



ITEM# UJKA148

A HOSHO SCHOOL KATANA UNSIGNED, KAMAKURA PERIOD (~1317)

- Swordsmith:** The Hosho School (attribution)
Location: Yamato province (Nara prefecture)
Certificate: 48th NBTHK Juyo Token (a sword designated as a Profound Sword by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword. Certificate issued in 2002, serial no. 11330.)
Nagasa (length): 68.1cm **Curvature:** 1.7cm
Moto-haba: 2.7cm **Saki-haba:** 1.7cm
Kissaki: 2.8 cm **Nakago length:** 16.5cm **Nakago curvature:** 0.2cm
Jihada: Pure masame-hada, thick ji-nie, good chikei and sharp
Boshi: Sugu-gokoro (straight line) and curled back at the tip
Hamon: Hosu-suguba (narrow straight line), komidare-gokoro, ko-ashi, nioi-fukaku, habuchi-hotsurete, uchi-noke, sunagashi, and sharp
Shape: Shinogi-zukuri, iori-mune, hosomi (narrow blade), shinogi-hirome/takame (shinogi is wide and high), O-suriage, chukissaki (mid-size nakago)
Nakago: O-suriage, saki-kiri, sujikai, four holes
Included: Edo-period koshirae, shirasaya, brocade carry bags, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, printed care guide, exportation paperwork to home country

SOLD

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Before the capital was transferred to Kyoto in Yamashiro province, Nara in Yamato province was the center of Japanese culture. This was known as the Nara period, from 710-794AD.

The mural on the left is of a group of women in continental jackets and long skirts from this time.

Nara has a greatly coveted history in Japan. It is said that Amakuni who lived in Yamato during the Nara period was the earliest Japanese swordsmith.

Although no signed blades of his exist today, the origins of the Japanese sword can be traced back to Yamato.

According to Kokan Nagayama, author of the *Connoisseurs Book of Japanese Swords*:

“The development of the swordsmiths’ trade in Yamato was closely linked to the area’s proximity to the capital at Nara. Furthermore, swordsmiths’ prosperity depended on their relationship with the temples with which they were affiliated.”

From the end of the Heian period (794~1185AD), temples in Yamato province acquired vast manors and many branch temples, and strove to arm themselves in order to guard their rights and property. The five major Yamato schools – the Senjuin, Tegai, Taima, Hosho and Shikkake – were groups of swordsmiths who supplied the temples, and the Yamato tradition thus became known over a wide area through the nationwide organizations of these temples.”

Of the five major schools of the Yamato Tradition mentioned above, the Hosho School holds a special place amongst them. For it is within the Hosho School that the iconic straight-grain forging pattern known as *masame-hada* was born onto long swords.

When one learns about the general characteristics of the Yamato tradition, the general rule is that the *jihada* (surface skin of the steel) is that it is forged in *masame*. However, when one looks closely at the five Yamato schools, **only** the Hosho School forges exclusively in *masame*. They are the most conservative school and arguably, the most revered.

Interestingly, Hosho is the only school that is not named after a temple or a location, but likely that of a family name, Hosho. According to Japanese sword scholar Han Bing Siong this is a very significant point and directly relates to their prominence:

“The Japanese sources do not mention any temple to which the Hosho belonged. Could it perhaps be that the Hosho were the very few swordsmiths in Yamato working independently from the temples? Then their swords presumably were made for samurai and not for war monks.”

総じて古色の趣を醸し出しており、地刃共によく冴えている。
同派極の中でも特に秀でた一口である。

*"It exudes an old traditional atmosphere and is in a healthy state.
This sword is an extraordinary work that even surpasses
other great swords from the Hosho School."*

A Hosho School Katana
48th NBTHK Juyo Token Certificate

It gives us great pleasure to introduce a masterpiece from the Kamakura period.
A remarkable katana attributed to the Hosho School with NBTHK Juyo Token certification.

As previously illustrated, the Hosho School specialized in producing *masame-hada*. A straight grain forging technique that only the Hosho School perfected and religiously adhered to. One must admire their strict code of conduct, such immense pride they carried.

The simple reason that all other schools did not forge swords this way: *it's difficult*. The welds form long seams thus it is common for the sword to split along the seams. In fact, most Hosho School swords show such *hada-ware* of this variety. It's accepted as a charm point.

Except on this katana...the *pure masame hada* is essentially flawless. It is a very rare and pristine example of the work that made this school so greatly treasured.

This sword's *sayagaki* (a sword appraisal opinion) takes the attribution a step further to *Hosho Sadayoshi* one of the founders of the school and a National Treasured swordsmith.

The NBTHK Juyo Token certificate strongly re-affirms the importance of this katana as *"an extraordinary work that even surpasses other great swords from the Hosho School."*

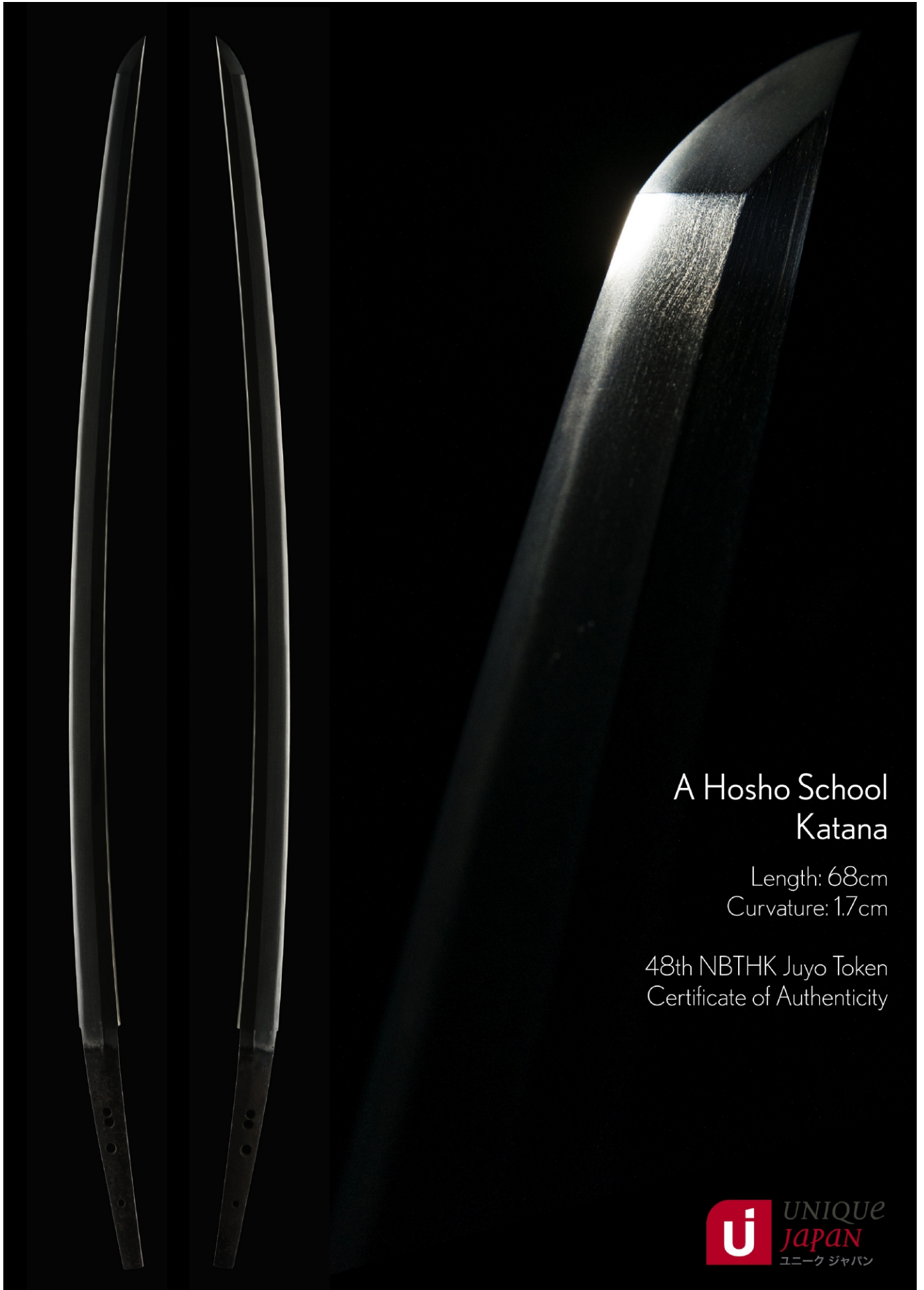
The sword holds another masterclass of craftsmanship, her *koshirae*. The eye is instantly drawn to the black-lacquered *straight* grooved lines of the saya known as *"Tate Kizami Saya"*. This design is no accident. This is complimentary Japanese art at the highest level.

Other parts of the *koshirae* include an outstanding *tsuba* (guard) that is from the Goto School from the early Edo period and a *fuchi-kashira* with delightful depictions of the moon. In fact, both the *koshirae* and *tsuba* comes with NTHK-NPO Kanteisho Certificates of Authenticity.

As stated in Catalogue 19, 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 very rare and valuable piece of Japanese history with profound significance. The next owner must ensure that it continues its inspiring journey in a faithful manner.

Six pages of insight follow regarding this Samurai katana that only scratch the surface of this masterclass. Please contact me, Pablo, at service@uniquejapan.com for further information and interest in ownership. Thank you.



A Hosho School
Katana

Length: 68cm
Curvature: 1.7cm

48th NBTHK Juyo Token
Certificate of Authenticity



Sayagaki

The shirasaya features *sayagaki* (a sword appraisal)
It reads as follows:

Hosho Sadayoshi (attributed swordsmith)
Yamato No Kuni Hosho Katana Saijo Kiju Yuhin
(most rare and important work by Hosho School)

Kore Saku Migoto Nari (this is a great work)
48th Juyo Token designated
Nagasa (length): 2 shaku 2-sun 5-bu arikore (68cm)
14th year of Heisei (2002) October

Kamakura Jidai No Meisaku Nari
(This blade is a masterpiece from the Kamakura period)

Masame-hada

The steel from which Japanese swords are made is known as the *jigane*. The term *jihada* refers to the pattern of the surface grain produced by the swordsmith's forging.

Since this pattern varies with each individual swordsmith and school, the *jihada* is useful in determining the age and school.

Masame-hada is a *jihada* pattern in which *the grain runs nearly straight along the blade*. It is a defining trait of the Yamato tradition.

This katana is a rare and outstanding example of pure *masame-hada*.

The Hosho School is recognized as being the only school in Japanese sword making history to forge exclusively in *masame*.

These talented swordsmiths worked during the Kamakura to Nambokucho periods (13-14th century).



'Tate' Kizami-saya

The Hosho School katana is blessed with a very rare and wonderful *saya* (scabbard) known as *tate* (tah-tei) *kizami* (kee-za-mee) *saya*. Crafted in the late Edo period, this saya has symmetrically grooved lines flowing the length of the piece.

One can see that this unique scabbard design pays tribute the straight grain *masame-hada* seen on the surface skin of the sword itself. Perfect harmony.



The Hosho School katana's koshirae features an early Edo Period tsuba by the Goto School. It is of shakudo base rimmed in gold with skilfully carved waves and gold kiri-mon. This is a top class tsuba surely held by an elite Samurai.





*'On the Musashi plain
There is no mountain
Behind which the moon disappears.
It rises and sinks among the grass.'*

Minamoto Michikata (1189-1238)

