



ITEM# UJKA197

A HIROSHIGE KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (CIRCA KAN'EI TO KANBUN 1624~1673)

Swordsmith:	<i>Bushu Shitahara Ju Hiroshige (attribution)</i>		
Construction:	<i>Unokubi-zukuri (shape of a cormorant's neck)</i>		
Measurements:	Length: 65.1cm (<i>ubu-nakago</i>)	Curvature: 1.5cm	Moto-haba: 3.15cm
Jihada:	<i>Ko-mokume with masame, tobiyaki</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Notare with ko-gunome, clear nioguchi with kanitsume, kinsuji and sunagashi</i>		
Certificate:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (<i>a Sword Especially Worthy of Conservation</i>)		
Fujishiro:	Chu-Josaku (<i>collectively ranked as above average swordsmiths</i>)		
Included:	Shirasaya, bags, stand, kit, DVD, printed description		

SOLD

Some swords simply *feel* invincible. Constructed in a rare *unokubi-zukuri* shape based on the great *naginata* pole arms of the warrior monks, this muscular katana by *Hiroshige* glides effortlessly in hands. This is due to the skillfully beveled spine that removes any excess weight. The *Shitahara school* has a reputation for producing powerful swords that samurai warrior class could trust with their lives. They are the only school that worked in Tokyo prior to the 1600s.

A clear *notare hamon* with bright spots of *tobiyaki* and *kanitsume* – areas that resemble the *claws of a crab* – offer an abundance of steely detail to admire. Look for the long stretch of *muneyaki* (tempering) along the spine by way of the *Soshu* tradition. A stunning custom *koshirae* was built for this charismatic katana in the **2019 Year of the Wild Boar** theme of *inoshishi* (wild boar).

Saki-kasane: 5.4mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 8.7mm

Omosa: 785g

Kissaki: 3.9cm

Saki-haba: 2.3cm

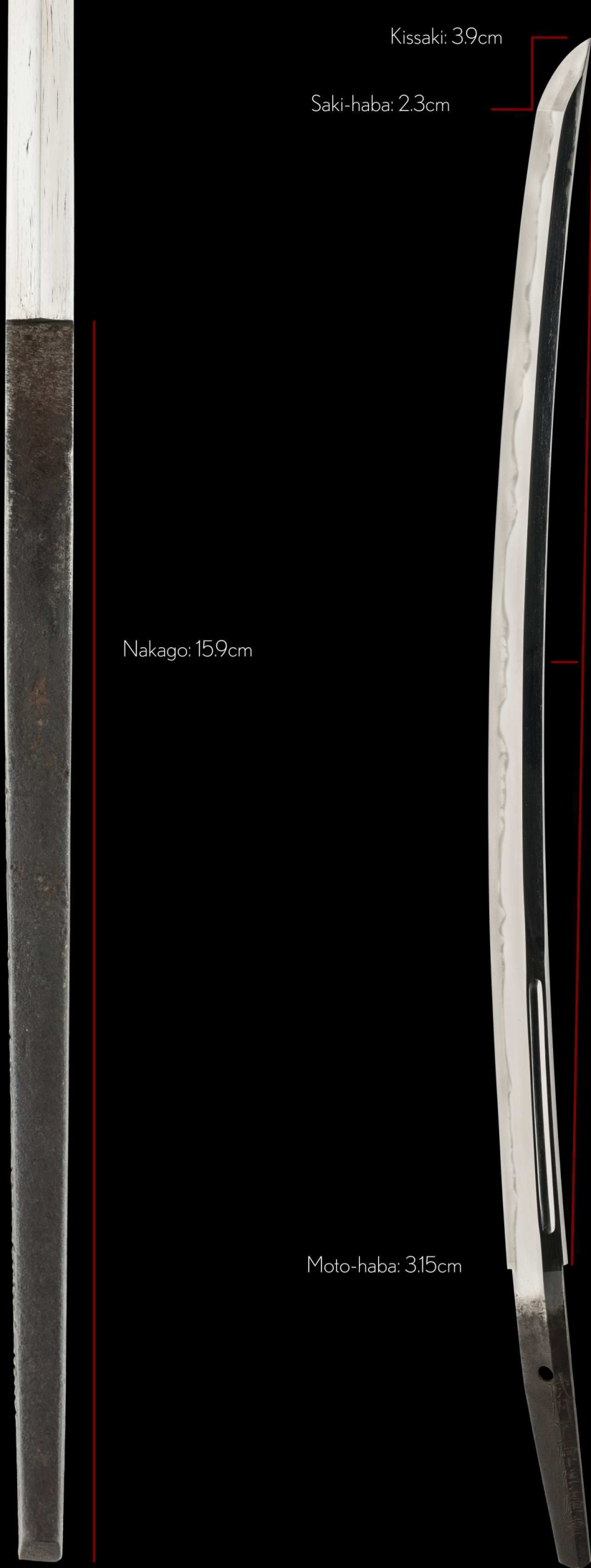
Nakago: 15.9cm

Moto-haba: 3.15cm

Nagasa: 65.1cm

Sori: 1.5cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



Swords forged by the *Shitahara school* have a reputation for being strong, invincible weapons for the samurai warrior class. They are the only school that worked in *Musashi* province (Tokyo) prior to the 1600s.

This very powerful *unokubi-zukuri* shaped blade can be dated from the *Kan'ei* era to the *Kanbun* era (circa 1624 to 1673).





Location: *Bushu* (Hachioji, Tokyo)

School: *Shitahara*

Swordsmith: *Hiroshige*

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

katte-sagari

(right-handed, downward-slanting file marks)

Bu

shu

Shita

hara

Ju

Hiro

shige

This katana has a unique *nakago* (tang) whereby the upper part has a bulge that tapers into a narrow lower section.

It is said to resemble the belly (*bara*) shape of a bitterling fish (*tanago*).

Thus this nakago shape is referred to as *tanago-bara*.



Tanago (bitterling)

特 保
26201503



No 1005302



鑑 定 書

一 刀 銘 武州下原住広重

長二尺一寸一分

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十八年六月一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



千 葉 教育委員会
第 9414 号
昭和28年 3月16日

NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 28th year of Heisei (2016), June 1st

One, Katana

Bushu Shitahara Ju Hiroshige

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 1-sun 1-bu (65.1cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Unokubi-zukuri



The unique shape of the sword is referred to as *unokubi-zukuri*, as it resembles the *neck of a cormorant* (bird). *U* means cormorant, *kubi* is neck, *zukuri* is shape.

Unokubi-zukuri, swords taper in the middle section of the *shjinogi-ji* and then widen in the top *kissaki* area. Blades with an *unokubi zukuri* shape often also feature *naginata-hi* which is a short *koshi-bi*.

This geometry was initially designed to lighten the blade of a *naginata* while keeping its functionality intact.

Cormorants are expert swimmers and divers despite the fact they are buoyant. To overcome this hurdle, they swallow pebbles to make themselves heavy enough to stay under water. A testament to the saying, "if there is a will, there is a way."

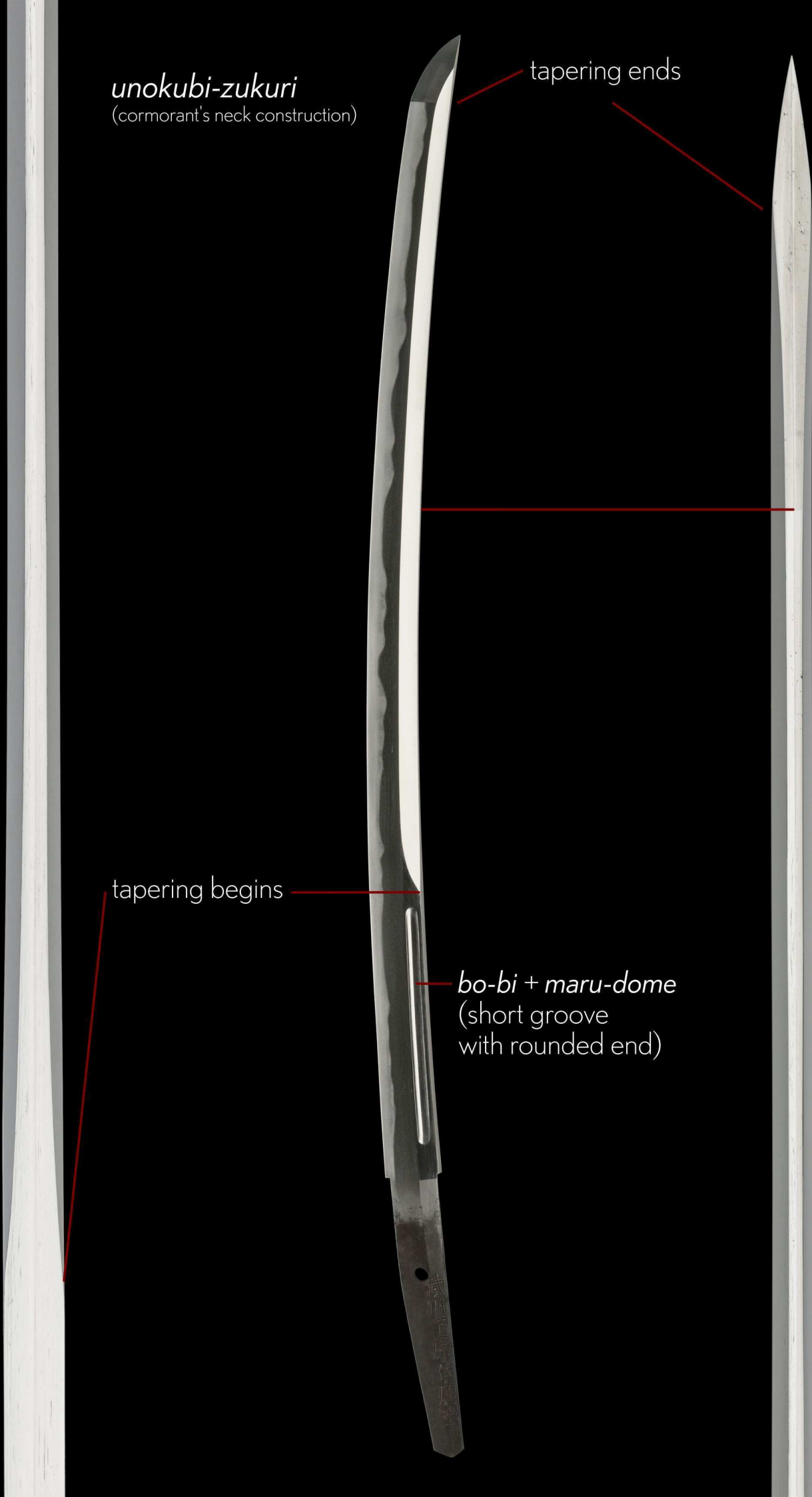


unokubi-zukuri
(cormorant's neck construction)

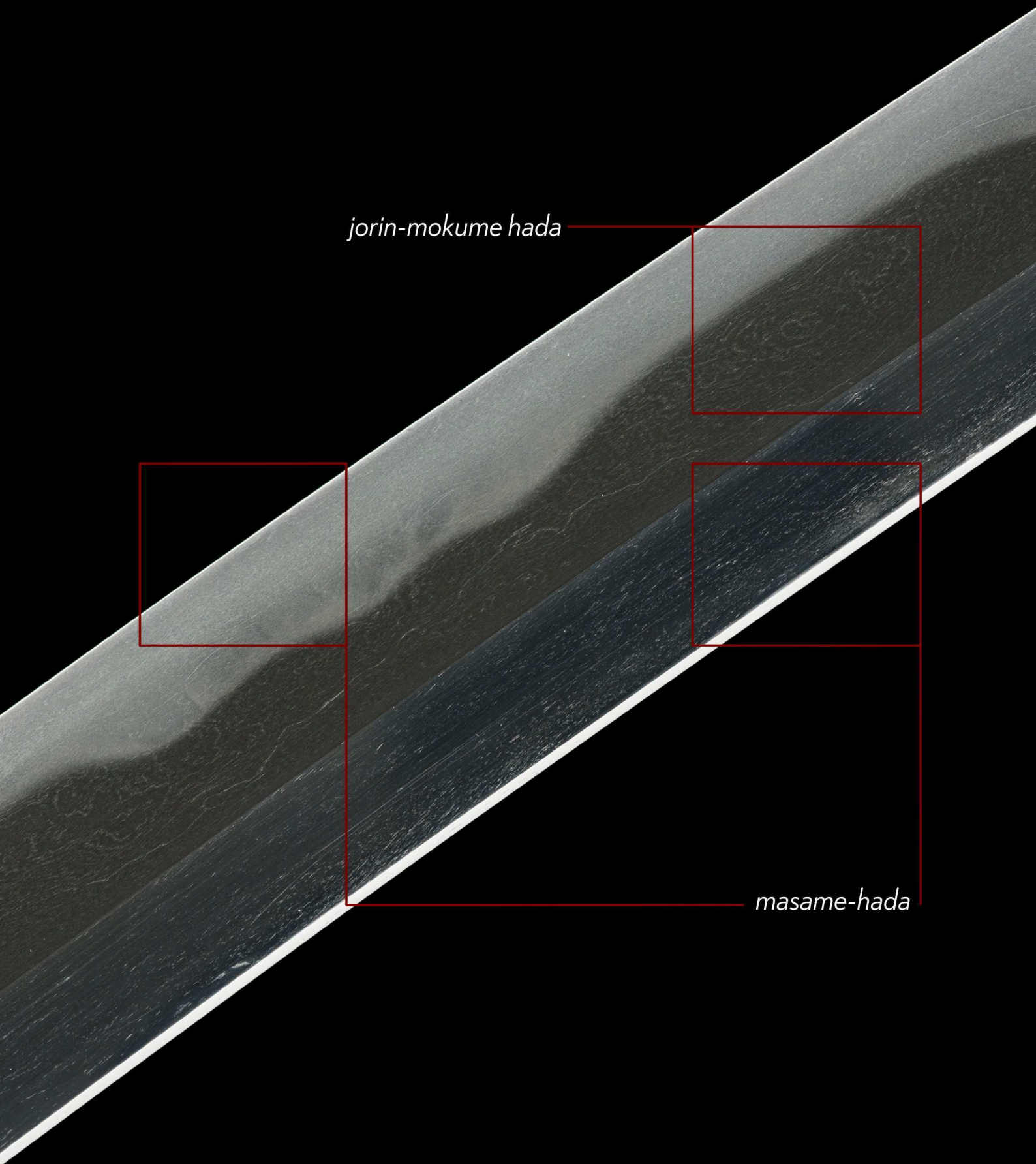
tapering ends

tapering begins

bo-bi + maru-dome
(short groove
with rounded end)



The magnificent *jihada* (surface grain) displays *jorin-moku* - prominent pools of concentric circles of *mokume* that resemble the annual rings of a tree. Beautiful *masame-hada* (straight grain) can also be seen in the *shinogi-ji* and towards the *ha* (cutting edge).



jorin-mokume hada

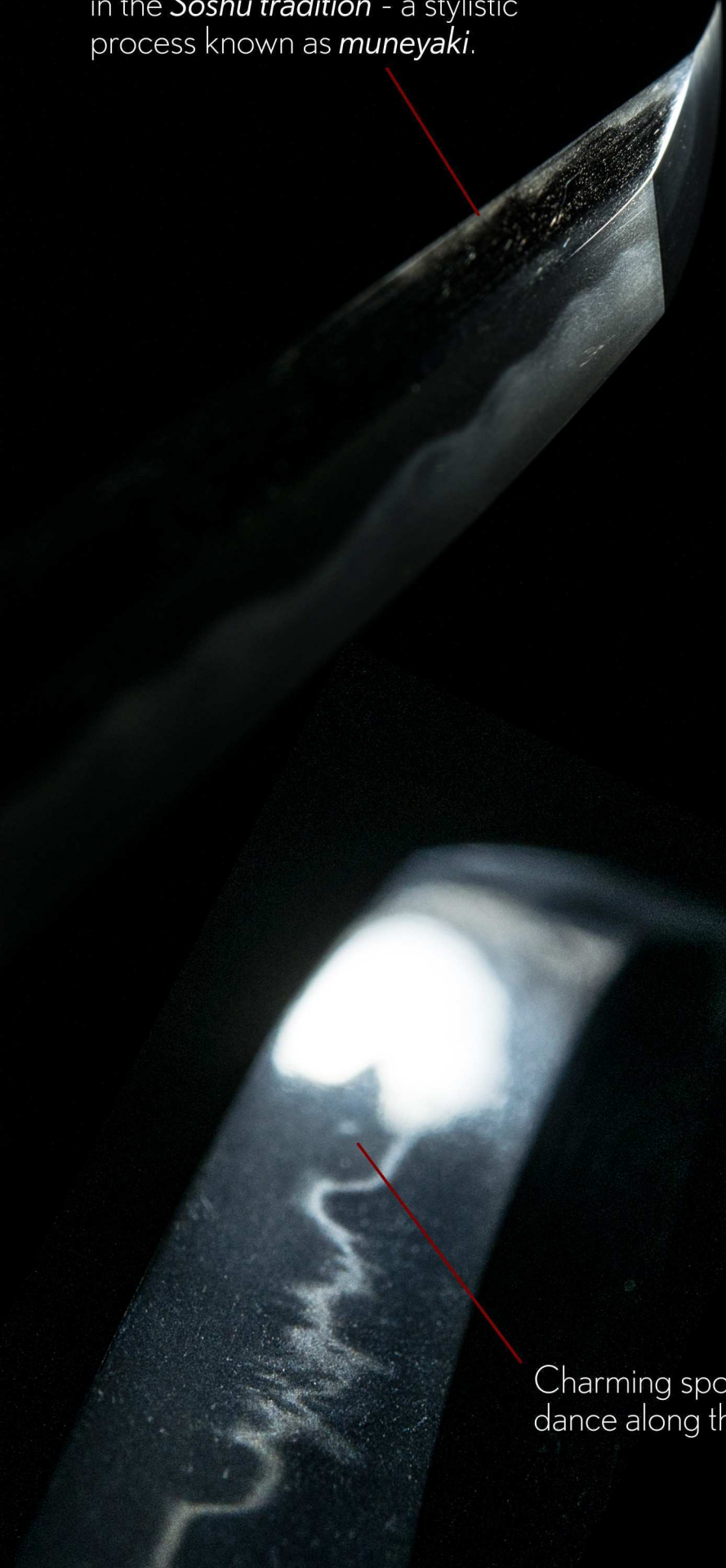
masame-hada

A golden line of *kinsuji* rips through the *hamon*.

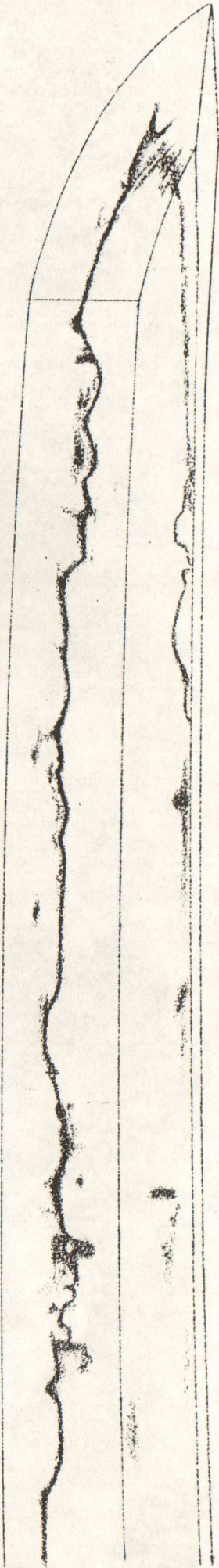
dark swirls of *chikei*



The *mune* (spine) has been tempered in the *Soshu tradition* - a stylistic process known as *muneyaki*.



Charming spots of *tobiyaki* dance along the blade.





This brilliant katana pulsates with a *hamon* based on wavy *notare* mixed with *ko-gunome*, *tobiyaki* (spots) and a clear *nioguchi*.



The *hamon* is forged in lovely *nio-deki* where the crystals shine together uniformly.



On the *sashi-ura* (reverse side) the *hamon* delights us with a pattern of *kanitsume* or "crab claws".

Crabs are symbolic of ninja warriors for they both move sideways, silently approaching their target.

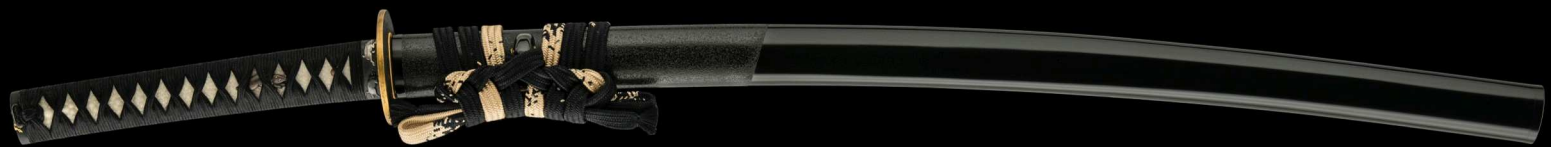


Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



habaki
gold wrapped over copper base
with *kiri* straight file pattern

The completed *custom koshirae* in the theme of *Inoshishi*, commemorating 2019 as The Year of the Wild Boar.



Your Custom Koshirae and Samurai Daisho



Many fine antique *samurai swords* today come stored in a *shirasaya* only. A shirasaya acts like a humidior, protecting the steel for the long term.

Just as the samurai would have ordered a custom *koshirae* (outdoor mounts) during the Edo period, you too can have a traditional set of koshirae crafted for your sword like a tailored suit in a theme that connects with your spirit.

At Unique Japan, we have proudly created dozens of custom koshirae projects for our clients over the years - each with their own style and energy.

The *tsuka* (hilt), *saya* (scabbard), *samekawa* (ray skin), silk, and lacquer are *all handcrafted by skilled craftspeople in Japan*. The *tsuba*, *fuchi-kashira*, *menuki* and other fittings are carefully sourced samurai antiques largely from the Edo period. This unique blend of modern life meeting traditional history is what makes each creation so personally rewarding for every client.

The investment required starts from \$4,000 depending on the quality and rarity of the fittings and the complexity of the lacquerwork.

Each custom koshirae project takes several months to complete properly. Contact Unique Japan on starting your personal koshirae journey.



(daisho: the official dress code for the samurai)

