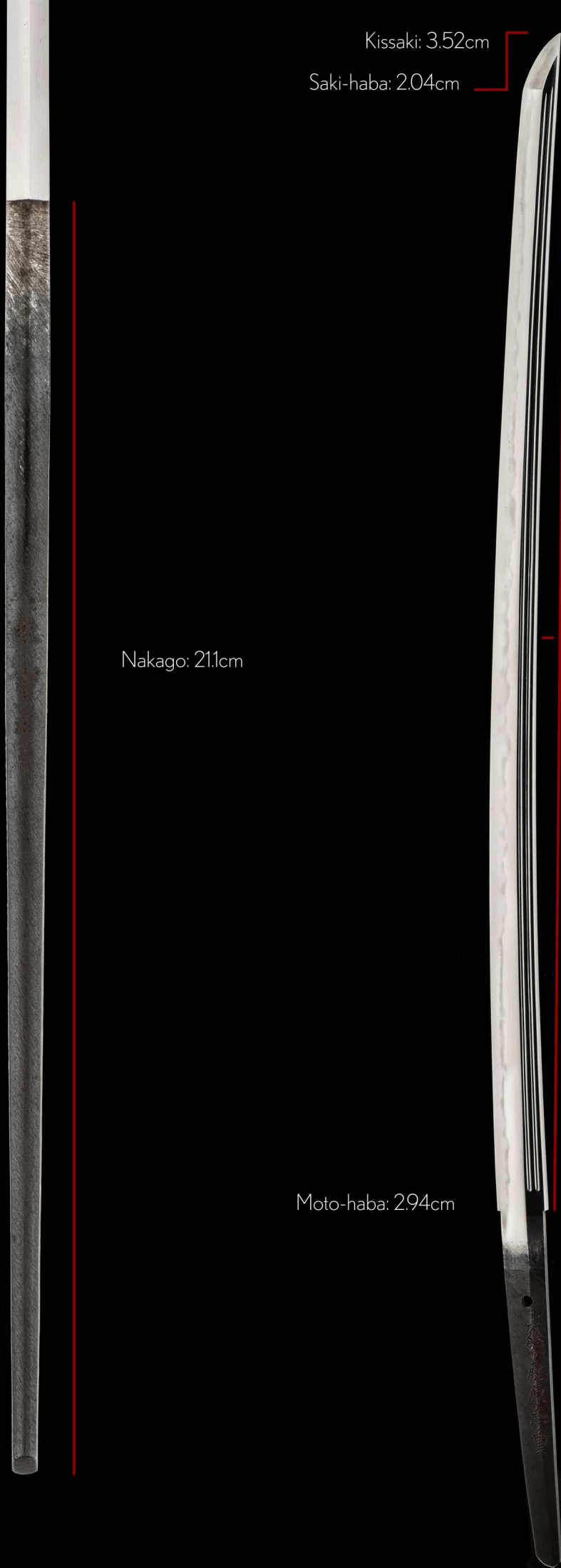
Nakago: 21.1cm

Moto-haba: 2.94cm

Nagasa: 71.0cm

Sori: 1.0cm

Mekugi-ana: 1





Saki-kasane: 4.7mm

Moto-kasane: 6.4mm

Omosa: 530g

Kissaki: 2.94cm

Saki-haba: 2.01cm

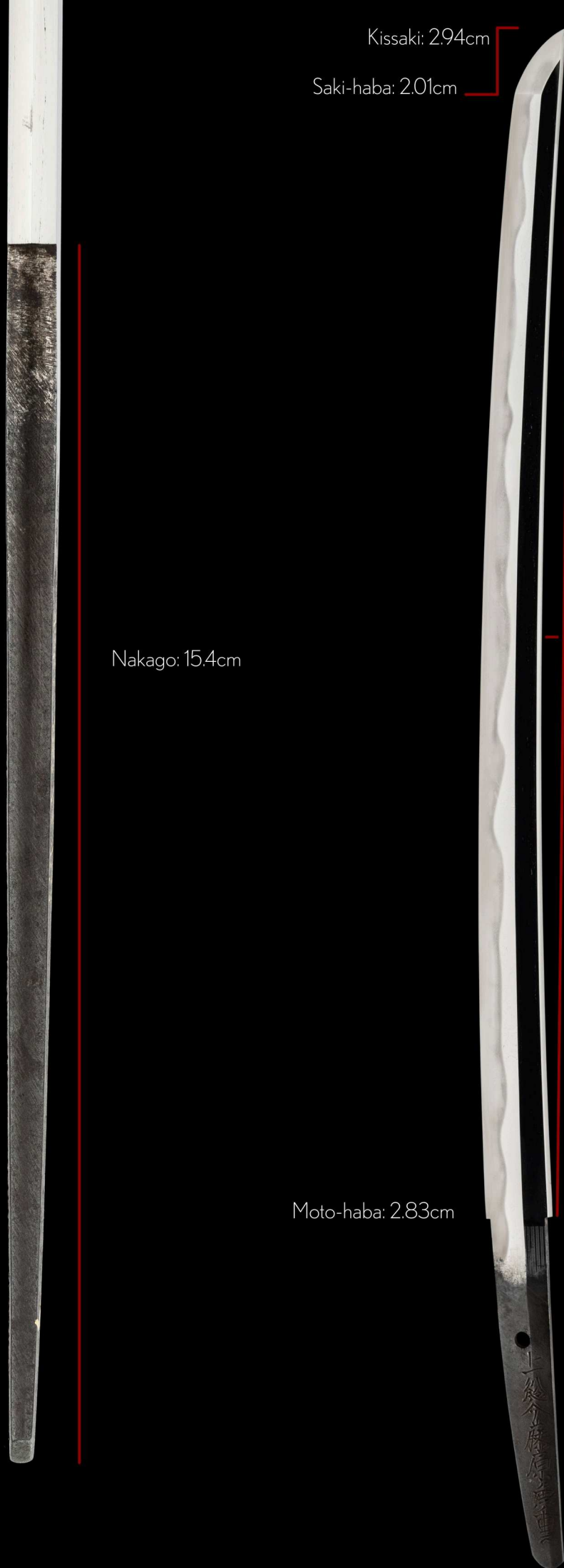
Nakago: 15.4cm

Moto-haba: 2.83cm

Nagasa: 52.8cm

Sori: 0.7cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



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

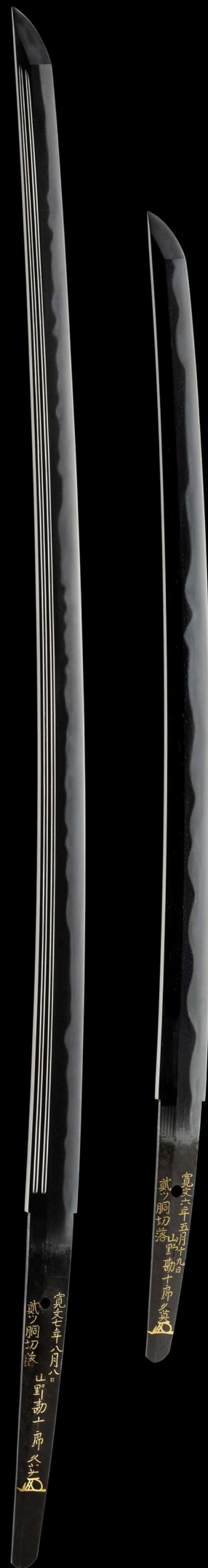
Born *Tsuji Suke'emon* (辻助右衛門), *Kaneshige* was active during the *Kanbun* era (1661-1673) and is believed to be the son of the first-generation *Izumi no Kami Kaneshige* (和泉守兼重). Both served the *Tôdô* (藤堂) family before moving to *Edo*, where *Kaneshige* forged swords for samurai clientele. *Kaneshige*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

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

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

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

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



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

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

keshô
Decorative file marks enhance its visual appeal.

上 (Kazu)

総 (sa, no)

介 (Suke)

藤 (Fuji)

原 (wara)

兼 (Kane)

重 (shige)

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

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

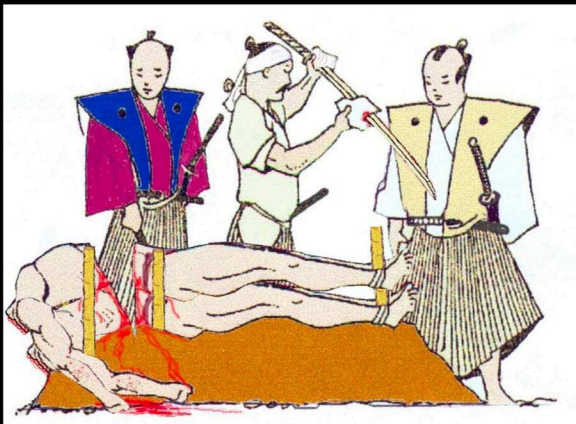
On the nineteenth day in the fifth month in the sixth
year of *Kanbun* era (May 19th, 1666), *Yamano
Kanjûrô Hisahide* severed through two human
bodies [with a single stroke using this sword].

+ signed with his personal monogram

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

寛文六年五月十九日
山野勘十郎
久英

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



A successful two-body cutting test

特 保
01201903



公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協会



令和元年五月二十三日

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

一脇指 銘

上総介藤原兼重
(金象嵌) 山野勘十郎久英 (花押)
寛文六年五月十九日
貳寸胴切落
長一尺七寸二分

鑑定書

静岡県 教育委員会
第 16350 号
昭和32年6月17日

NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

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

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)

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

Nagasa (length)

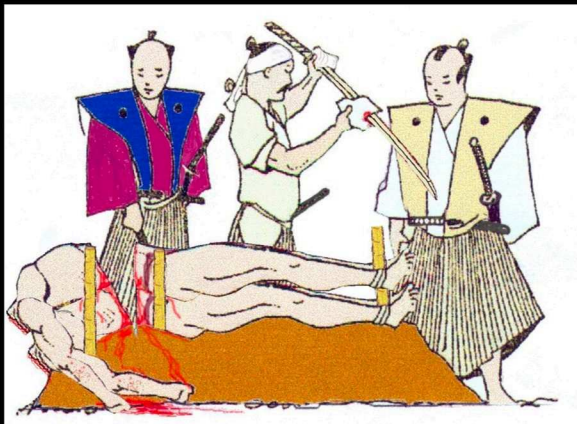
1-shaku 7-sun 2-bu (52.1cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

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

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

+ signed with his personal monogram



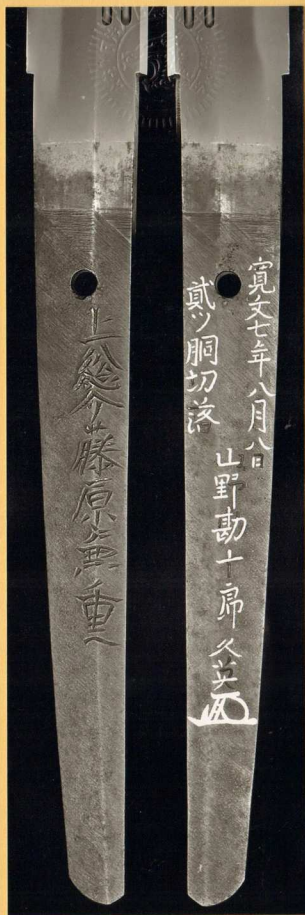
A successful two-body cutting test

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

寛文七年八月八日
貳ツ胴切落
山野勘十郎久英
五

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

特選
03202103



No 1015448

鑑定書

一 刀 銘 上総介藤原兼重

(金象嵌)

寛文七年八月八日
山野勘十郎久英(花押)
貳ツ胴切落

長 二尺三寸四分半

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

令和三年五月二十四日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



群馬県 教育委員会
第 248 号
昭和26年3月31日

NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 3rd year of Reiwa (2022), May 24th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

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

Nagasa (length)

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

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

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

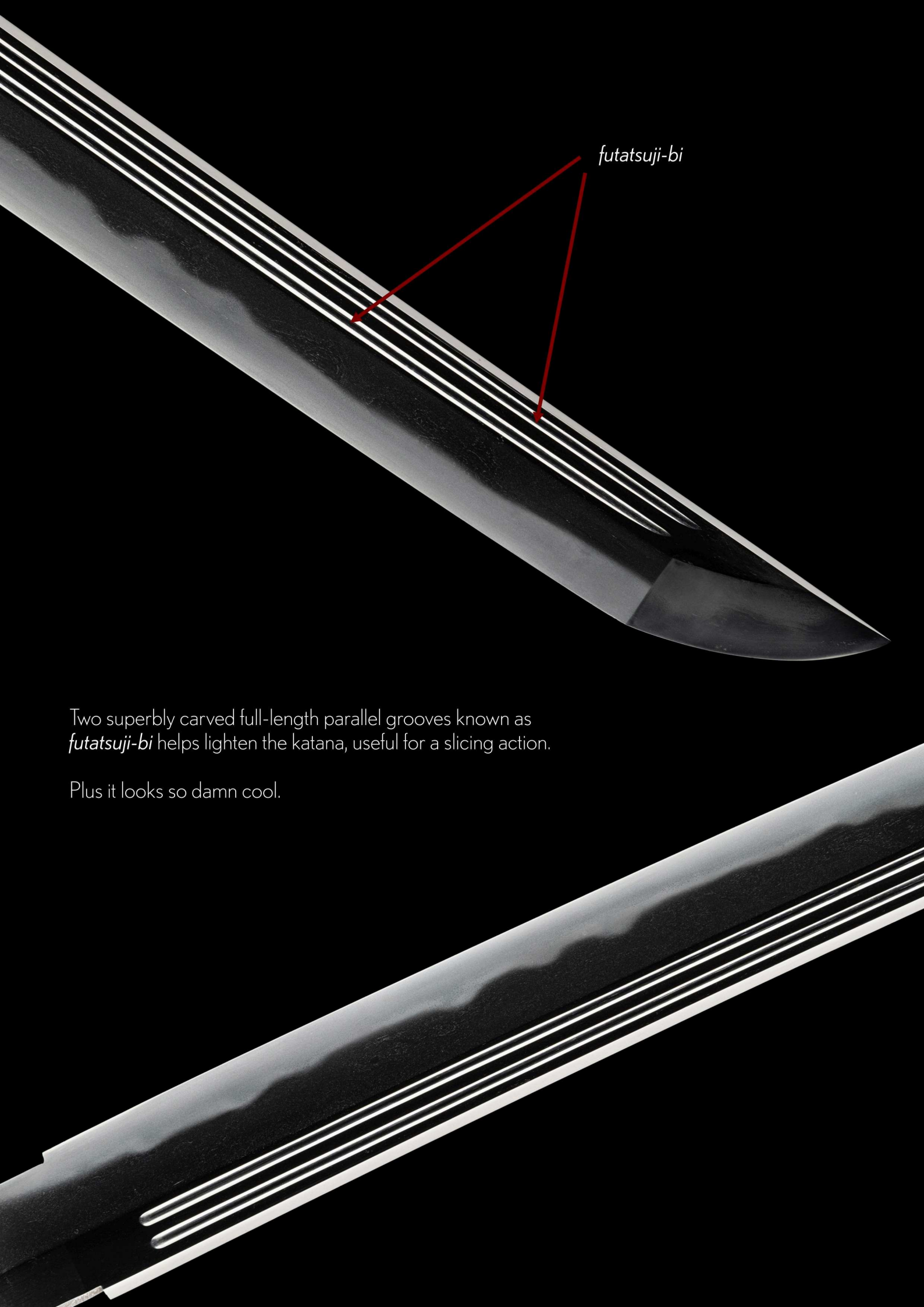
Yamano Kanjurô Hisahide (山野勘十郎久英) was the son of *Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa* (山野加右衛門永久), the first in the *Edo* period to hold *tameshigiri* (test-cutting) as a formal profession. Both father and son were renowned masters of *tameshigiri*, with *Hisahide* also serving as an executioner, carrying out official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

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









futatsuji-bi

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

Plus it looks so damn cool.



deep *nioguchi* resembles freshly fallen snow

long *ashi*

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



visible *nie* crystals

(katana)

togari (pointed)

keen edge

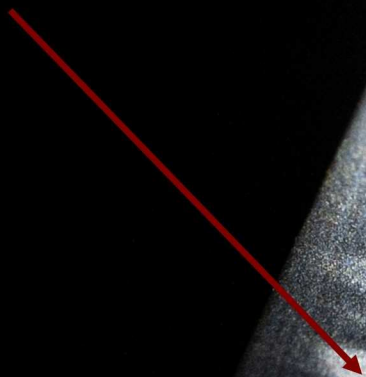
This blade just looks sharp. Kaneshige is ranked *ryô-wazamono* for the famed cutting ability of his swords.

(katana)

Consistency matters.

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

quality shines



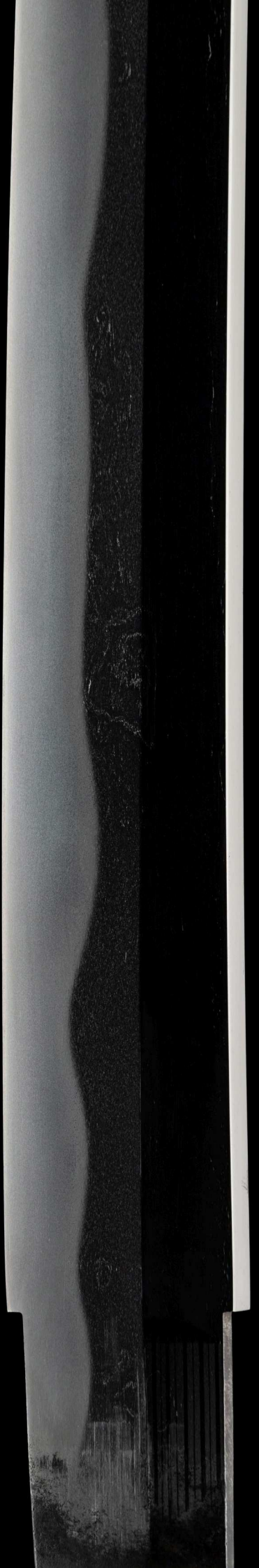
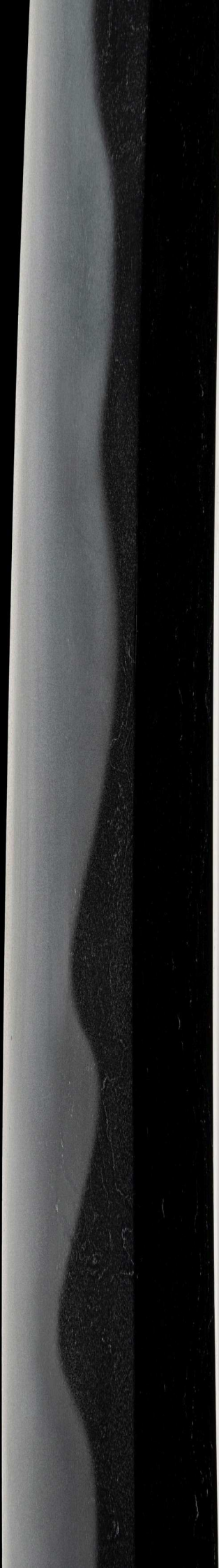
By 1666, Japan had settled into a new rhythm. The 25-year-old shogun *Tokugawa Ietsuna* ruled from Edo Castle, but power resided with his senior advisors, particularly the shrewd *Sakai Tadakiyo*. The violent convulsions of civil war had ended decades earlier when *Tokugawa Ieyasu* crushed his rivals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

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




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

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





The image shows two close-up views of a wakizashi blade. The top view shows the tip and the beginning of the hamon pattern. The bottom view shows a longer section of the blade with a prominent hamon pattern. A red arrow points to a specific feature on the blade labeled 'ashi'.

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

ashi

(wakizashi)



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

inazuma

(wakizashi)



mokume-hada

nagare-hada

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

(wakizashi)

Shirasaya
(protective scabbards)

Tanobe-sensei sayagaki opportunity



wakizashi



katana

Nijû-habaki x 2

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

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

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

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



dragonfly-themed *daishô*

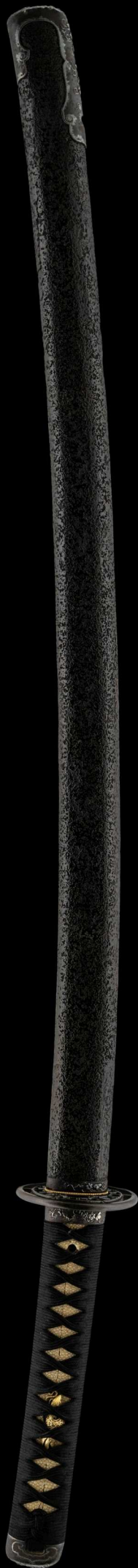
Examples of a past *daishô koshirae* projects produced by Unique Japan (we've built many over the years).



formal black-lacquered *daishô*

Katana koshirae

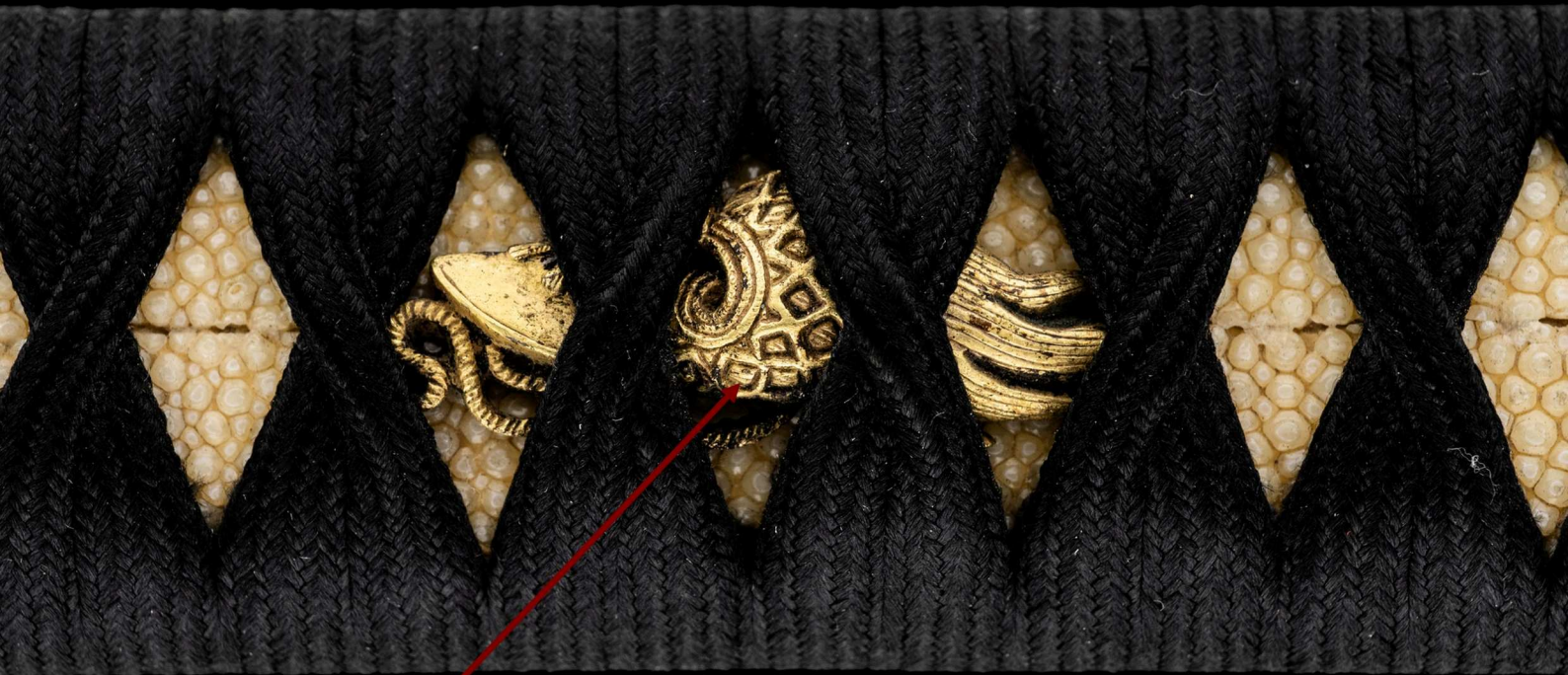
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
certification can be acquired
if requested by new owner





katana tsuba with a chrysanthemum-inspired design





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

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





silver vines set upon iron, fine juxtaposition.



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

Clematis symbolizes graceful strength and refined resilience.

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



Wakizashi koshirae

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





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





mekugi-ana

mei (signature)

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





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

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

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



Kozuka (utility knife)

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



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

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



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



Chrysanthemum crest

大 (Ya)
和 (mato)
力 (Riki)
王 (ô)



Two blades, one legacy.





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

Gorgeous theme of ocean, seashells, lobsters and crabs.