



ITEM# UJKA272

A RAI KUNIZANE KATANA

UNSIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (CIRCA 1280~1318)

Swordsmith: *Rai Kunizane (attribution)*
Measurements: **Length:** 67.3cm (*o-suriage*) **Curvature:** 2.6cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0cm
Jihada: *Ko-mokume with ji-nie, chikei and yubashiri, classic Rai-hada*
Hamon: *Ko-gunome with kinsuji, ko-ashi, and yo*
Certificate: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (*a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword*)
Fujishiro: **Jo-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Authenticity: **Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei** (*former director of the NBTHK*)
Included: Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description

SOLD

This gem of a katana has been attributed to *Rai Kunizane*, a Juyo-level smith from the respected Rai School. The Rai School was established in Yamashiro province, modern day Kyoto. The character Rai 来 means "to come", as the founder is said to have travelled to Japan from overseas.

There are almost certainly two generations of Rai Kunizane (sometimes written *Kunisane*). The first generation born 1268 worked until early 1300s' late Kamakura period (died in 1318) was the son (and apprentice) of master *Rai Kunitoshi*. A second-generation Rai Kunizane lived from about 1350. Given the grandiose *torii-zori* curvature of the sword, its shape speaks of the Kamakura period, thus the first generation's work.

This healthy katana carries all the hallmarks of the Rai School. Swirling *chikei* within a *ko-mokume hada* and a touch of *utsuri*. A bright *ko-gunome hamon* with *kinsuji*, *ko-ashi* and spots of *yo* (leaves) offers plenty of eye candy to nibble on. The shirasaya exhibits *sayagaki* by *Tanobe-sensei* who has written fine praise for the sword. A custom koshirae project would be an adventure to consider.

Saki-kasane: 4.1mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 5.6mm

Omosa: 610g

Saki-haba: 2.1cm

Nakago: 18.0cm

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Nagasa: 67.3cm

Sori: 2.6cm

Mekugi-ana: 2




Elegant *torii-zori* shape, where the evenly distributed *sori* (curvature) resembles a *torii* (archway to a Shinto shrine). The deepest point resting near the middle of the blade.

The type of curvature is also referred to as *Kyo-zori* as most of the koto period schools based in *Yamashiro* (Kyoto) - such as this Rai Kunizane katana - applied this type of *sori*.



Itsukushima-jinja (source: pixabay)





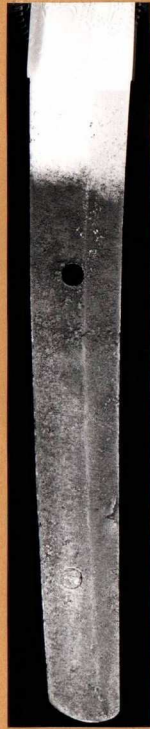
This katana carries an *o-suriage nakago*, where the *nakago* (tang) is greatly shortened. The new nakago is formed from what was originally part of the blade.

Note that one of the older holes has been filled in suggesting that this former tachi was shortened more than once over its lifetime.

In *o-suriage* blades the original *mei* (signature) is lost, although sometimes preserved as an *orikaeshi* (folded-over signature) or *gakumei* (framed signature).

特 係
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財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



鑑定書

長 二尺二寸三分

一 刀 無銘(求国真)

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

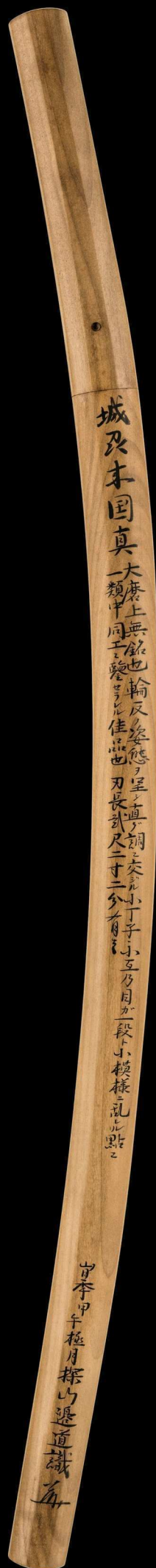
Issued in the 18th year of Heisei (2006), January 19th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Mumei (Rai Kunizane)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 2-bu (67.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



Joshu
Rai
Kunizane

*Osuriage Mumei Nari Wazori no Shitai wo Teishi
Suguchō ni Majiru Kochoji Kogunome ga Ichidan to
Kokibo ni Midareru Ten ni Ichirui Chu Doukou ni
Kanserareru Kahin Nari*

O-suriage, unsigned, circular curvature, straight temper line, small clove shape temper line, small irregularly undulating temper line, lots of small movement, displaying classic Rai school features, good work.

Nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 2-bu ari kore (67.3cm)

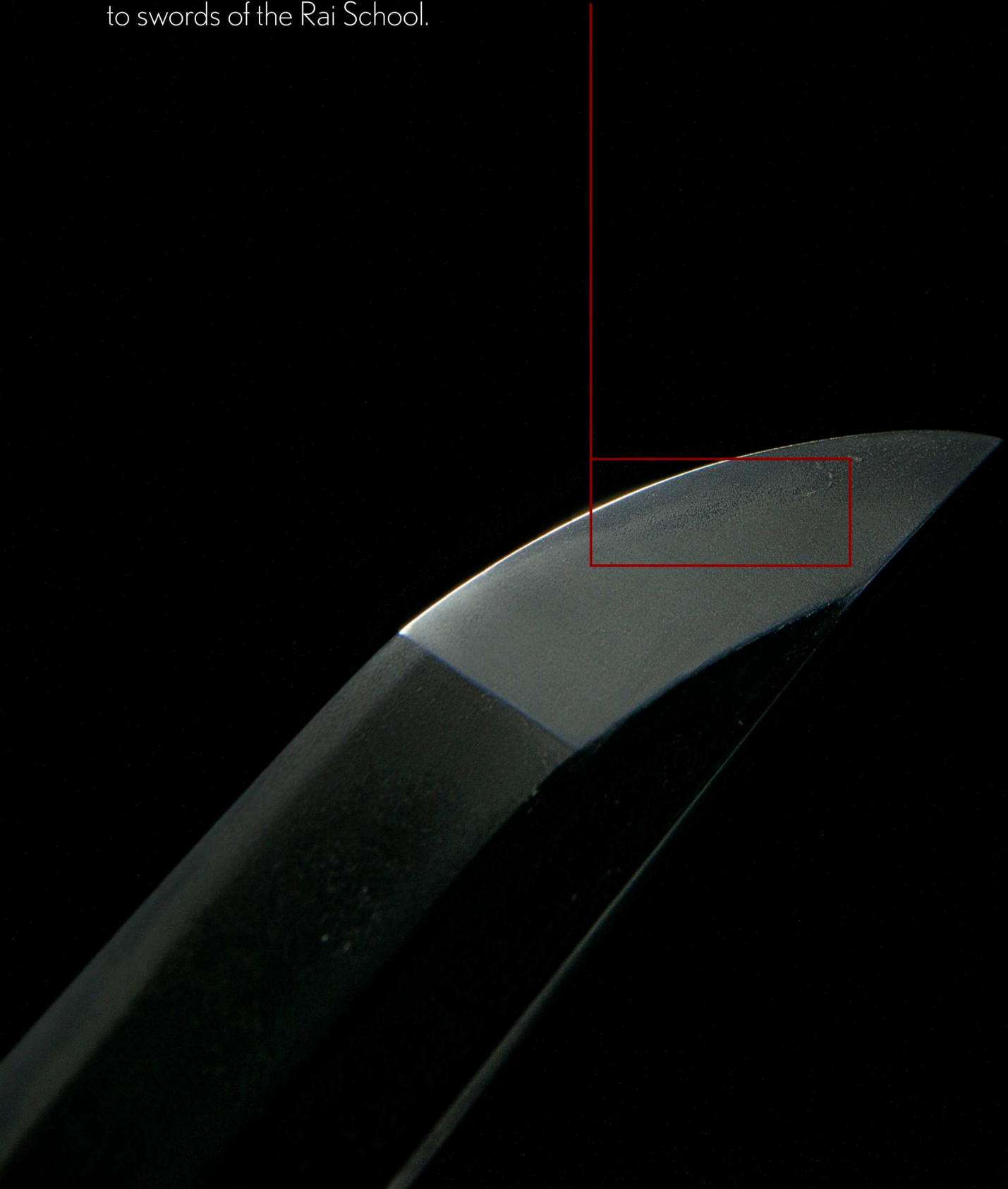
Jizai Kougo Gokugetsu (April 2014)

Tanzan Hendoushiki (Kaou)

signed by Tanobe sensei with his personal seal

The *boshi* (hamon in the tip) is called *yakitsume* (without turn-back) where the hamon continues directly to the *mune* (back of the blade). In this case in a *midare* (irregular wave) fashion.

Note the clusters of nie crystals called *nie-kuzure*, a boshi feature to swords of the Rai School.






nie crystals

Swords of the Rai School are crafted with the majority of the blade made of *shingane* or core steel.

When polished the core can be revealed in tiny islands that carry a slightly different hue.

This unique trait has come to be known as *Rai-hada* (steel skin or gain of the Rai School).


A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a Japanese katana, showing the intricate patterns of the steel. The blade is oriented diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right. The surface exhibits a complex, circular grain pattern known as ko-mokume hada, which is characterized by a dense, swirling texture. Interspersed within this grain are dark, linear features called chikei, which are described as burrowing through the steel. A red rectangular box highlights a specific section of the blade, and a red line connects this box to the text below. The lighting is dramatic, with a bright highlight along the top edge of the blade, contrasting sharply with the dark background.

Tight *ko-mokume hada* (circular burl grain) with dark lines of *chikei* burrowing through the steel.

When the light reflects off of the *jigane* (surface steel), it shines like a diamond.

This effect is called *ji-nie*, a sign of a top quality sword.





ko-ashi

A gorgeous *ko-gunome hamon* temper line that pulses in a narrow manner. Note the small *ashi* (legs) that gravitate to the cutting edge.



kinsuji

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the yubashiri (concentrated spots of nie crystals) and yo (leaves) patterns. The blade is dark and metallic, with a bright light reflecting off the edge. The yubashiri is a dark, textured area that looks like running water, and the yo is a series of small, dark, leaf-like spots. A red line points from the text to the yubashiri, and another red line points from the text to the yo. A red square highlights a portion of the yubashiri.

yubashiri (concentrated spots of nie crystals) that look like running water.

yo (leaves)

Steps to Building Your Own Koshirae

Many fine antique Samurai swords today come stored only in a shirasaya. A shirasaya acts like a humidior, protecting the steel for the long term. Just as the Samurai would have custom ordered during the Edo Period we can build a traditional set of outdoor koshirae (sword mounts) for your sword.

Step 1: Choose your sword

(find the sword that chooses you)



Step 2: Select your antique fittings & colours

(decide on a theme that speaks to you and your sword)



Step 3: Patience...

(it takes about 3-6 months to build as it is handmade by master craftsmen in Japan)

Total production cost ranges from \$2,500 ~ \$5,000

Please speak to a member of the Unique Japan team to get started!