



ITEM# UJKA186

A NIDAI YASUTSUGU KATANA SIGNED BY THIRD GENERATION YASUTSUGU EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANEI ERA: 1624~1645)

- Swordsmith:** *Yasutsugu (2nd generation attribution)*
Signature: *Aoi mon, Yasutsugu Saku Mumei (omote, front)*
San-Dai Yasutsugu Mei Kore (ura, back)
- Location:** Edo province (modern-day Tokyo)
- Measurements:** **Length:** 71.2cm **Curvature:** 1.1cm **Moto-haba:** 2.9cm
- Jihada:** *Itame with ji-nie*
- Hamon:** *Ko-notare (small gentle waves) with kinsuji, sunagashi and ashi, wide yaki*
- Nakago:** *Ubu (original length)*
- Fujishiro:** *Jo-saku (ranked as a superior swordsmith)*
- Asaemon:** *Ryo-Wazamono (maker of good sharp swords)*
- Certificate #1:** **NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho** (a sword designated as Especially Precious by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)
- Certificate #2-5:** **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (a sword, tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae all designated as Authentic by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)
- Included:** Edo-period koshirae, shirasaya, carry bags, sword stand, kit, etc.

SOLD

The Yasutsugu School

The much-acclaimed Yasutsugu lineage starts with the birth of the first generation, *Ichizaemon*, in *Shimosaka Shiga-gun* in *Omi province* during the middle of the 16th century.

Born into a sword-making family headed by Yasutsugu's father, *Hironaga*, was reputed to be the last descendent of *Yamato no Kuni Senjuin*, by way of *Nara*. Though his father was from *Omi*, he was trained in the *Mino* tradition. *Omi* neighbors *Mino* province.

Throughout the history of Japan, a great number of swordsmiths flourished when they came under the patronage and protection of the local feudal lords. Yasutsugu (first generation) was one such swordsmith.

Whether by chance or intent, he became noticed and supported by *Matsudaira Hideyasu*, who was the third son of *Tokugawa Ieyasu* (the first shogun of the Edo period, pictured on right).



Hideyasu was the *daimyo* (great family) of *Echizen* province. His power and influence bolstered the fame of Yasutsugu considerably.

By the fifth year of *Keicho* (1600) Yasutsugu was well established in *Echizen*. His patronage by Hideyasu secured his livelihood and allowed him the freedom to produce swords in a variety of styles.

Around the 11th or 12th year of this same period of *Keicho* (1606-1607), Yasutsugu's fame reached the point that he was called to *Edo* (Tokyo) to share his time with *Tokugawa Ieyasu*.

Not long after Yasutsugu was given the privilege of using the kanji character *Yasu* (康) from *Tokugawa Ieyasu*'s name. Thus he changed his name to Yasutsugu from that point on.



An additional privilege followed whereby the carving the *Aoi Mon* (hollyhock crest) on his blades was granted. These privileges were given in perpetuity to Yasutsugu and his descendants.

Yasutsugu swordsmiths thus became the *kaji* (official smiths) of the *Tokugawa* Family. Upon the death of the first generation Yasutsugu, the family responsibility was taken up by his son, *Ichinojo*.

His original signature was *Yoshisuye* and it was officially changed to *Yasutsugu* in the ninth year of *Genna* (1623). It was at that time that he received the official *shogunate* order to move to *Edo* on a permanent basis. Two years after his father's death.

Nidai (2nd generation) Yasutsugu made swords only until the second year of *Shoho* (1645) and he died on February 15 of the third year of that same era (1646). His death caused a rift in the family that was solved in a most interesting way...

At the time of the death of the *Nidai* Yasutsugu, his son, first called *Umanosuke* and later *Ichinojo*, was too young to assume the succession. Despite this fact, he was supported by the students of the *Nidai* and the *Shogun's Arms Office*.

His succession was opposed by the younger brother of the Nidai, who was the third son of the Shodai Yasutsugu. His name was *Shirouemon* later *Ichiuemon*, who lived and worked in Echizen. In the end, it was decided that there would be *two Sandai* (3rd generation) Yasutsugus.

Umanosuke would assume his father's mantle and become the third generation Yasutsugu working permanently in Edo, while Shirouemon would remain in Echizen and become the Echizen third generation.

From this point onward the Yasutsugu lineage of swordsmiths was split into two distinct branches, the *Edo branch* and the *Echizen branch*. The two divisions of the Yasutsugu school continued for several generations. The Edo school was sustained through eleven generations.

The sword

What makes this sword so interesting is that it was originally left unsigned, yet later signed by third generation Echizen Yasutsugu. We took this sword to the NTHK-NPO for insight.

They determined that the blade was originally crafted by second generation Yasutsugu. A possible scenario being he was too weak or died before he was able to sign the sword. He may have also intentionally not signed the blade out of respectful protocol.

This is an elegant sword with a finely worked *jihada* filled with plenty of *chikei* (streaks of *nie* crystals). The *hamon* is a *ko-notare* (small undulating waves) with *sunagashi* (brushes of sand) and *kinsuji* (golden lines). It is a katana with character.

The *koshirae* (fittings) is equally as impressive. It's like walking back in time, as the set of *koshirae* is certified as being from the middle Edo period (1700s). On the *fuchi-kashira*, the strategic game of *GO* is being battled out by two daimyo lords.

Look for the spider web depiction on the *kashira* suggesting a very long game of strategy!

The *saya* (scabbard) is beautifully lacquered in *aoi-gai* (mother-of-pearl). The protective *kojiri* (end cap of the scabbard) is carved with superb detail of a dragon.

There is so much to enjoy and cherish in this sword. Five certificates of authenticity accompany this rare Samurai find.

***Update: The sword has just been submitted to the NBTHK in July for Hozon and Tokubetsu Hozon shinsa (judgement).*



Please watch presentation video here:
<http://tinyurl.com/ujka186-yasutsugu>

Saki-kasane: 4.0mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 6.0mm

Omosa: 670g

Saki-haba: 2.1cm

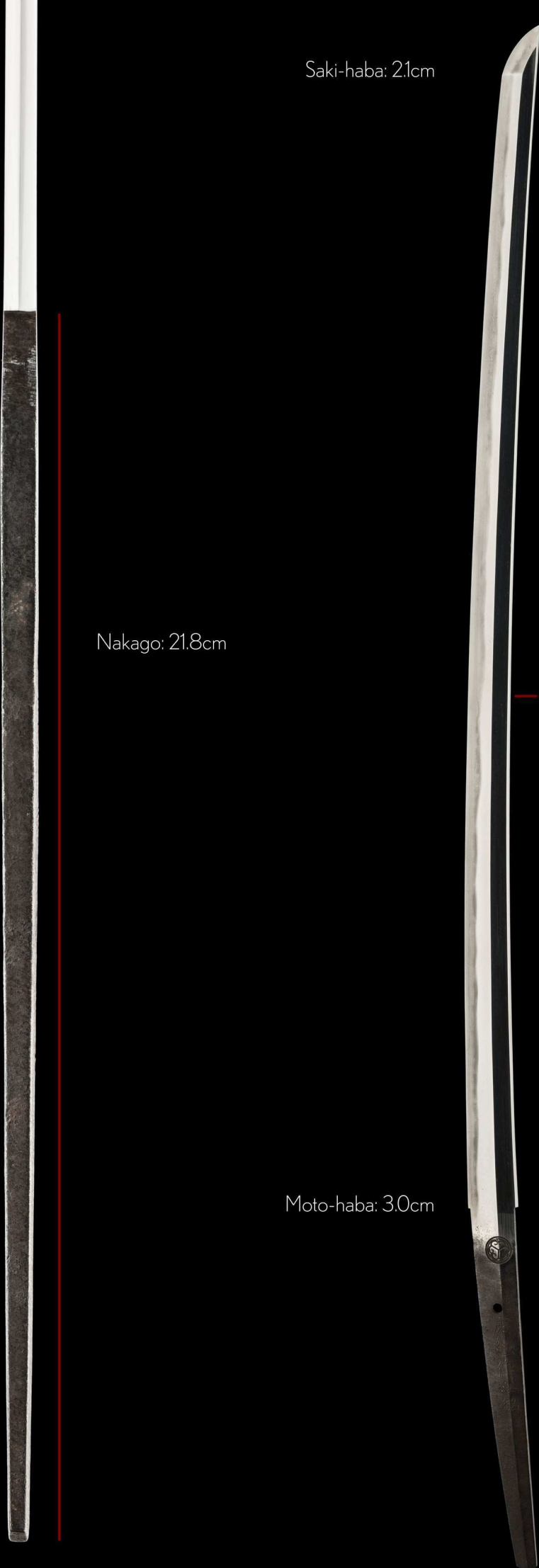
Nakago: 21.8cm

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Nagasa: 71.2cm

Sori: 1.1cm

Mekugi-ana: 1





This katana was crafted by *second generation Yasutsugu*, however, it was never signed. Thus the nakago reads *mumei* (unsigned). His younger brother, Echizen Yasutsugu 3rd generation, signed the piece for him.



Aoi-mon (hollyhock)



康
継
作
之
銘

Yasu
tsugu
saku
Mu
mei

The nakago reads:

*This is the signature of 3rd generation
[Echizen] Yasutsugu.*

San (3)

dai

Yasu

tsugu

Mei

Kore





NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 41st year of Showa (1966), April 17th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Yasutsugu Saku Mumei (omote, front)

3 Dai Yasutsugu Mei Kore (ura, back)

Nagasa (length)

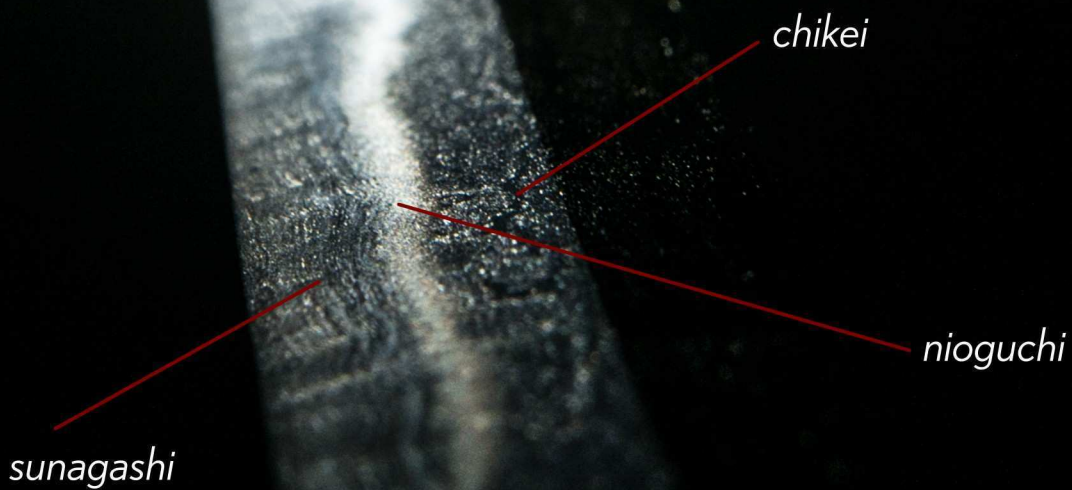
71.1cm

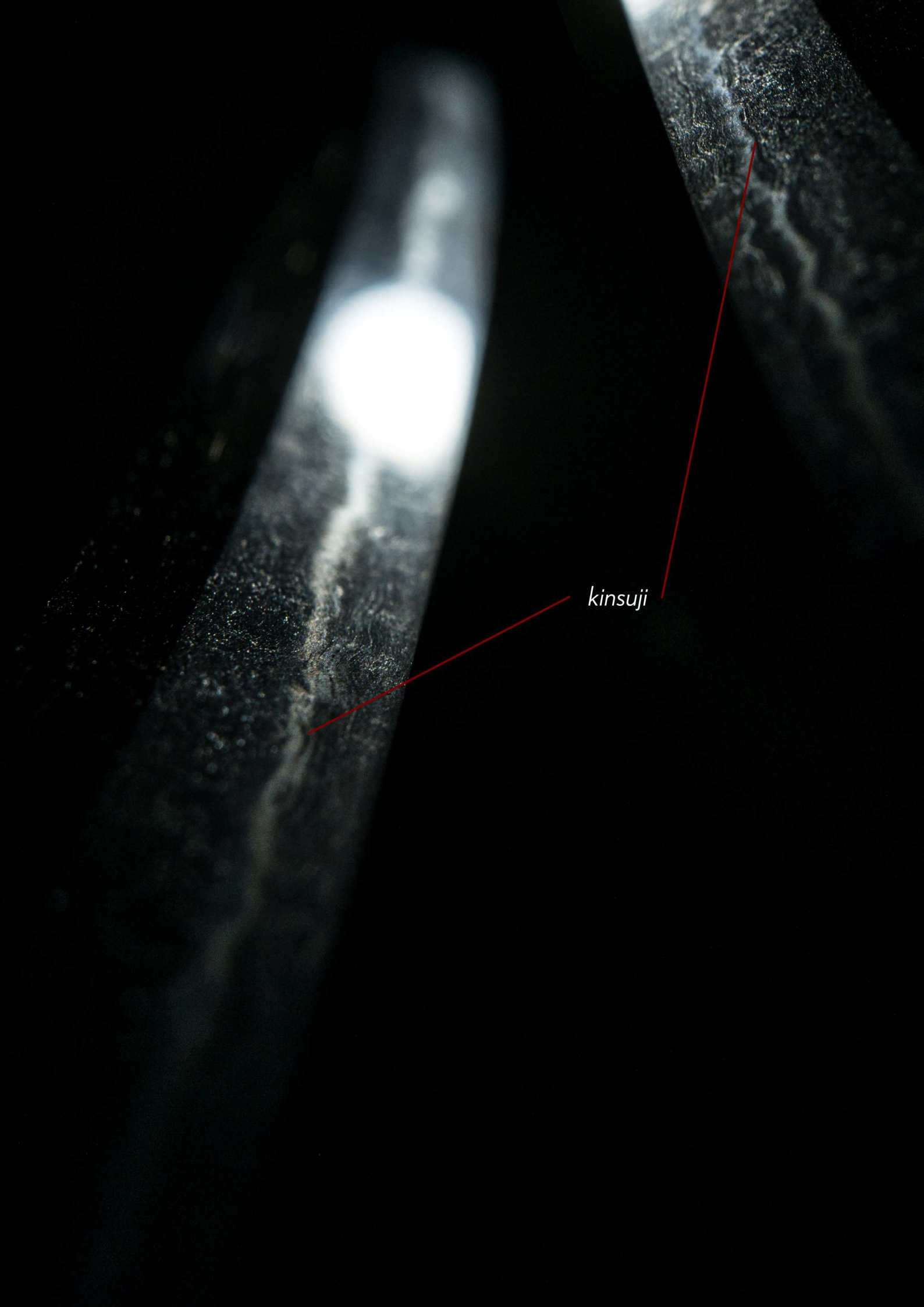
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Hamon

Second generation *Yasutsugu* is known for a thick *nioguchi* (crystals that make up the hamon).

This sword has plentiful *sunagashi* (brushed sand), *chikei* (dark lines in the jihada) and *kinsuji* (black lines within the hamon).





kinsuji



Shirasaya



Gin-habaki
(silver)





Tsuba

A beautiful polished iron *sukashi* (openwork) tsuba depicting the *aoi-mon* (hollyhock leaf) consistent with the Yasutsugu *kamon* (family crest) carried on the sword.

The tsuba is from the *Shoami School* crafted during the middle of the Edo period (1700s).

Design also depicts three geese in flight over a grassy plain. Wonderful work.



This tsuba is certified with NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certification



Deep in thought as the nobleman strategizes his next move in the game *GO*.

GO is a board game invented in China four thousand years ago, where it is known as *Wei Qi* or *Wei Chi*. Later introduced to Japan, it became the favourite game of nobility, particularly with the three great samurai generals *Oda Nobunaga*, *Toyotomi Hideyoshi* and *Tokugawa Ieyasu*.





Like the strategic general, the spider is also a master tactician.

What's your strategy?



The *tsuka* (hilt) has been preserved since the middle Edo period (1700s).





Where form meets function.

A magnificently carved *kojiri* provides protection to the tip of the saya.





Happy dragon.

