



ITEM# UJKA280

A SUKEMITSU KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY MUROMACHI PERIOD (OEI ERA: 1394~1428)

- Swordsmith:** *Sukemitsu (two-character signature)*
Location: Bizen province
Measurements: **Length:** 73.3cm (*machi-okuri*) **Curvature:** 2.7cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0cm
Jihada: *Ko-mokume with chikei, ashi and light midare utsuri*
Hamon: *Bright gunome choji-midare*
Boshi: *Hakikake and midare-komi*
Certificate: **NBTHK Hozon** (*a sword designated as Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword*)
Included: Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description

SOLD

The magnificent shape of this *koshi-zori* (curvature at the waist) katana by swordsmith Bizen Sukemitsu speaks to the horseback-ridden tachi of the Kamakura period. There is a Sukemitsu from the famed *Yoshioka Ichimonji School* that worked from 1295-1326 who signed *katana-mei* with deep *koshi-zori* who may very well have been the craftsman.

The NBTHK, however, has dated the sword to the Muromachi period (1392~1573). In W.M. Hawley's book of Japanese swordsmiths, there is a Sukemitsu listing who worked at about 1394, which we conservatively attribute this blade to.

This is a katana with bundles of character. It has clearly been involved in countless battles and numerous polishes over the centuries. As such the steel has some *hada-ware* (openings in the body). These scars of time are easily forgivable given it's a signed piece with a graceful shape and a lively *gunome choji-midare hamon* with light *utsuri*. It's now looking for a caring home to lay it's beautiful *boshi* (hat).

Saki-kasane: 5.5mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 7.4mm

Omosa: 820g

Saki-haba: 2.0cm

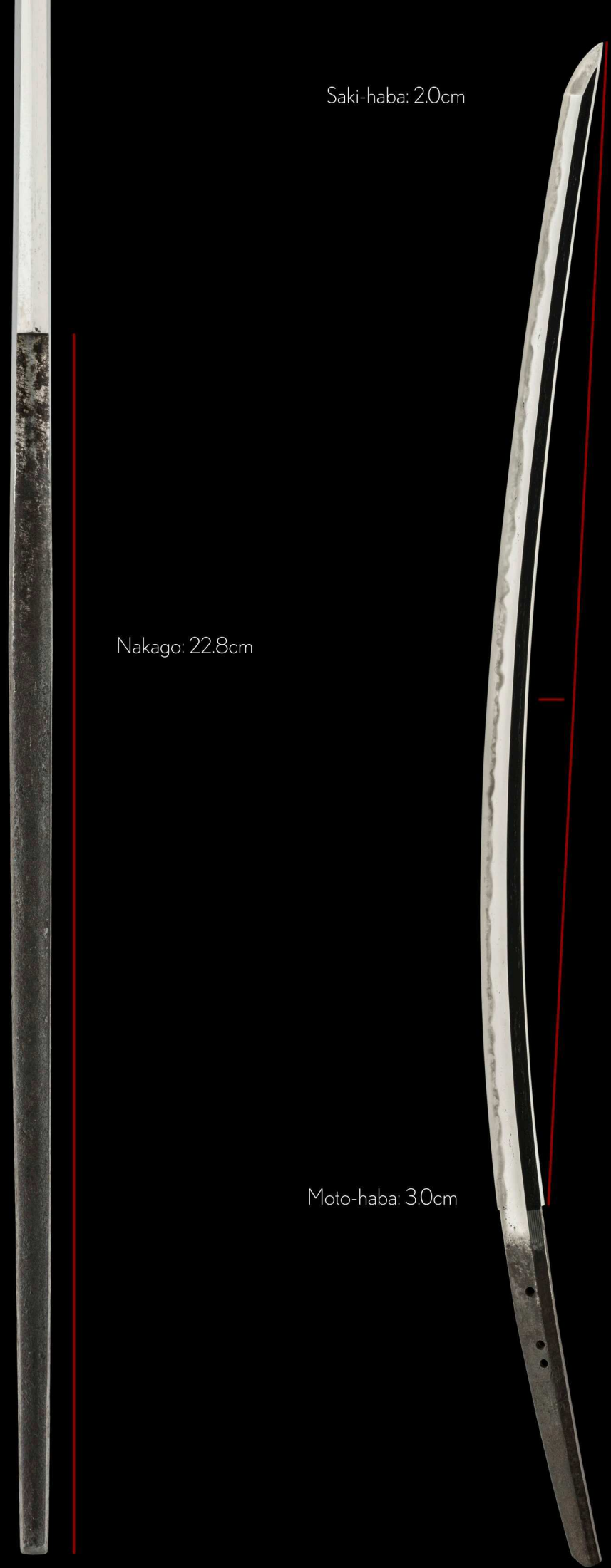
Nakago: 22.8cm

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Nagasa: 73.3cm

Sori: 2.7cm

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 sugata* (overall shape) as these swords were carried on horseback as *tachi* 'wrapping' around the waist of the samurai.

As the NBTHK has dated this blade to the Muromachi period (1392~1573), it would have been crafted very early on during this time frame as demand for such a shape was greater.



Location: Bizen province

Swordsmith: *Sukemitsu*

A classic two-character signature
of the Koto period (pre-1600).



Suke

mitsu

Machi-okuri nakago

This sword was originally carried on horseback as a tachi, therefore it needed to be long and curvy.

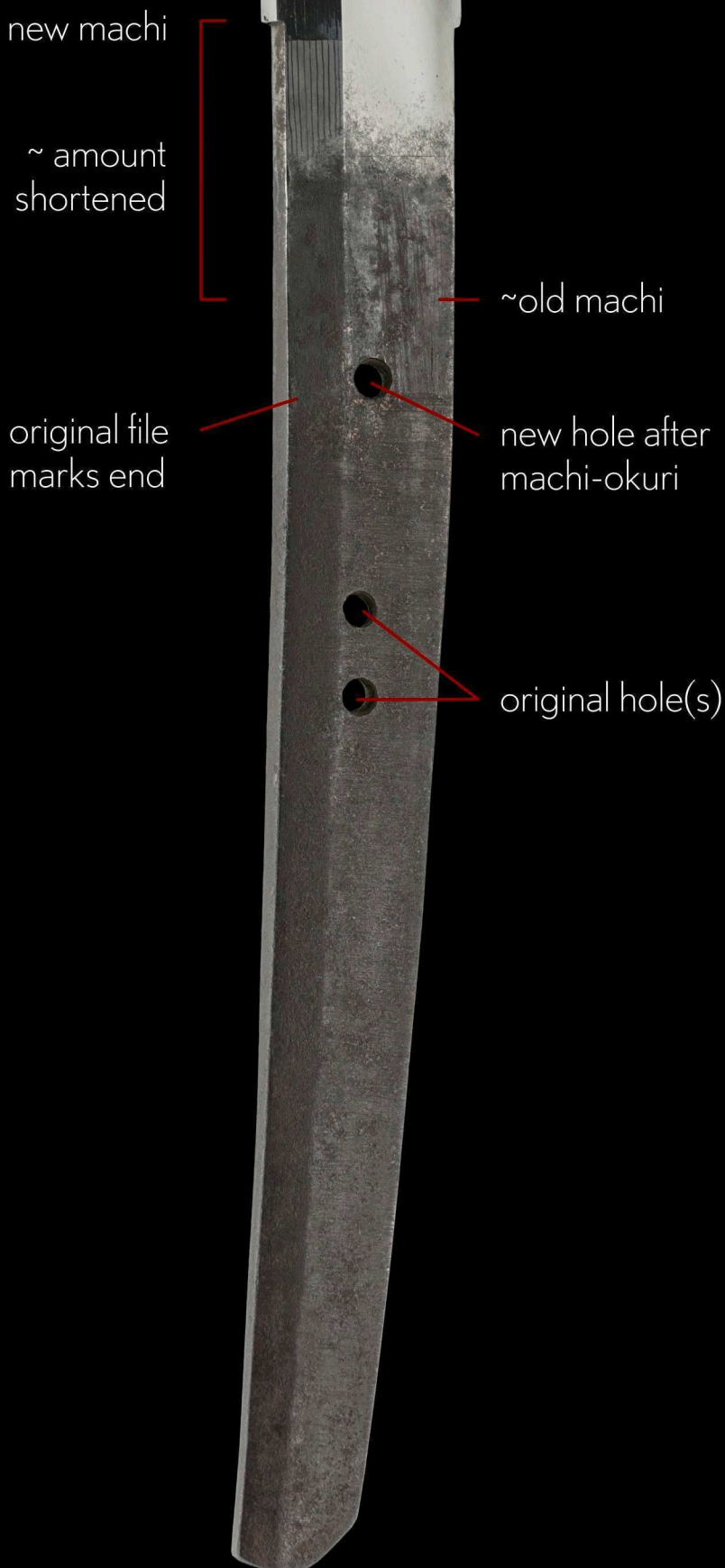
As warfare changed over the centuries, swords needed to be drawn from a standing position. Therefore the *nagasa* (length) had to be physically viable given the height of the warrior. In most cases, a longer blade needed to be shortened, often times by several centimetres.

One way to shorten a sword is through a process called *suriage* where the sword is cut from the nakago and a new nakago is formed from where the cutting edge used to be.

In other cases, such as on this katana, the shorter nagasa is achieved by simply moving the *machi* (notches) upwards.

This process is called *machi-okuri*.

The overall length of the sword is unchanged, only the cutting edge is shorter, typically by about 1-sun or 3cm. A new hole (*mekugi-ana*) is created for the new hilt that is required. It should also be noted that with *machi-okuri* the *mei* (signature) is left intact.





the kanji character 光 (mitsu) means 'bright'.

28201505

No 3012664



鑑定書

一刀 銘 助光(時代室町)

長二尺四寸二分弱

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十八年 七月二十一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



秋田 教育委員会
第 839 号
昭和26年 4月25日

NBTHK Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 28th year of Heisei (2016), July 21st

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Sukemitsu (Muromachi period)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 4-sun 2-bu jaku (73.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Boshi is a lovely mix of *hakikake*
(swept) with *midare-komi* (wavy).





Tried and tested

This sword has stories to tell. This is a katana that has been in several battles and thus polished many times over the centuries.

As such, the *ji* (steel body) has opened at the folds in several places along the blade. This flaw is called *hada-ware*.

While artistically hada-ware is not desirable, it is not a serious or fatal flaw, and certainly much more acceptable on older swords.

And this is why the sword was awarded NBTHK Hozon certification. It *is* a sword worthy of preservation and it's now looking for an owner who will care for this retired warrior in a respectful manner.

mokume-hada
(circular burl grain)



A dazzling *gunome choji-midare hamon*.



A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (edge pattern). The blade is dark, and the hamon is a lighter, wavy line. The background is black. Three red lines point from text labels on the left to specific parts of the hamon pattern.

light *midare utsuri*
(reflection)

choji
(clove blossoms)

ashi (legs)

The *jigane* radiates a lovely blue tinge, a characteristic of high quality koto-period swords.

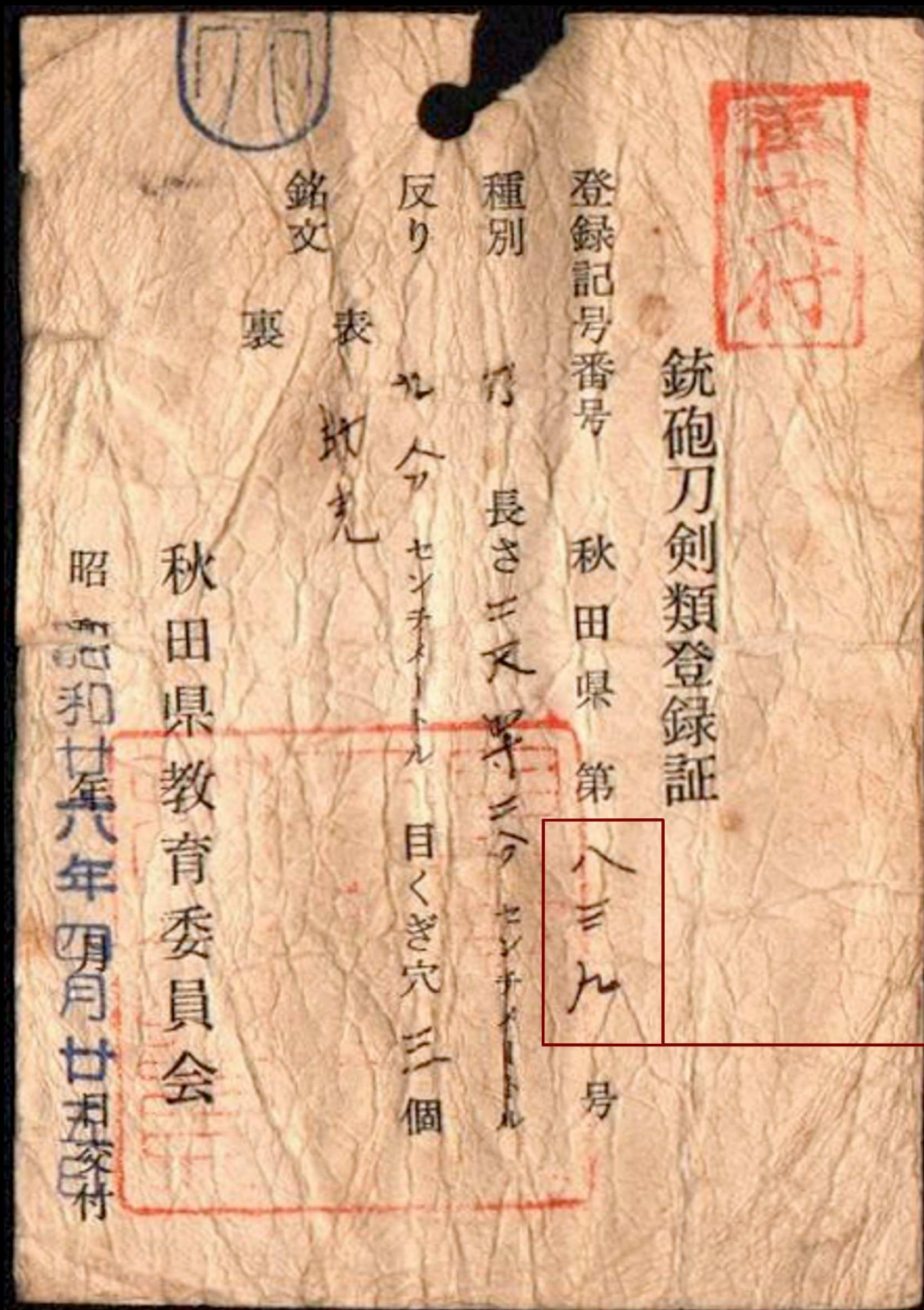




Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



Silver Niju-habaki
(copper base with rain pattern)



This is the *torokusho* (registration card) for the Sukemitsu katana. The card was registered in the 26th year of Showa (April 1951) in Akita.

This is significant as 1951 was the very first year that swords were formally registered in Japan. Many former Daimyo families were invited to submit their collections suggesting this blade was once held by a prominent family.

The serial number is just **839**, one of the very first swords registered in Japan.



吉岡
助光



吉岡
助光

Sukemitsu
Yoshioka

ARIGATO!

THANK YOU FOR DOWNLOADING OUR CATALOGUE.
WE LOOK FORWARD TO SERVING YOU.

PLEASE JOIN OUR VIP MAILING LIST TO BE INFORMED OF RECENTLY
ACQUIRED SWORDS. EMAIL US AT SERVICE@UNIQUEJAPAN.COM



*A recently completed Kanewaka katana custom koshirae project from father to son.
Congratulations John.*

UNIQUEJAPAN.COM