



ITEM# UJKA178

A MASAMITSU KATANA [FORMER TACHI]

UNSIGNED, NAMBOKUCHO PERIOD, ENBUN TO EIWA ERAS (1356~1379)

- Swordsmith:** *Bishu Osafune Masamitsu (attribution)*
Location: Bishu province, modern-day Okayama
Measurements: **Length:** 75.1cm **Curvature:** 2.8cm **Moto-haba:** 3.1cm
Jihada: *O-hada, mokume and itame hada with chikei and midare utsuri*
Hamon: *Koshibiraki ko-midare with ashi and sunagashi*
Nakago: *o-suriage, 2 holes*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Juyo Token** (*a sword designated as Profound and Important by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword*)
Certificate #2-3: **NBTHK Hozon Token** (*a tsuba and menuki designated as Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword*)
Certificate #4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (*a koshirae designated as an Authentic handachi koshirae by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword*)

[Paraphrasing from the Juyo Token certificate] *Masamitsu* is a swordsmith from the Bizen tradition that worked during the tumultuous *Nambokucho* period. He was a direct student of grandmaster swordsmith *Osafune Kanemitsu* and was faithful to his sensei's instruction. One difference is that the hamon on Masamitsu swords is a little dark in comparison.

With a cutting edge of over 75cm, a curvature of nearly 3cm and a relatively long *kissaki* (tip), a clue which places the sword in the *Nambokucho* period, it's easy to imagine this impressive sword carried proudly on horseback by a samurai warrior. A gorgeous swirling grain pattern with *chikei* can be seen in the body of the sword- typical of the great work of the Kanemitsu school. In honour of its tachi heritage, a beautiful *handachi koshirae* with Higo province fittings and uniquely zen lacquer work was produced for the sword taking the better part of 2016 to complete. A fine sword for a very fine person indeed. Congratulations Kim, Pablo.

Saki-kasane: 4.7mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 5.8mm

Saki-haba: 2.1cm

Nagasa: 75.1cm

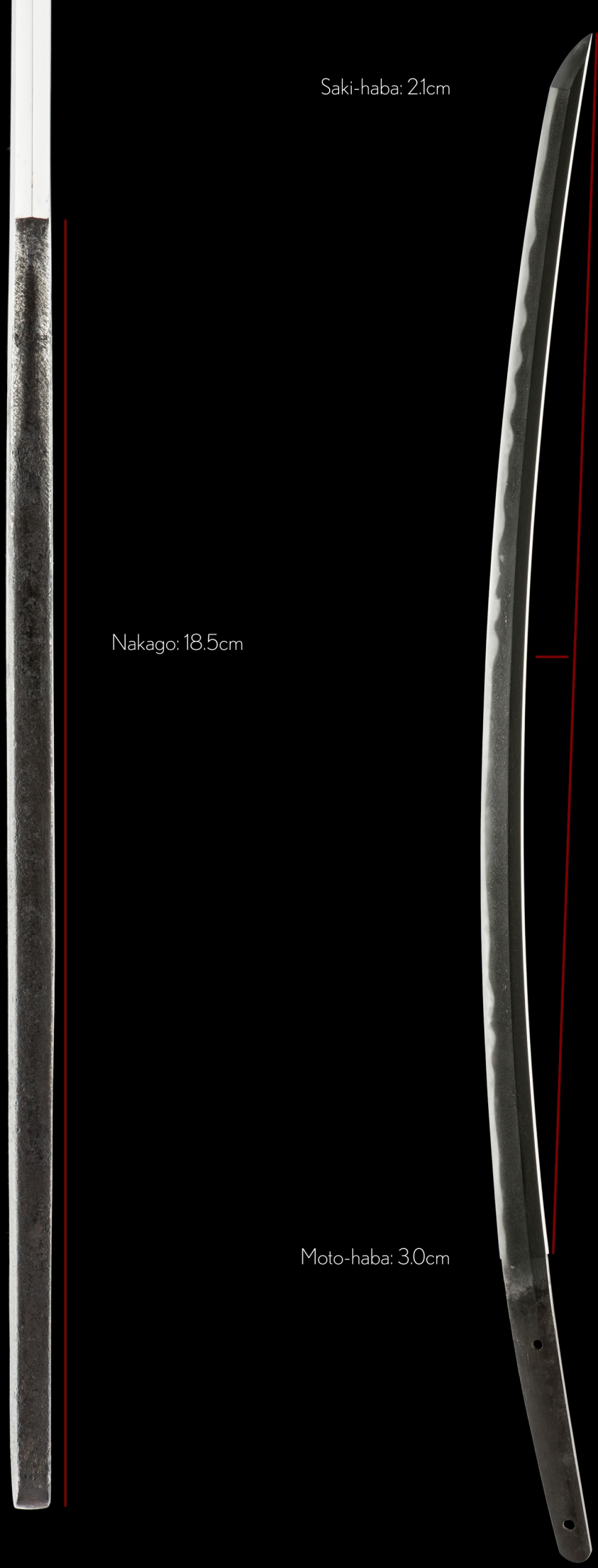
Nakago: 18.5cm

Sori: 2.7cm

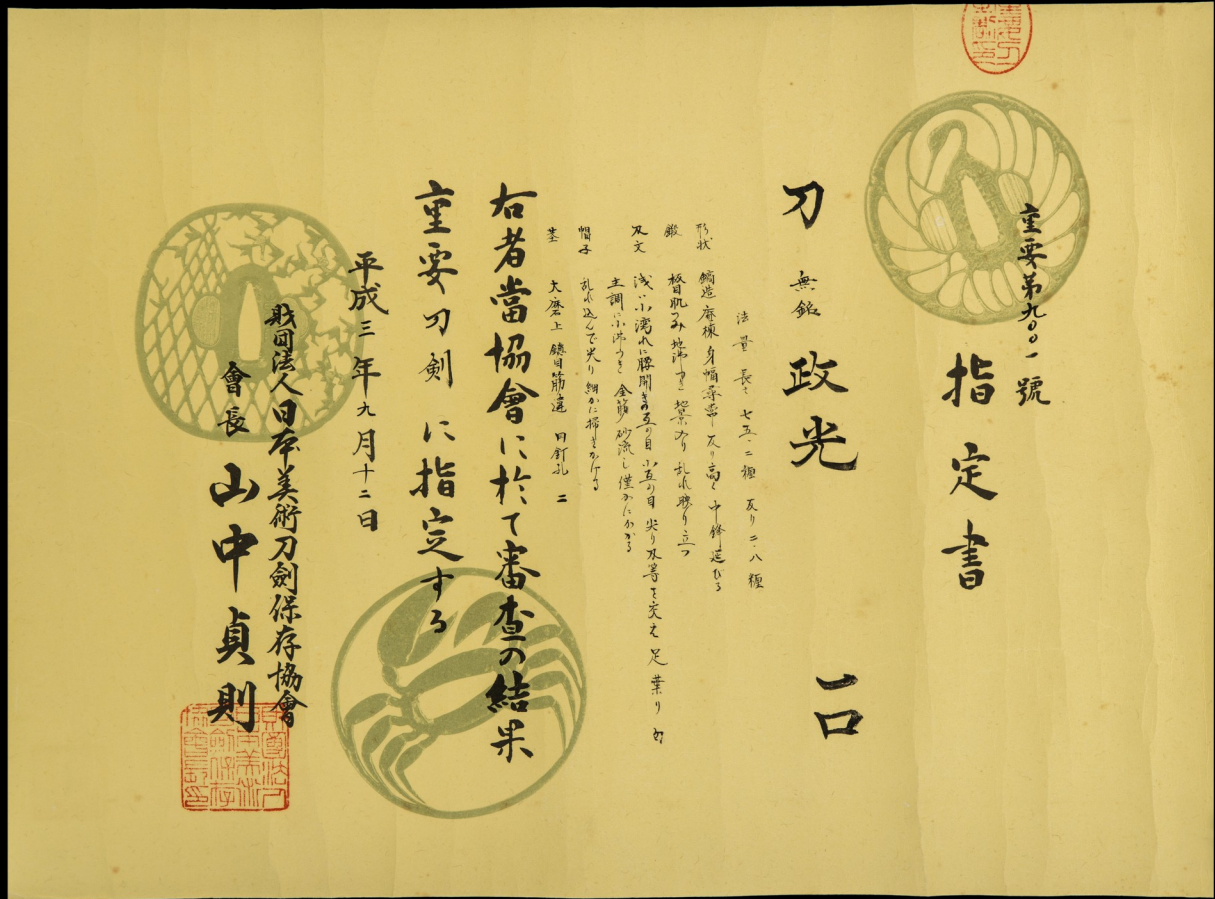
Omosa: 670g

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Mekugi-ana: 2







NBTHK Juyo Token Certificate of Designation

a sword designated as *Important and Profound*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 3rd year of Heisei (1991), September 12th

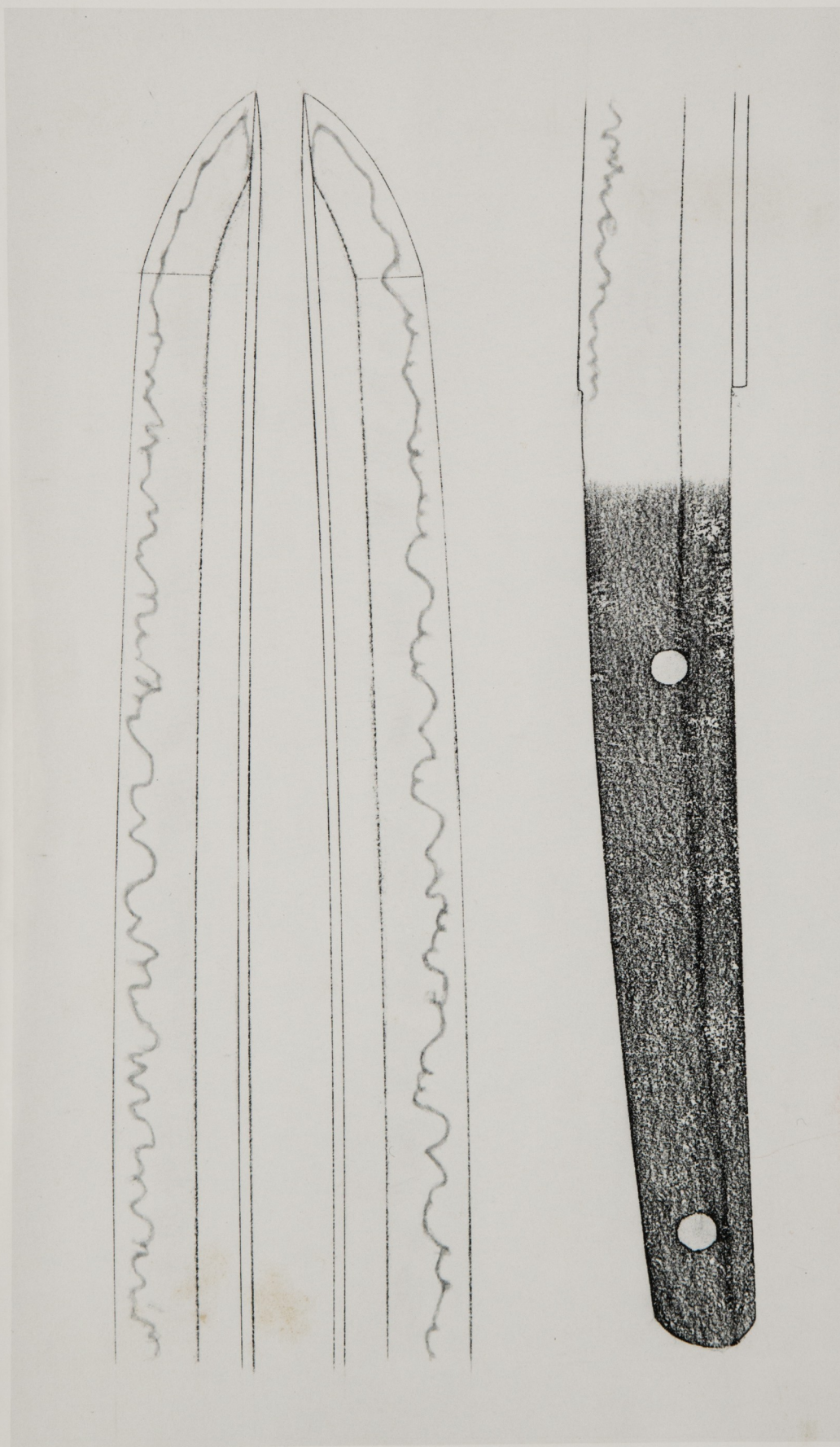
One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Mumei (Masamitsu)

Nagasa (length)
75.1cm

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

刀
無銘
政光



NBTHK Juyo Token
(white paper oshigata)
rubbing of the nakago and tracing of the hamon

Note: This sword has been attributed to *Kanemitsu* by *Honami Koson*, a respected scholar of Japanese swords who worked in the 20th century (born 1879). Kanemitsu was the sensei of Masamitsu.



Bi
zen
(no) kuni
Osa
fune
Kane
mitsu

Nagasa 2 shaku 4 sun 8 bu Honmei Nari

(Length: 75.1cm)

Honami Koson (Kaou)

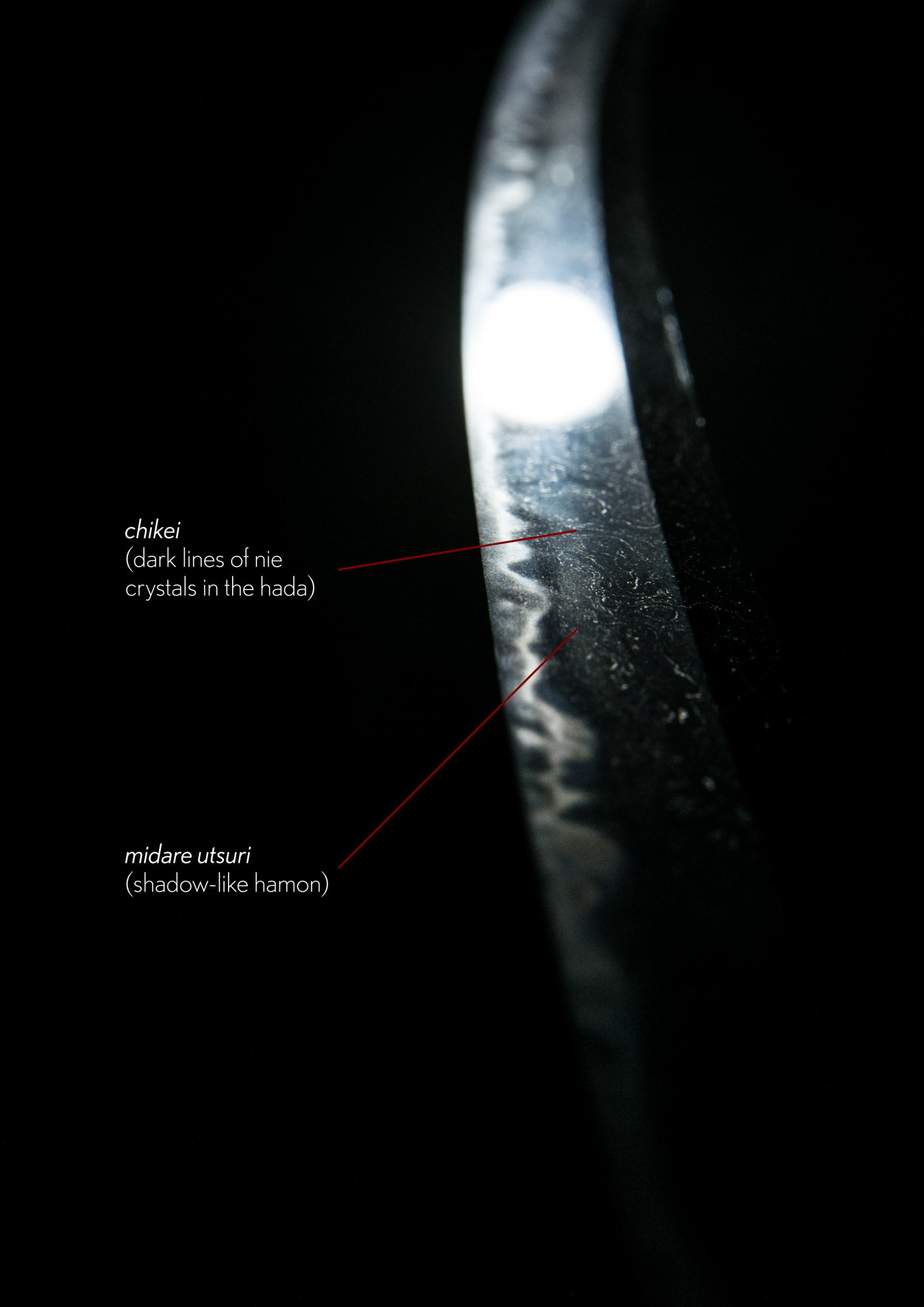
signed by Koson with seal

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, showing the intricate wood grain patterns. The blade is dark, with a prominent ridge line running down its center. The wood grain spirals are clearly visible, creating a complex, swirling pattern. Two red lines point from the text to specific areas of the blade: one points to the wavy grain near the ridge line, and the other points to the spiral grain further down the blade.

Beautiful wood grain spirals
of *itame* and *mokume hada*.

Note that the *shinogi-ji*
(surface area of the ridge
line) also contains wavy
itame hada.

This trait is generally found
on quality Koto period
swords. Swords made in
the Shinto era normally
have *masame-hada* straight
grain in the *shinogi-ji*.

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (edge line). The blade is dark and has a curved shape. The hamon is visible as a lighter, textured line along the edge. Two red lines point from text labels to specific features on the blade. The background is black.

chikei
(dark lines of nie
crystals in the hada)

midare utsuri
(shadow-like hamon)



Kirikomi

Cutting marks (battle scars) on a blade from use in combat. These are prized marks on a sword and not to be removed by a polisher.

A close-up, vertical view of a sword blade against a black background. The blade is dark, with a prominent, wavy, light-colored temper line (hamon) running down its length. The line is wider at the top and tapers towards the bottom. The texture of the blade surface is visible, showing some grain and wear. Two red lines originate from the text on the right and point to specific features on the hamon: one points to a peak and the other to a valley. A third red line originates from the text at the bottom left and points to a specific area on the blade's body.

Koshibiraki hamon

Koshi means 'waist'. This temper line is synonymous with the Bizen tradition. It widens like a valley towards the edge of the blade with gentle peaks.

The *koshi* areas of the hamon are before and after a peak.

Note the tempered spots of *tobiyaki* in the *ji* (body).



kinsuji
golden (black) gleaming
lines of nie crystals that
cut through the hamon.

Also referred to as *kinsen*.



Handachi Koshirae

Literally “half tachi,” these fittings are a hybrid form of the *tachi koshirae* carried on horseback and the *uchigatana koshirae* which drew the sword from a standing position.

The handachi originated as semi formal attire of the *bushi* (samurai class) during the Kamakura period, circa 13th century.

All matching fittings of the koshirae are from Higo province.





Tsuba

This impressive iron *tsuba* (guard) is attributed to the *Nakane group*, part of Higo family of fitting specialists from the late Edo period (early 1800s).

The design is called *sugimori-hoen* - a design inlaid in silver consisting of rectangles with stylized cedar trees.



This tsuba is papered with NBTHK Hozon certification





The *saya* (scabbard) holds a unique lacquering technique reminiscent of the swirling pools of within a zen garden.

White sand and gravel represent water or white space seen within Japanese paintings. Shinto beliefs describe emptiness and distance as places of reflection and meditation.



Zuihoin Garden: Kyoto Japan



Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) pay tribute to the fact this sword was once a tachi carried on horseback. They are certified NBTHK Hozon to the Mito School.



A black and white photograph of a dark, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a piece of fabric. A bright, diagonal line runs across the frame from the bottom left towards the top right. A small, dark insect is perched on the bright line. The background is dark and shows some texture and light reflections.

Stay hungry Kim.

Warm regards,
Pablo

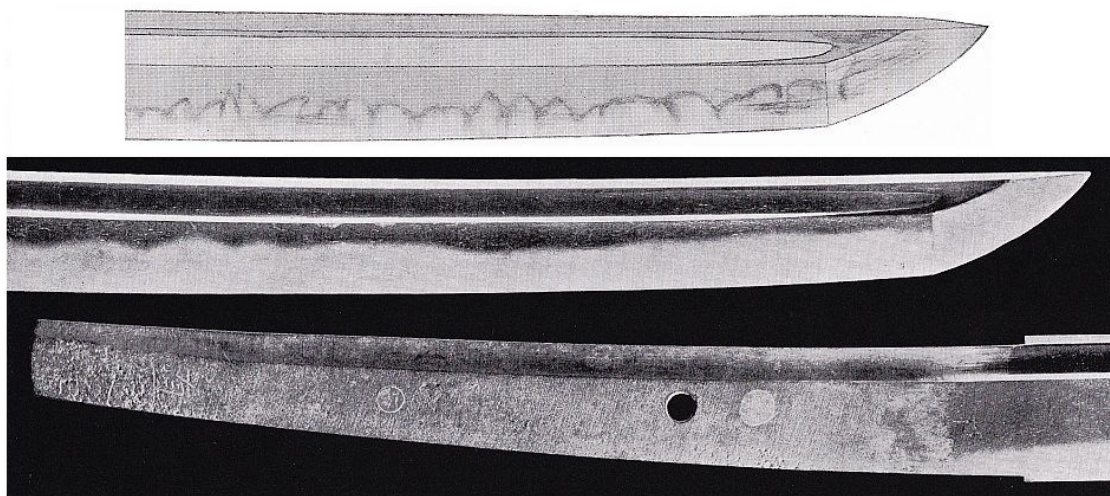
Honma Junji

Nihon-kotō-shi

日本古刀史

The History of the *kotō*
Era of Japanese Swords

Print and publishing:
Lulu, Inc.



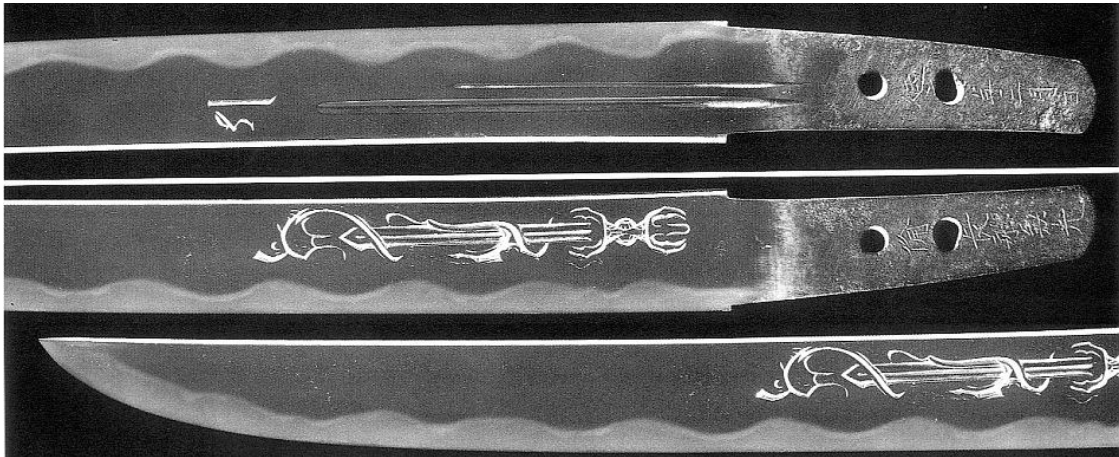
Picture 259: *jūyō-bijutsuhin, tachi, mei* „Naotsuna saku“ (直綱作), *nagasa* 69,8 cm

4.12. *Osafune-mono* and *Kozori-mono* (Osafune swords and Kozori swords)

There were two major schools of Ichimonji and Osafune in the former period of Bizen Province. Entering this period, there are no important smith of the Ichimonji school and Osafune smiths come to represent this province. Representative smiths of the Osafune school of this period are students of 1st or 2nd Kanemitsu (兼光), like Rin-Tomomitsu (倫光), Motomitsu (基光), Masamitsu (政光) and Shigemitsu (重光) as well as Yoshimitsu (義光) and Yoshikage (義景) who belong to the school. Amongst them, it has been confirmed by their production dates, that Rin-Tomomitsu, Motomitsu, Masamitsu and Shigemitsu were the students of 1st Kagemitsu. There may be a few generations of these smiths and their active ages are as follows; Rin-Tomomitsu between the Bunna (文和, 1352-1356) and Eiwa Eras (永和, 1375-1379), Motomitsu and Masamitsu between the Enbun (延文, 1356-1361) and Ōei Eras (応永, 1394-1428), Shigemitsu between the Kōan (康安, 1361-1362) and Ōei Eras, Yoshimitsu between the Genkō (元弘, 1331-1334) and Eiwa Eras and Yoshikage between the Kenmu (建武, 1334-1338) and Ōei Eras. Also two collateral schools represented by Motoshige (元重) and Nagashige (長重) exist in this province. There seem to be two generations of Motoshige between the Shōwa (正和, 1312-1317) and Jōji Eras (貞治, 1362-

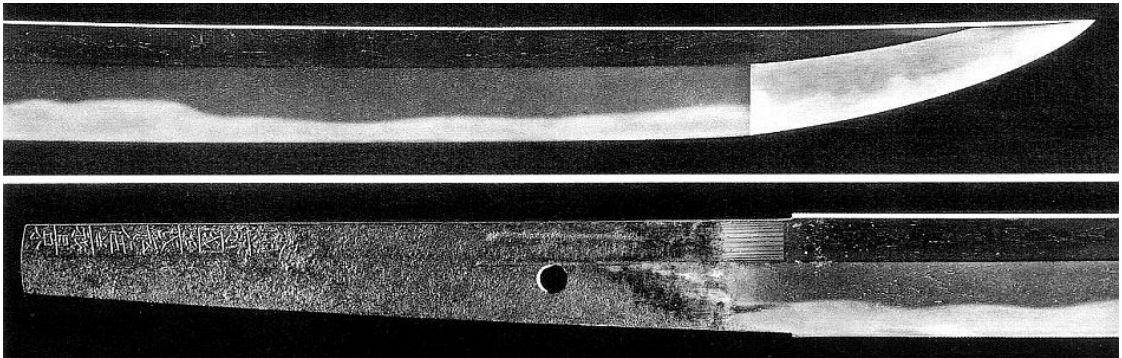
1368). Shigezane (重真) was a younger brother of 1st Motoshige and the production dates between the Karyaku (嘉暦, 1326-1329) and Ōei Eras have been confirmed. As described before, a commonly accepted theory that Nagashige was a younger brother of Chōgi, is not correct. I conclude that Chōgi is a younger brother or a student of Nagashige. Another theory that Nagashige and Chōgi are the same smith could be denied by *oshigata* of Nagashige with a production date of the Jōwa Era (貞和, 1345-1350) and of Chōgi with a production date of the Kōei (康永, 1342-1345) Era (if the *oshigata* are genuine). Incidentally, extant works of Chōgi with production dates, range from the Shōhei (正平, 1346-1370 Southern Court era) (or Enbun, 延文, 1356-1361, Northern Court era) to the Kōryaku Era (康暦, 1379-1381).

One theory states that Chōgi, with production dates of the Kōryaku Era, are the works of the 2nd generation of which another smith name is Nagakiyo (長清). However, I believe extant *tachi* with the *mei* of ‘Nagakiyo’ are not the works of 2nd Chōgi. Generally speaking, Nagakiyo is much inferior to Chōgi in skill. There is a smith called Nagamori (長守) who is said to be a student of Chōgi. He left a *naginata* with the production date of Shōhei 8 (正平, 1353) and two *tantō* with the production dates of Shōhei 11 (1356) and Kentoku 2 (建徳, 1371). It is speculated that Nagamori was active at the same time as Chōgi. In addition there is a smith called Kanenaga (兼長, or Kenchō) and there are a certain number of *ō-suriage mumei katana* attributed to Kanenaga, but I have seen only one *tantō* with *mei* and a production date of the Jōji Era.

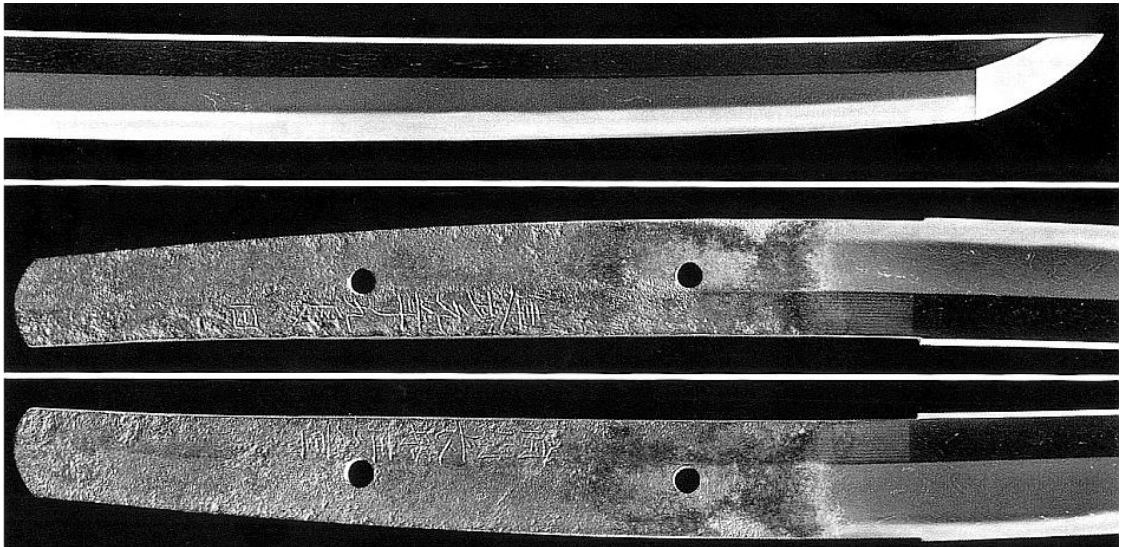


Picture 260: *tokubetsu-jūyō, tantō, mei* „Bi? Osafune Kanemitsu – Enbun ?-nen nigatsu-hi“ (備○長船兼光・延文○年二月日, „a day in the second month Enbun ? [1356-1361]“)

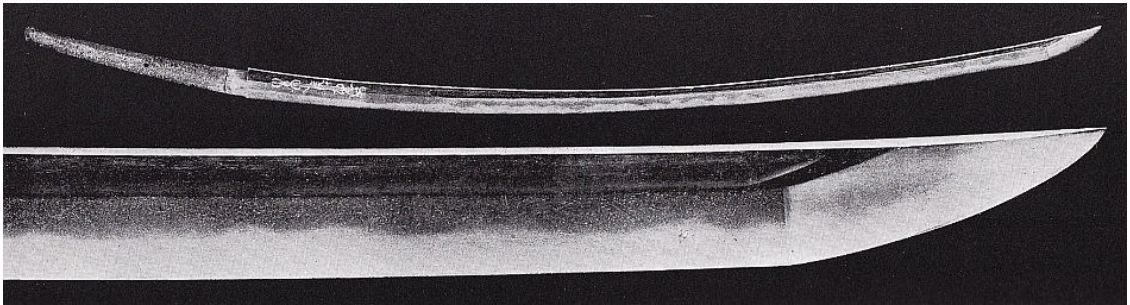
The workmanship of the smiths described above reflect the flavour of the period well. Kanemitsu and his students temper *gunome* (pointed *kataochi-gunome*) and *notare*. Motoshige and his students do *gunome* in *nioi-deki* or *nioi-hon-i* in a smaller pattern, and Nagashige and his students do *ō-midare* mixed with *notare* and *gunome* in *nie-deki* (they occasionally temper *hamon* in *nioi-deki*). Nagashige and Nagamori temper *ko-midare*. It is interesting to know that the production date of Kanemitsu and his students accords to the era of the Northern Court but Chōgi and his students to the eras of the Northern and the Southern Courts.



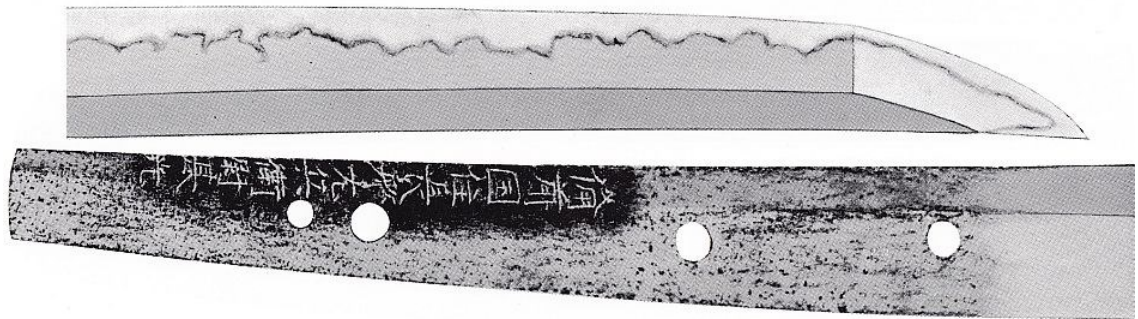
Picture 261: *jūyō-bunkazai, tachi, mei* „Bizen no Kuni Osafune-jū Yoshikage“ (備前国長船住義景), *nagasa* 74,4 cm



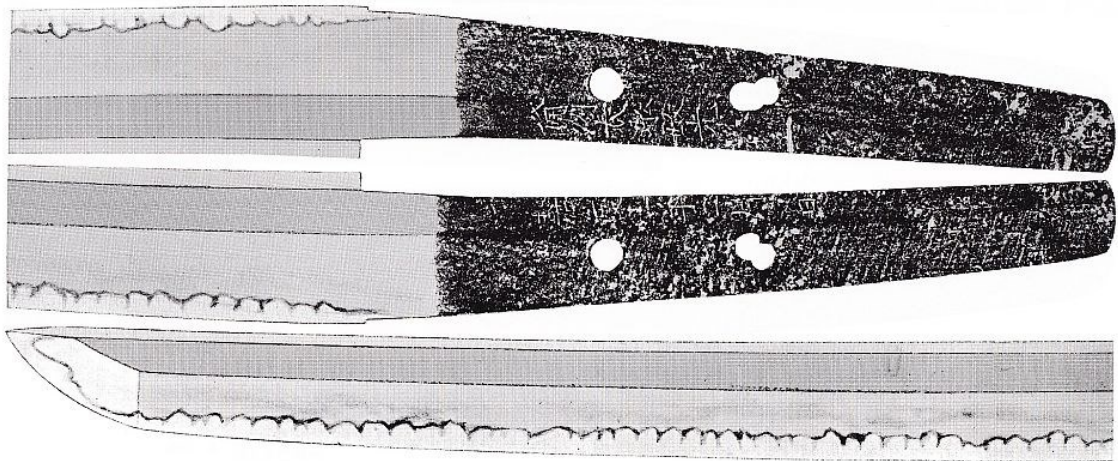
Picture 262: *tokubetsu-jūyō, tachi, mei* „Bishū Osafune-jū Motoshige – Kenmu gannen kugatsu-hi“ (備州長船住元重・建武元年九月日, „a day in the ninth month Kenmu 1 [1334]“)



Picture 263: *kokuhō, tachi, mei* „Bishū Osafune Tomomitsu – Jōji gonen nigatsu-hi“ (備州長船倫光・貞治五年二月日, „a day in the second month Jōji 5 [1366]“), *nagasa* 126,0 cm



Picture 264: *tachi, mei* „Bizen no Kuni-jū Osafune Sahyōe no Jō Motomitsu“ (備前国住長船左兵衛尉基光), *nagasa* 75,8 cm



Picture 265: *jūyō-tōken, kodachi, mei* „Bishū Osafune Masamitsu – Kakyō sannen nigatsu-hi“ (備州長船政光・嘉慶三年二月日, „a day in the second month Kakyō 3 [1389]“), *nagasa* 56,0 cm