



ITEM# UJKA136

## A NAOE SHIZU SCHOOL KATANA

UNSIGNED, MID-NAMBOKUCHO PERIOD (1338-1367)

**Swordsmith:** The Naoe Shizu School (attribution)

**Location:** Naoe district in Mino province (modern-day Gifu prefecture)

**Certificate:** **12th NBTHK Juyo Token** (a sword designated as a *Profound Sword* by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword. Certificate issued in 1964, serial no. 1210.)

### Measurements and information from Juyo certificate:

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

**Sori (curvature):** 5-bu (1.4cm)

**Moto-haba:** 1-sun, 2-bu (~3.6cm)

**Saki-haba:** 8-bu, 5-rin (2.5cm)

**Kissaki:** 3-sun, 5-bu (10.6 cm)

**Kuki-naga (nakago):** 6-sun, 4-bu (19.3cm)

**Jihada:** Clear & shiny itame hada **Boshi:** Jizo-like, midare komi

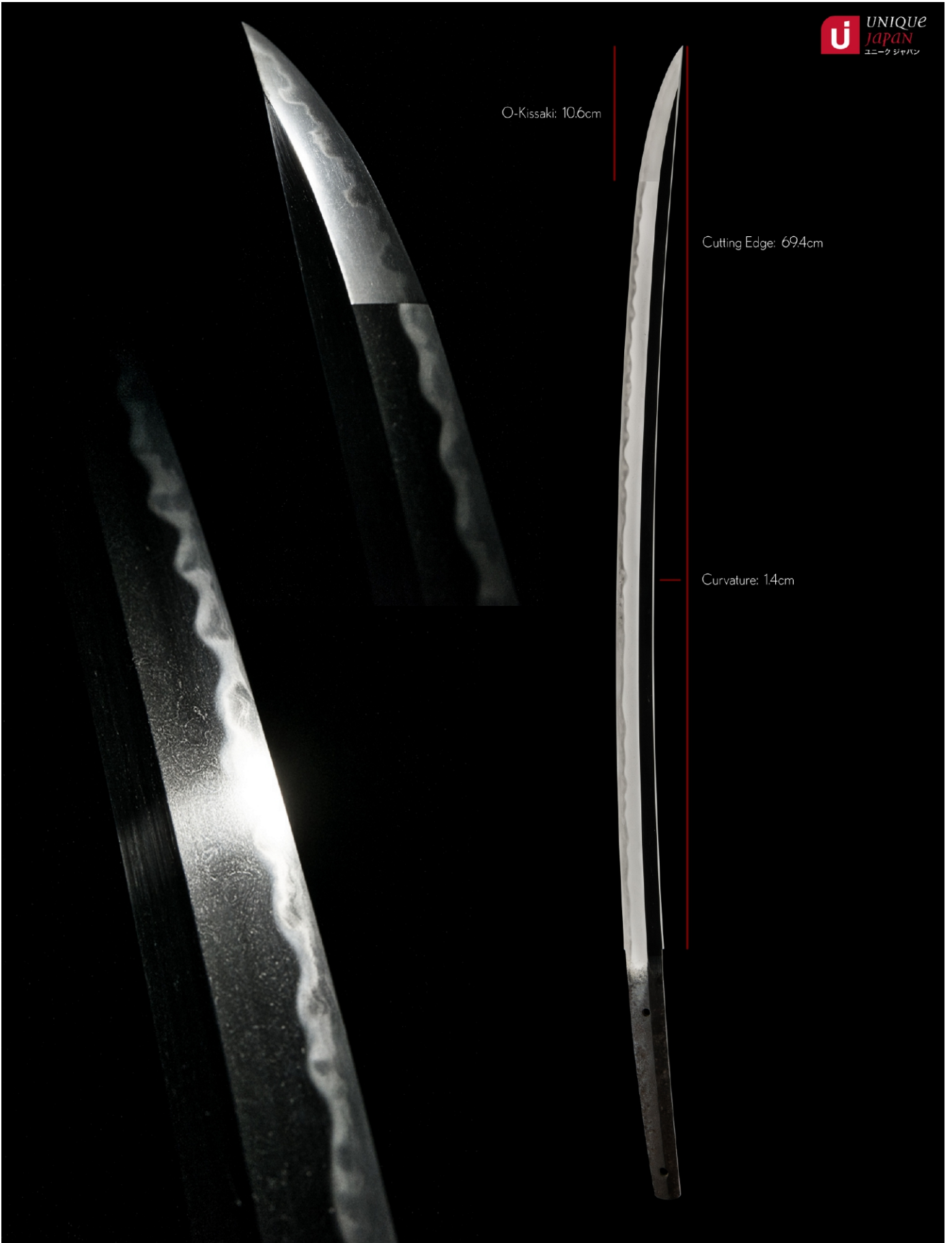
**Hamon:** Gunome, togariba (pointed), sweeping sunagashi, kinsuji, very sharp nioguchi

**Nakago:** O-suriage, slightly curved by design (two holes in nakago)

**Included:** Shirasaya, brocade carry bag, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, printed care guide, registration and all exportation paperwork to home country

**SOLD** (a custom koshirae is in production)

*continue for details >*



A 12th NBTHK Juyo Token Katana (*A Profound Sword*) attributed to *The Naoe Shizu School*.  
Circa Mid-Nambokucho period (1338-1367)

**“[The sword] shows typical features of the Naoe Shizu School.  
The blade is distinguished and remarkable.”**

12th NBTHK Juyo Token Certificate  
July 30, 1964

It's hard to put down in words just how incredible a sword this is.

Your eyes are, of course, drawn immediately to the blade's *o-kissaki* (long extended tip) that measures almost 11cm in length. It's not just the grandeur of the tip itself but also the wonderful complexity of the *boshi* known as the *hamon* of the *kissaki*.

The *boshi* is an extremely important part of a sword- if one were to liken a sword to a human being, the *boshi* would be her face. The quenching of the *boshi* requires enormous skill and is a clear indicator of proficiency of a swordsmith.

It would be a challenge to find a more impressive *boshi* than that which exists on this Naoe Shizu Katana. In fine Koto-period fashion it weaves through in *midare komi* fashion (irregular waves) in the general shape of a Jizo-*boshi*. It is clear, bright and healthy.



This katana is a classic beauty with a powerful soul. It was once a tachi of course, a formidable sword carried during the warring mid-Nambokucho period (1338-1367).

According to historical records swordsmiths populated Mino province in the *Hogen era* (1156-1159) during the Heian period. However, it's only once the very late Kamakura period (early 1300s) appeared that works by *Shizu Saburo Kaneuji* and *Kinju* have been confirmed.

To give a sense of context, Kaneuji is said to have moved from *Yamato* (Nara) to study under the great Masamune to become one of his ten finest pupils (*Masamune Jutetsu*).

Kaneuji eventually moved to Shizu district in Mino province and is largely considered the founder of the Mino tradition. Incidentally, *Shizu* means 'still' or 'calm' in Japanese.

As one would have expected, Kaneuji's works carry a strong mixture of *Yamato Tegai School* qualities (*a jihada of mokume hada with straight grain masame hada*) and the *Soshu tradition* with a *hamon* displaying *nie-deki* with plenty of *hataraki* such as *sunagashi* (streaks of sand), *kinsuji* (stripes of gold) and *inazuma* (crooked lightning bolts).

A noteworthy difference is that is that the *hamon* carries some *togari* (tapered peaks) in the *hamon*. As a basic rule of thumb, all Mino tradition swords have *togari* in the *hamon*.

Unsigned swords attributed to Kaneuji are known as *Yamato Shizu* (*Shizu* meaning 'Kaneuji').

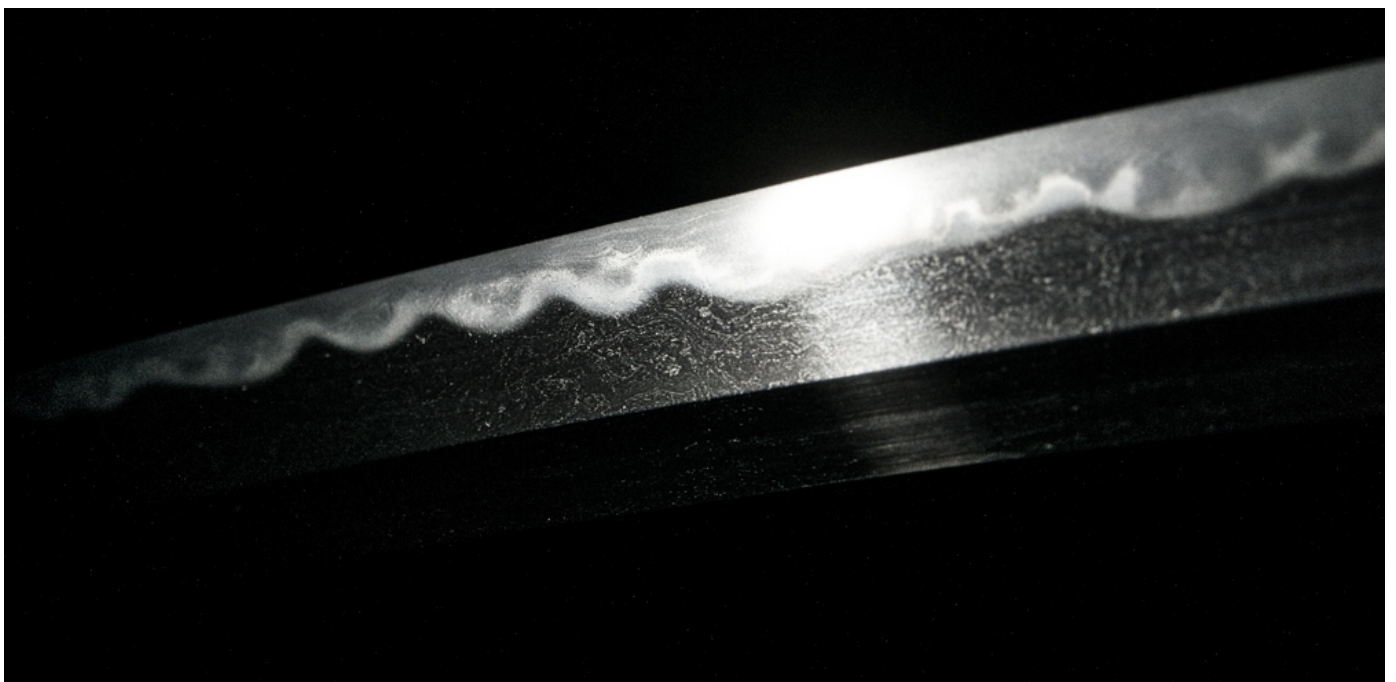
### **The Naoe Shizu School**

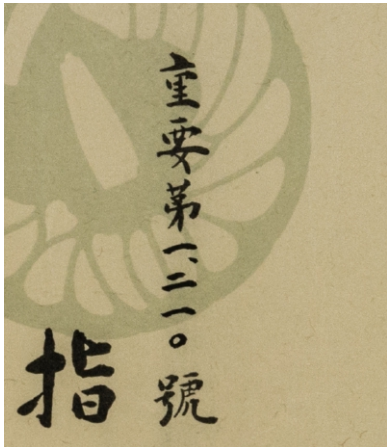
In the beginning, students of the *O-Shizu School* (founded by Kaneuji) and of the *Naoe Shizu School* moved to *Naoe* district also in Mino province to differentiate themselves.

Notable students include *Kaneyuki* (son of *Kaneshige*), *Tametsugu* (a disciple of either *Go Yoshiro* or *Norishige*), *Kanetoshi*, *Kanetsugu*, *Kanenobu* and later generations of *Kaneuji*.

What makes the *Naoe Shizu School* different from that of *O-Shizu* is that the *sugata* (shape) is superior; key traits being that of a wide *mihaba* and *o-kissaki*. Both of which, according to *Nagayama Kokan* of the *Connoisseurs Book of Japanese Swords*, "lend to a grand appearance".

Of equal importance to note is that the *jihada* has swirling pools of *itame* mixed with *mokume*. The folding pattern in the steel has a direct influence on the *hamon* displaying *sunagashi* (streaks of sand). Here is a close-up of the sword's *jihada* (grain)...

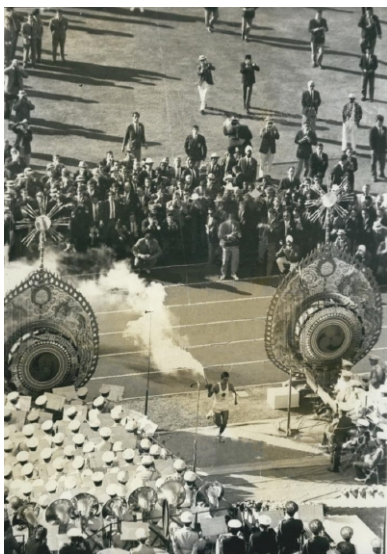




It must be pointed out that the sword was awarded its vintage 12th Juyo Token certificate on July 30, 1964. This is significant as this was *the very highest level of achievement* at the time. NBTHK Tokubetsu Juyo was introduced much later in 1971.

Only the finest swords in Japan could attain this level of prestige. The judging was fierce and illuminates the quality of this sword.

In fact, the serial number (as shown on the left) is numbered 1210. This sword is one of the very first swords ever to receive the coveted NBTHK Juyo Token certificate.



Of further interest, the certificate was issued only six weeks prior to the opening of the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics.

Opened officially by Emperor Hirohito, the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo celebrated Japan's progress and reemergence on the world stage. The new Japan was no longer a wartime enemy, but a peaceful country that threatened no one, and this transformation was accomplished in fewer than 20 years.

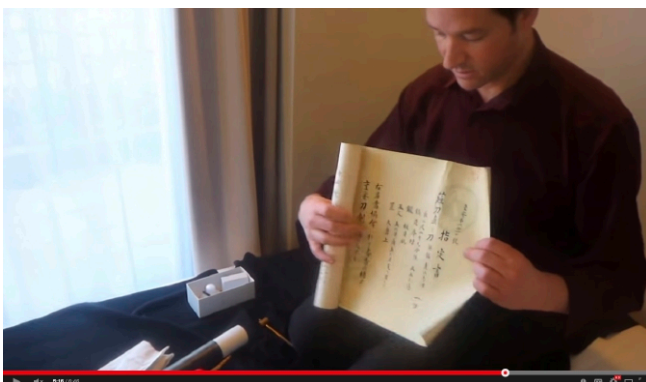
View article: <http://tinyurl.com/tokyo-64>

The 1964 Summer Games were the first Olympics held in Asia and the first to be telecast around the world (partly in colour!).

The words "Juyo Token" are often translated as being an 'Important sword'. However, a closer, more suitable choice of swords would be "*Profound*". This katana is a valuable piece of Japanese history with profound significance that I wholeheartedly recommend.

Please contact me, Pablo, at [service@uniquejapan.com](mailto:service@uniquejapan.com) for further images and information.

I have made a short video in my apartment/office in Tokyo for you to review this blade:



Copy and paste this link to view:  
<http://tinyurl.com/naoe-12juyo>

Thank you,

Pablo Kuntz  
Founder, Unique Japan

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