



ITEM# UJKA200

A NIO SCHOOL KATANA

UNSIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (GENTOKU ERA: 1329-1331)

- Swordsmith:** *The Nio School (attribution)*
Location: Suo province
Length: 74.35cm (o-suriage)
Curvature: 2.2cm
Moto-haba: 2.9cm
Saki-haba: 1.7cm
Ko-Kissaki: 2.3cm
Hamon: *Hoso suguha ko-gunome ko-ashi ko-nie tsuki nioi-guchi urumi gokoro*
Jihada: *Beautiful itame, with jinie and shirake utsuri*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK 60th Juyo Token** (a sword designated as Profound by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword. Achieved in October 2014.)
Certificate x 3: **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (a koshirae, tsuba and fuchi-kashira all designated as Authentic by the Non-Profit Japanese Sword Appraisal Association)
Fujishiro: *Jo-saku (3rd gen. Kiyotsuna & Kiyohisa ranked as superior swordsmiths)*
Included: Edo-period koshirae, shirasaya, carry bags, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, booklet, NBTHK magazine, printed description, export permit from Japan

SOLD

It gives us great pleasure to introduce a very special katana from the *Nio School*. The sword was crafted during the **Late Kamakura Period**, circa 1329. It attained prestigious **NBTHK Jujo Token Certification** in October 2014.

Words are hard to describe the aura this blade exudes. There is a serenity and elegance to her shape and steel. The sword is also fitted with a lovely set of Edo-period period koshirae.

The Nio school (二王) of Suo province (modern-day Yamaguchi prefecture) were active between the Kamakura period through to the late Edo Period. The founder of the school is said to be *Kiyozane* circa 1249, having travelled from *Yamato* or *Chikuzen* province. His grandson, *Kiyotsuna I* is generally regarded as the founder of the school with a sword from circa 1265 that is registered as *Jujo Bunkasai* (Important Cultural Object), see image below.



The origin of the school name has very interesting background stories. It is said that a tachi by first generation Kiyotsuna cut a chain that locked the door of the Nio-do temple and helped to rescue Nio-son (a statue of Deva) from a raging fire.

The NBTHK states on the Jujo white paper that the Nio name comes from the location in which they settled to called Niho. Many spiritual temples are located in the area.

Nio, meaning “Benevolent Guardian Kings of Buddhism” was inscribed on the nakago of latter generation smiths of the school.

A Nio statue, Todaiji Temple in Nara

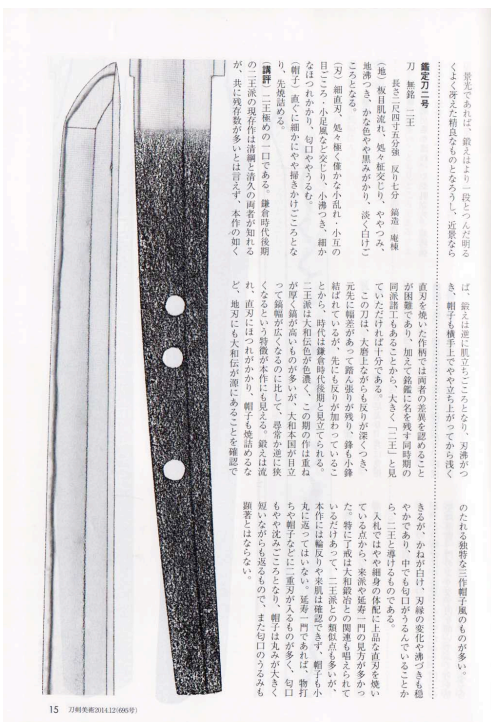


A Nio Tachi by 1st gen. Kiyotsuna, Jujo Bunkasai (~1265, Kamakura period). Length: 80.8cm

***“This katana holds all the fine qualities of the Nio School.
It is an admirable sword with healthy jiba [steel].”***

A Nio School Katana
60th NBTHK Jujo Token Certificate

The NBTHK highlighted this very sword in the **December 2014** edition of their official monthly *Token Bijitsu* magazine. Below is a translation of the article that provides a fine overview for this remarkable piece of Japanese history.



This is a sword from the Nio school. There are a small number of Nio school swords crafted by Kiyotsuna and Kiyohisa from late Kamakura period. This sword carries a suguha hamon.

It is hard to determine whether this sword was created by Kiyotsuna [3rd generation] or Kiyohisa. What is easy to say is that this is Nio school sword.

The sword's features include; o-suriage, deep curvature, funbari, ko-kissaki, curvature at tip, indicating the sword is from the late Kamakura period.

Nio school is similar to the Yamato tradition. There are swords from this time period with thick Kasane and high shinogi. This sword shows many Yamato tradition features that are standard width or narrower than standard width. The kitae (forging structure) is wavy. Hamon is suguha. Boshi is yakizume.

Jiba also shows Yamato tradition qualities with shirake utsuri, changes in habuchi, and calm nie. Most importantly, nioiguchi is watery (urumu) so this easily leads to a conclusion that this is Nio.

There were those who said this could be from the Rai school or Enju school. Ryokai especially, as he has a very similar style to Nio school. However, this sword doesn't have Rai hada nor does the boshi have a small round shape and curled back. If Enju, there would be niyu-ba, shizumi gokoro nioiguchi, more round boshi and curled back. The nioi-guchi would have a less remarkable watery pattern.

Parting notes

This former Samurai tachi is a rare and valuable sword with a strong spiritual energy. The next owner must ensure that it continues its inspiring journey in a faithful manner.

The following pages provide a glimpse into the beauty of this masterpiece along with information on the fine koshirae. Please contact me, Pablo, at service@uniquejapan.com for further information, photos and interest in ownership. Thank you.

Please watch introduction video here: <http://tinyurl.com/ujka200-nio-juyo>

Saki-kasane: 4.6mm[^]

Moto-kasane: 7.2mm

Saki-haba: 1.7cm

Kissaki: 2.3cm

Nagasa: 74.35cm

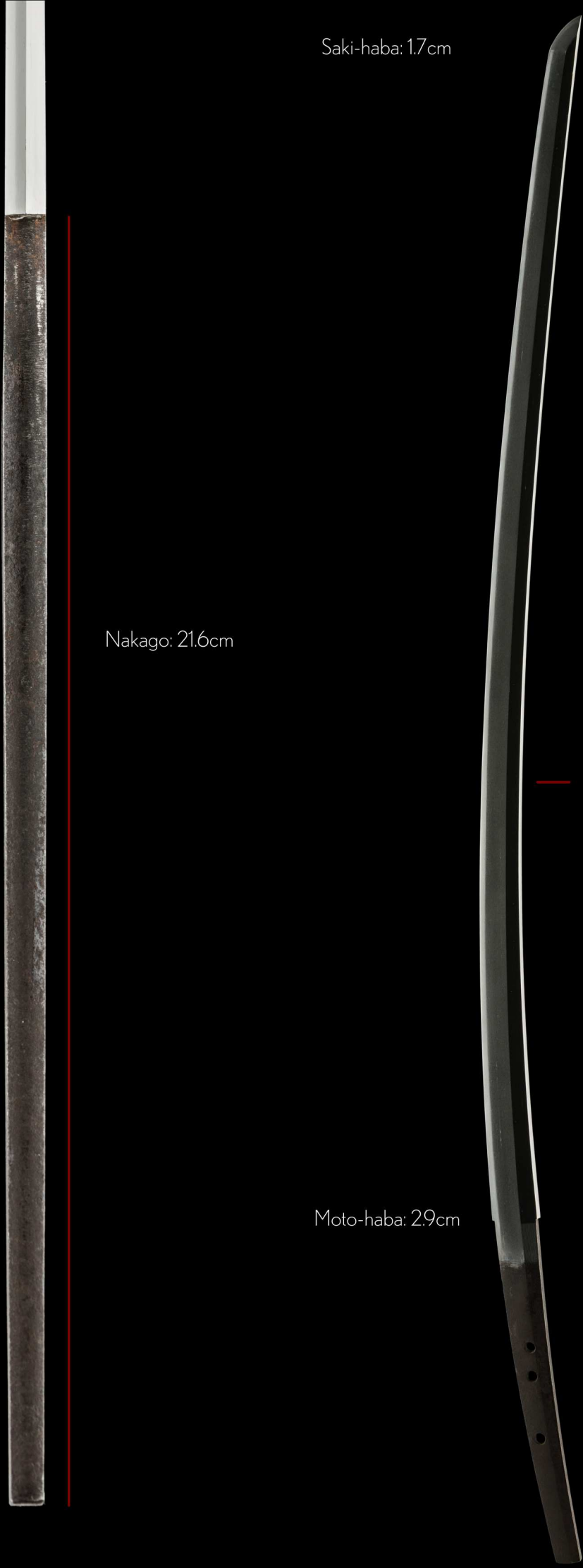
Nakago: 21.6cm

Sori: 2.2cm

Omosa: 755g

Moto-haba: 2.9cm

Mekugi-ana: 3





Koshizori

(curvature at the waist)

This term is used to describe swords with its deepest point towards the base of the blade.

Swords of the *Heian* and *Kamakura* periods generally carry *koshizori* shape as these swords were carried on horseback as *tachi* 'wrapping' around the waist of the Samurai.

Funbari

is a term that describes significant tapering over the first 4~5cm from a wide *moto-haba*

Funbari is a desired characteristic on swords, typically seen on antique *tachi* of the *Kamakura* period of earlier.

重要第三五七四號

指定書

一 刀 無銘 二 王 一 口

法量 長さ七四・三五釐 反り二・二釐
形状 鑄造庵様やや細身元先の幅差つき鑄や高く反りつき中鋒
鍛 板目肌総体に流れごころとなり処々杢を僅かに交え肌立ちごころとなり地沸細かにつき鉄色やや黒みかかり淡く白けごころ

刃文 細直刃主調に小互の目交じり小足入り小沸つき白口うるみごころとなる

帽子 直ぐ調に小丸掃きかけ風となり先焼詰める
茎 大磨上 鑢目切り 目釘孔三

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
重要刀剣に指定する

平成二十六年 十月 十六日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



大阪 教育委員会
第 107069号
平成 3年 4月 9日

NBTHK Juyo Token
Certificate of Designation

a sword designated as *Important (profound)*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 26th year of Heisei (2014), October 16th

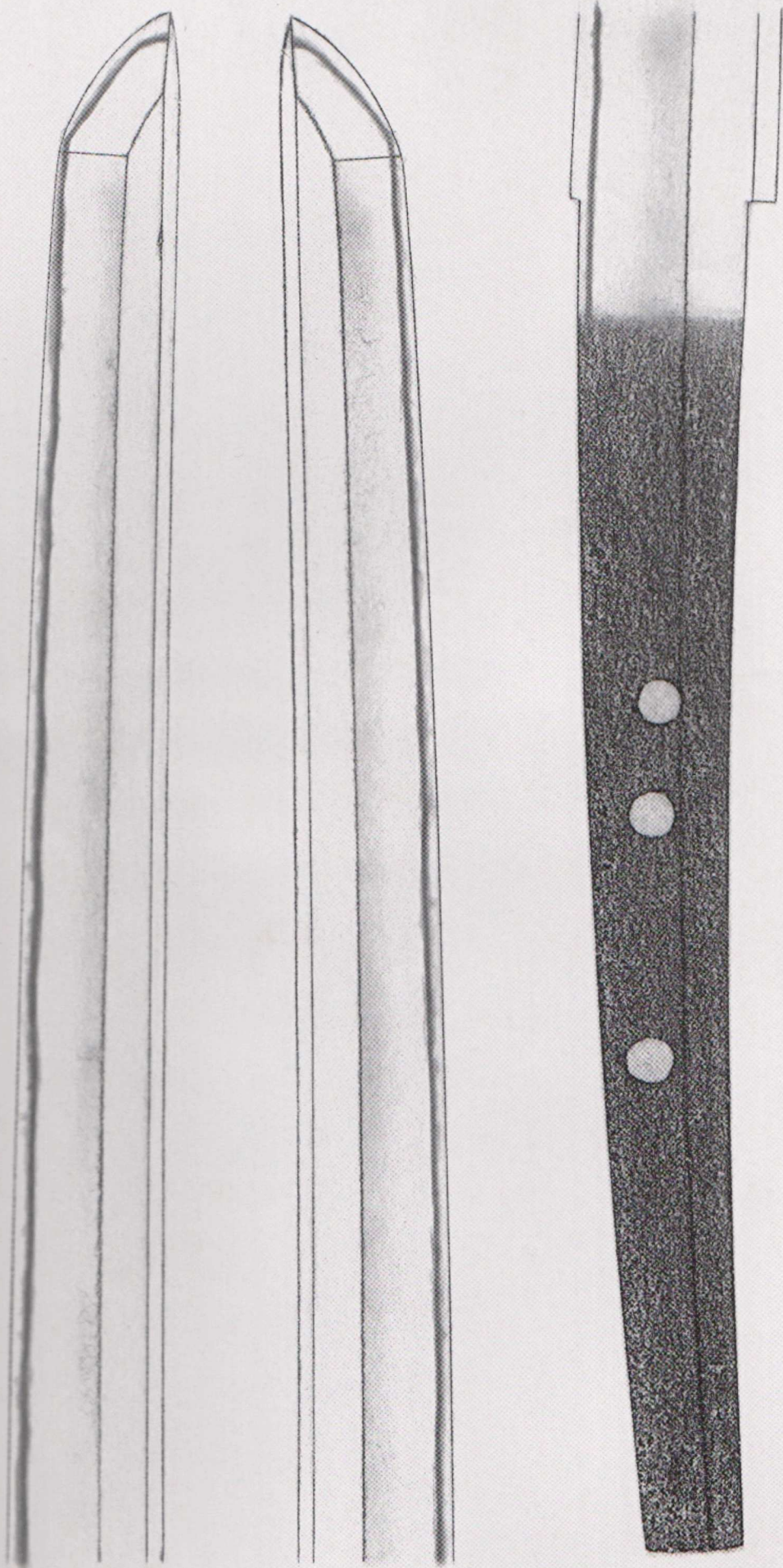
One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Mumei (Nio)

Nagasa (length)
74.35cm

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

刀 無銘 二王



東京大学蔵

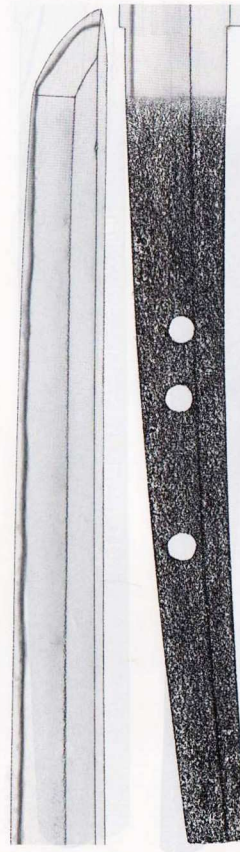
刀剣美術

十二月号

昭和四十一年十一月二十日創刊
 昭和四十一年十一月二十日創刊
 昭和四十一年十一月二十日創刊
 昭和四十一年十一月二十日創刊



公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協会



15 刀剣美術2014.12(695号)

鑑定刀二号
 無銘 二王
 長三尺四寸五分強 反り七分 鑄造 庵棟
 (地) 板目肌流れ、旭々疵交じり、ややつみ、地沸つき、かな色や黒みがかり、淡く白けこころとなす。
 (刃) 細直刃、旭々極く僅かな小乱れ、小互の目こころ、小足風など交じり、小沸つき、細かなはつれかかり、匂口やうらむ。
 (鞘) 直ぐに細かにやや締まかけこころとなり、先焼詰める。
 (講評) 二王様の一口である。鎌倉時代後期の二王派の現存作は清純と清久の両者が知られるが、共に残存数が多いとは言えず、本作の如くは、鍛えは逆に肌立ちこころとなり、刃沸がつき、鞘も横手上でやや立ち上がってから浅く直刃を焼いた作柄では両者の差異を認めることが困難であり、加えて銘鑑に名を残す同時期の同派諸工もあることから、大きく「二王」と見ていただければ十分である。
 この刀は、大筋上ながらも反りが深く、元先に幅が広がって踵も張り残り、鋒も小鋒結ばれているが、先にも反りが加わっていることから、時代は鎌倉時代後期と見立てられる。二王派は大和伝色が色濃く、この期の作は重ねが厚く鑄が高いものが多いが、大和本国が目立つて鑄幅が広くなるのに比して、尋常か逆に狭くなるという特徴が本作にも見える。鍛えは流れ、直刃にはつれかかり、鞘も焼詰めるなど、地刃にも大和伝が源にあることを確認するが、かねが白け、刃縁の変化や沸つきも絶やがであり、中でも匂口がうるんでいることから、二王と推けるものである。
 入札ではやや細身の体配に上品な直刃を焼いている点から、来派や延寿一門の見方が多かった。特に丁戒は大和鍛冶との関連も唱えられているだけあって、二王派との類似点も多いが、本作には輪反りや束肌は確認できず、鞘も小丸に返つてはいない。延寿一門であれば、物打ちや鞘子などに二重刃が入るのが多く、匂口もやや沈みこころとなり、鞘子は丸みが大きく短いながらも返るもので、また匂口のうるみも顕著とはならない。

NBTHK Token Bijitsu Magazine

this Juyo Token katana by the Nio School was featured on page 15 of the December 2014 edition of the sword museum's official monthly magazine.

The article features information on the blade itself, from the key measurements to the qualities of the steel.

A translation of the text is contained within this document.

A copy of the magazine will be presented to the new caretaker of this precious sword.

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

A close-up, diagonal view of a sword blade. The blade is dark, almost black, with a bright, curved highlight along its edge. The surface shows a complex, wavy pattern of light and dark lines, characteristic of the jihada steel treatment. The background is dark and out of focus.

Jihada

The structure of the steel is a gorgeous combination of wavy *mokume* (burl wood grain pattern) and *masame* (straight grain) that demonstrates a clear Yamato tradition heritage.

It is probable that the Nio School is connected to the Yamato smiths by way of the **Naminohira School** on nearby Kyushu island.

Note the fine dark lines of *chikei* twisting within the jihada.

Hamon

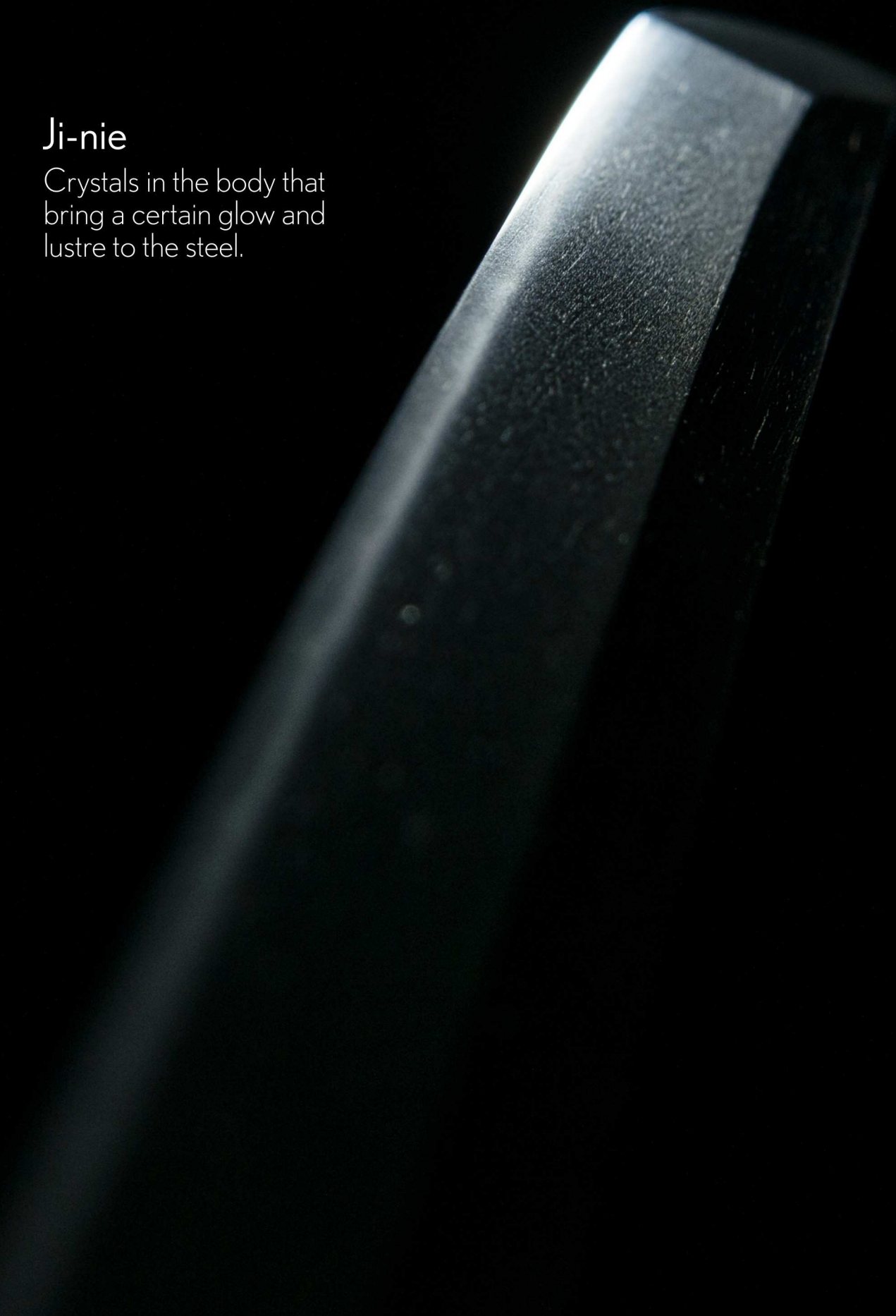
The *Nio School* of Suo province (modern-day Yamaguchi prefecture) is famous for producing a striking *hamon* (temper line) in which the *nioguchi* (crystals that make up the hamon) is described as being *urumu* meaning "watery" or "hazy" in appearance.

The hamon is based on *hoso-suguha* (thin and straight) with an elegant tightly woven *ko-gunome* pattern with short *ashi* (legs) extending to the *ha* (cutting edge).



Ji-nie

Crystals in the body that bring a certain glow and lustre to the steel.





Shirasaya



Yokoyasuri-habaki
(brass)





Namban Tsuba

A large and formidable *Namban tsuba* crafted in Nagasaki on Kyushu island during the late Edo period. It is formed of polished iron (*tetsu suriji*) in *sukashi* (open work) construction.

The beautiful design is of *Chabana* - seasonal flowers for the Japanese Tea Ceremony.

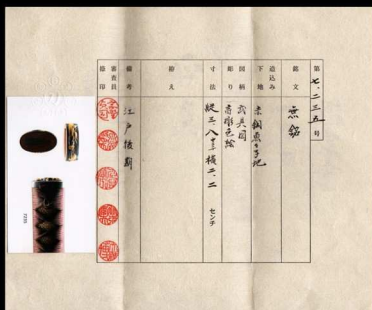
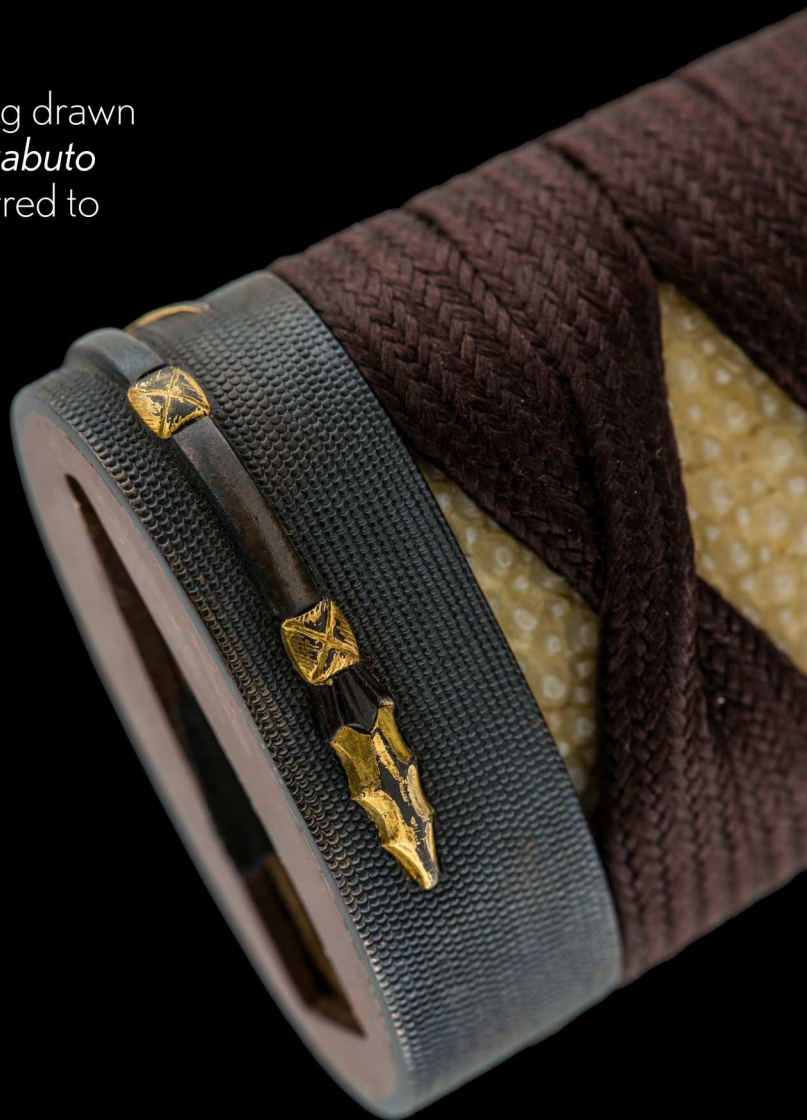


An NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity accompanies the tsuba.





A vicious dragon with a *hoko* (spear) being drawn from his snarling teeth. Together with the *kabuto* (helmet) on the *kashira*, this design is referred to as *Bugu Zu* (weaponry).



Accompanied with an NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity attributing the fuchi-kashira as the work of the *Den Kyo, Goto School* made in late Edo period.



Kashira (pommel)

An elaborately detailed
Samurai *kabuto* (helmet)



Botan (Japanese peony) is known as the "King of Flowers" symbolizing wealth, good fortune, honour and bravery.





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