



ITEM# UJKA145

A SHIZUHIRO KATANA

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

- Swordsmith:** *Hizen no Kami SHIZUHIRO*
Location: Iga province (Mie prefecture)
Measurements: **Length:** 67.3cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba:** 3.2cm
Jihada: *Itame tsumu (tight wood grain pattern)*
Hamon: *Futome naka-suguha (wide straight line)*
Certificate #1: **NTHK-NPO Yushusaku** (a sword designated as Highly Excellent by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)
Certificate #2: **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (a koshirae designated as Important by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)
Provenance: This sword was owned by Mr. Yamamoto Toyoshirou, eighth rank
Included: Customs koshirae, shirasaya, brocade carry bags, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, booklet, all exportation paperwork from Japan, Yushuto Book

SOLD

Iga, present-day western Mie prefecture, is a little known province surrounded by mountains that was for centuries inaccessible by road. Iga became independent from its nominal feudal rulers and established a republic by the early Muromachi period (circa 15th century). During this period, Iga came to be known as the birthplace of the *ninja*.

Sword making skills came to Nabari city Iga by way of Bungo province through brothers **Shizutada** and **Shizumasa**. The great influence however comes from Kii province where Shizutada studied for years with the Kii Ishido School.

Shizutada developed a dense and clear *itame* with excellent *suguha* that would become the archetype for future swords spanning a new school known as *Iga Ishido*.

This katana by **Hizen no Kami Shizuhiko** is a rare sword. Rare in the sense that swords by Shizuhiko are almost non-existent (in fact this very katana has been documented by Markus Sesko's *Nihon-Shinto-Shi*), and rare for the fact that a previous owner of the sword chiseled his name and military rank on the backside of the *nakago*.

Clients often ask us if we can state previous ownership of swords but we rarely know provenance. This sword is a delightful exception.

This katana was surely once carried in WWII. Its length would perfectly fit a traditional *gunto* (military) *koshirae*. The *hamon* is a skillfully crafted straight laser beam of *suguha* over a dense *jigane*. Long *bo-hi* (grooves) were also added to lighten and strengthen the blade.

The large tip (*o-kissaki*) draws inspiration from the huge tachi of the Nambokucho period.

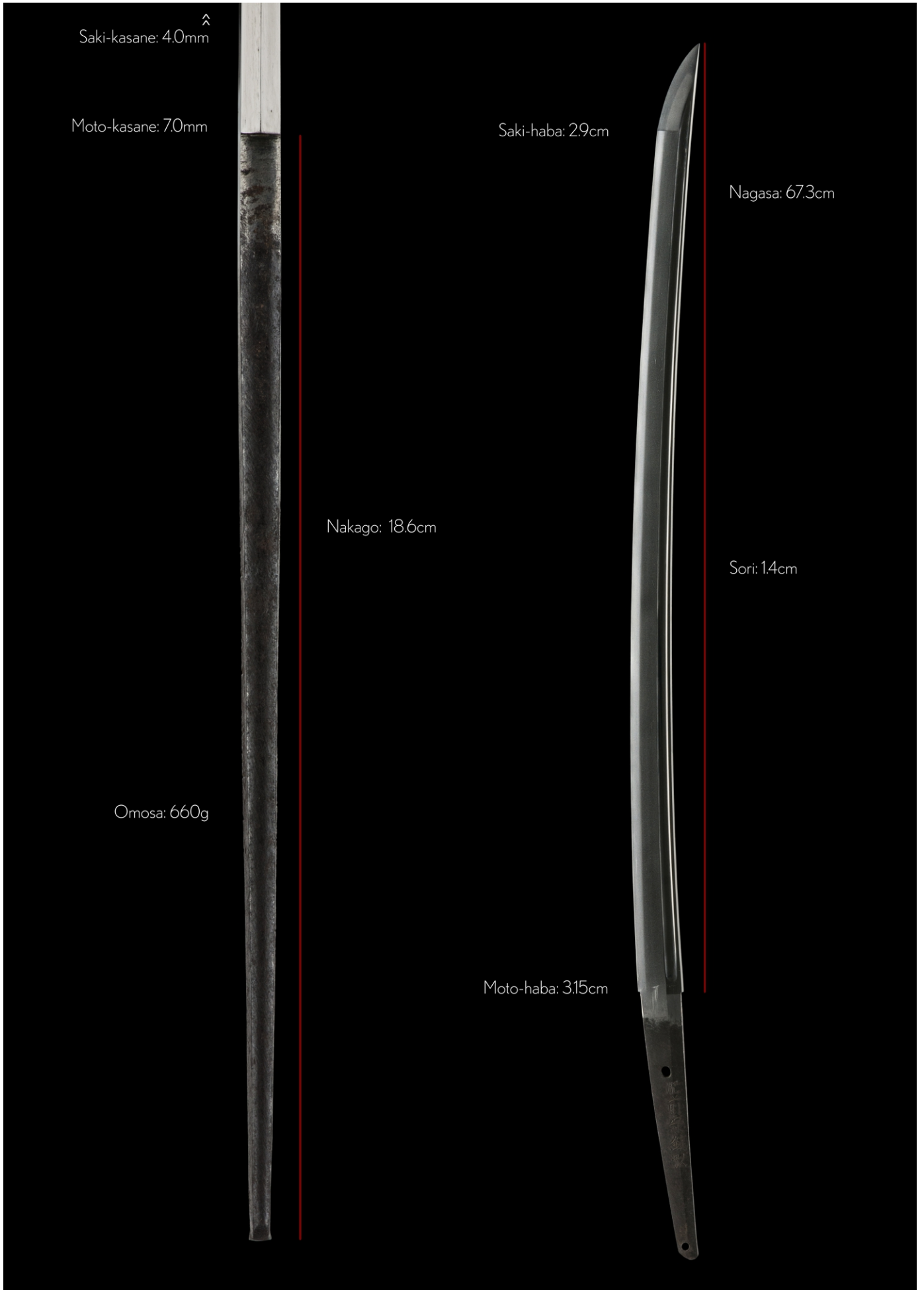
This katana was awarded the prestigious rank of **NTHK-NPO Yushusaku** – the highest level of honour at the non-profit sword preservation society. It has been featured in the *Yushuto Catalogue Book of Swords* recently released by the NTHK-NPO. A copy of the *Yushuto* book will be provided to the sword's new owner.

A beautiful and thoughtful custom *koshirae* was built for the sword that carries a theme of the revered horse and butterfly. Further images and information follow.



Picture 167: katana, mei: „Hizen no Kami Shizuhiko“ (肥前守鎮弘), nagasa 67,3 cm, sori 1,4 cm, shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune.
Work of the 1st generation Shizuhiko.

This katana has been documented in Markus Sesko's book Nihon-Shinto-Shi (page 205)



Saki-kasane: 4.0mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 7.0mm

Saki-haba: 2.9cm

Nagasa: 67.3cm


Nakago: 18.6cm

Sori: 1.4cm

Omosa: 660g

Moto-haba: 3.15cm





Province: Iga
Title: Hizen no Kami
(Lord of Hizen province)

Smith: Shizuhiko

Hi
zen (no)
Kami
Shizu
hiro

This katana was once owned
by Mr. Yamamoto Toyoshirou.
He held the 8th rank within
the Japanese Armed Forces.

Kun (rank)
Ha (eighth)
Tou
Yama
moto
Toyo
shi
rou



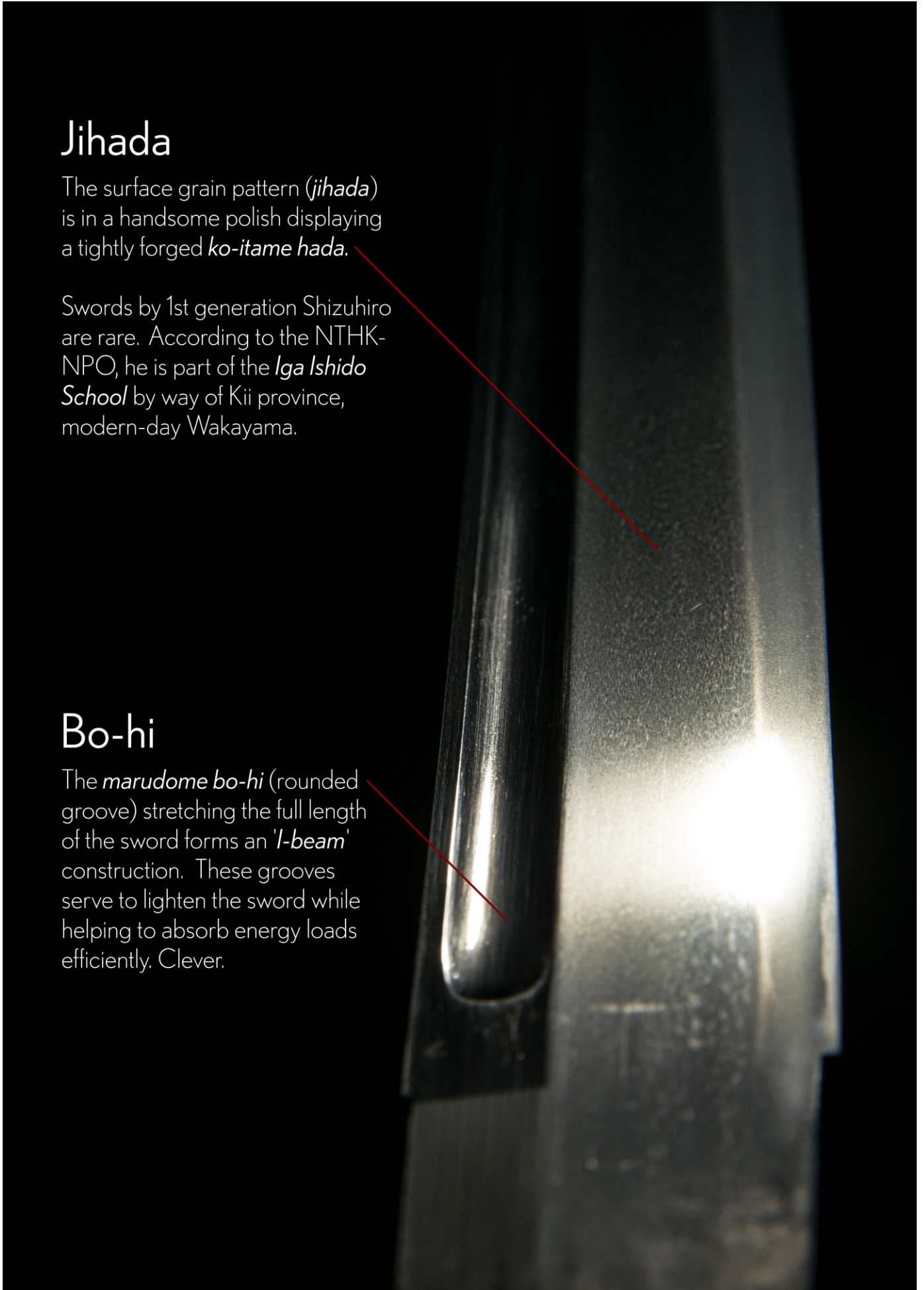
Jihada


The surface grain pattern (*jihada*) is in a handsome polish displaying a tightly forged *ko-itame hada*.

Swords by 1st generation Shizuhiro are rare. According to the NTHK-NPO, he is part of the *Iga Ishido School* by way of Kii province, modern-day Wakayama.

Bo-hi

The *marudome bo-hi* (rounded groove) stretching the full length of the sword forms an '*I-beam*' construction. These grooves serve to lighten the sword while helping to absorb energy loads efficiently. Clever.





A focal point of this katana is its powerful *o-kissaki* (large tip) reminiscent of swords crafted during the turbulent Nambokucho period war of the 14th century.

Hamon

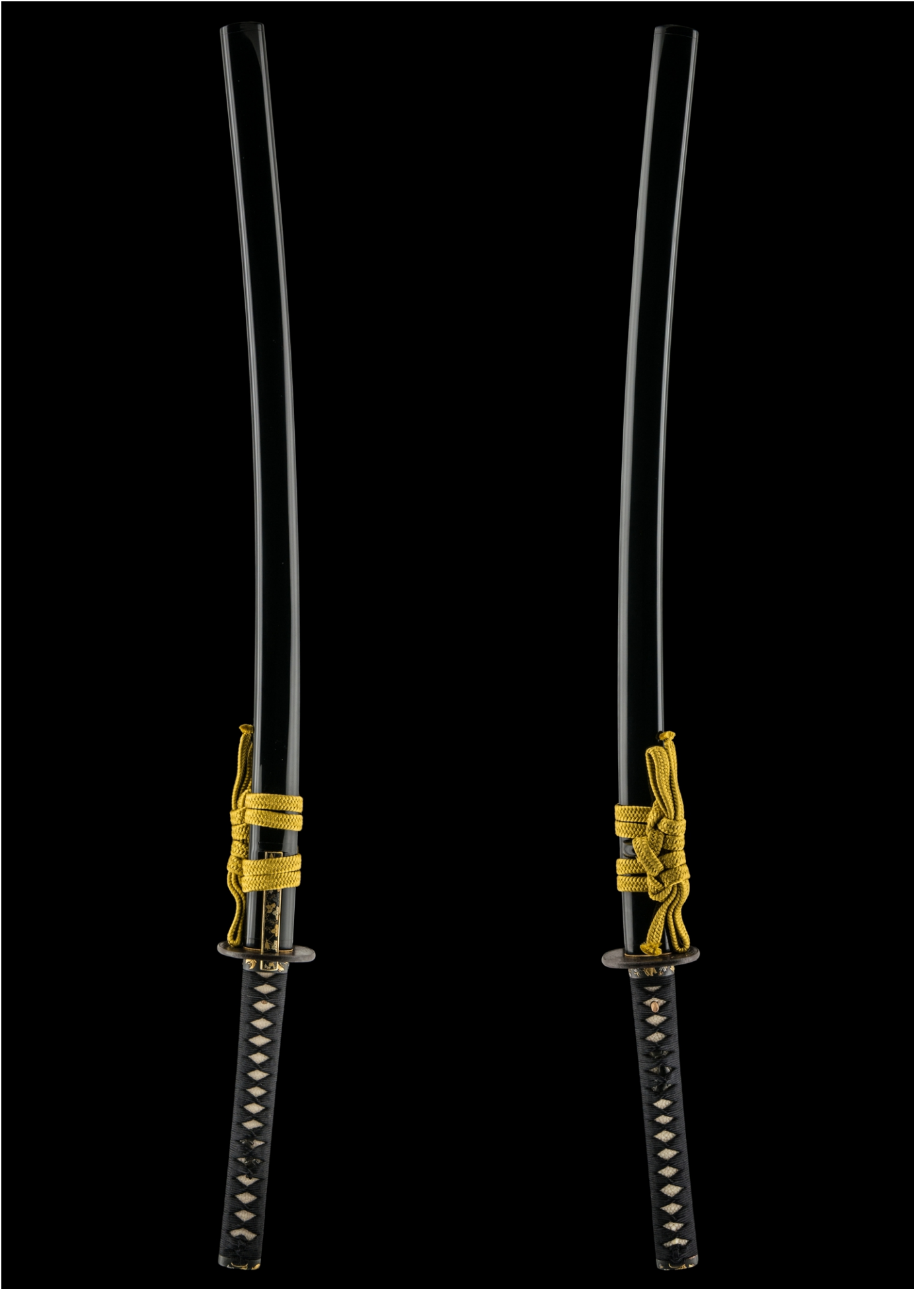
The temper line (*hamon*) on the blade is a crisp *suguha* (straight) - a pattern that takes great skill to achieve given the exacting nature of its shape. The *nioguchi* (band of crystals that make up the hamon) is bright and beautiful.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



Mito-habaki
(copper base)





Tsuba

A rich and beautiful chocolate brown iron guard (*tsuba*) depicting a horse (*uma*) in gold inlay within a meadow paints a scene of serenity.

The horse is the seventh symbol of the Japanese zodiac. Horses have long been depended upon by the Samurai, especially in the 10th to 14th centuries when tachi were carried on horseback.

Their strong and majestic bodies have made them the *symbol of life*.



(reverse side)



Cho (butterfly)

The butterfly holds great spiritual significance in Japan. Given their transformative nature from caterpillars, the Japanese believe butterflies carry the souls of the living and of past ancestors. They are a symbol of joy and longevity.

The butterfly is a cherished artistic motif that can be seen on woodblock prints, scrolls and on the *kimonos* of young women.

It is also the *kamon* (family crest) of the mighty *Taira* clan that ruled Japan during the Heian period (794-1185).





Kozuka (utility knife)



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