

ITEM# UJKA362

A YASUSHIGE 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

UNSIGNED, SUE-KOTÔ MUROMACHI PERIOD (EIROKU ERA: 1558~1570)

Swordsmith:	<i>Shitahara Yasushige</i>
Measurements:	Length: 70.3cm (<i>o-suriage</i>) Sori: 1.9cm Moto-haba: 2.82cm Weight: 660g
Jihada:	<i>Stunning mokume-hada mixed with itame, nagare-hada with plentiful chikei</i>
Hamon:	<i>Gunome midare with ko-notare, togari, kinsuji, sunagashi and ashi in nie-deki</i>
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Hozon (<i>sword Worthy of Preservation</i>)
Certificate #2-3:	NBTHK Kichô and Tokubetsu Kichô (<i>koshirae & sword designated as precious</i>)
Certificate #4-5:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (<i>koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic</i>)
Fujishiro rank:	Chûjô-saku (<i>ranked as an above average swordsmith</i>)
Sharpness:	Wazamonô (<i>rated as a maker of supremely sharp swords</i>)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD

This powerful katana has been attributed to *wazamono*-ranked *Yasushige* from the *Shitahara* school – official smiths of the *Tokugawa* family from the late *Muromachi* period. The blade features stunning whirlpools of *mokume*, *itame* and *nagare-hada* that immediately captures the eye. Beautiful lines of *kinsuji* further rip through the bright *gunome-midare hamon*. This katana was tested by *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* when he was 62-years-old, severing through three stacked bodies in one stroke. The result of the test documented in gold inlay. A terrific set of Edo-period *koshirae* featuring a *Mogarashi Sôten tsuba* with battling samurai accompanies this highly collectible katana.



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Kissaki: 3.93cm

Saki-haba: 1.95cm

Nagasa: 70.3cm

Moto-kasane: 5.7mm

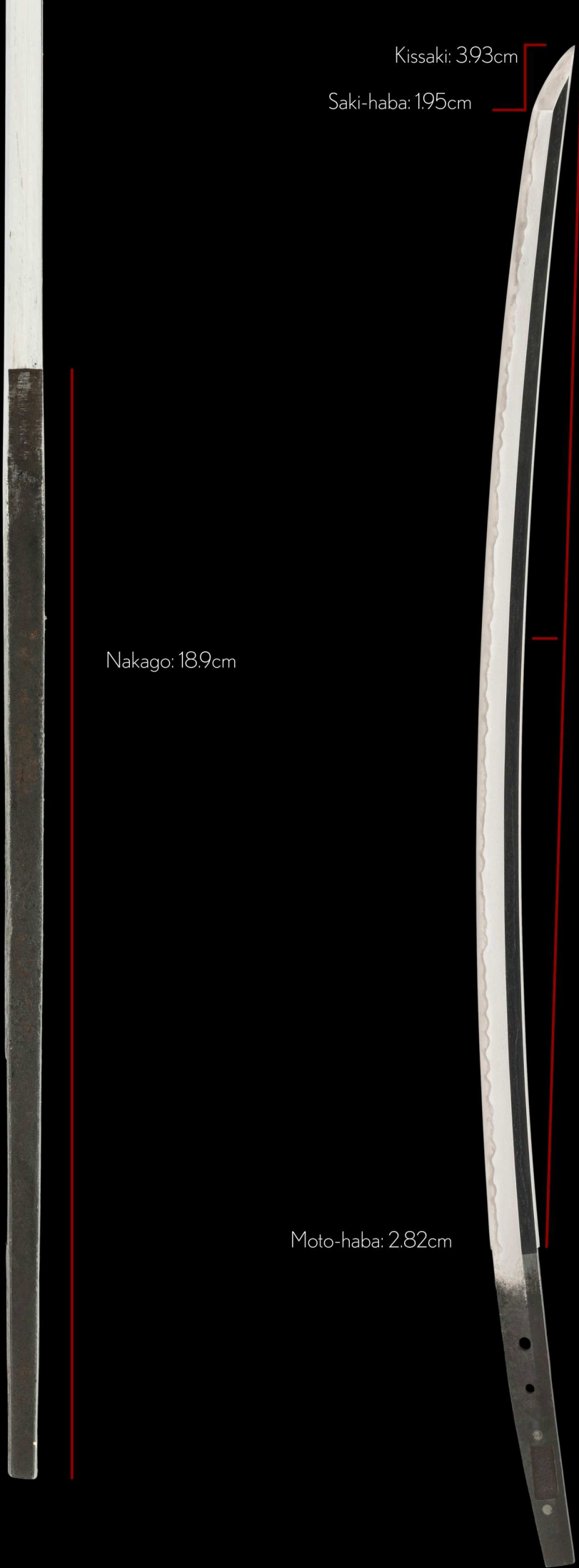
Nakago: 18.9cm

Sori: 1.9cm

Omosa: 660g

Moto-haba: 2.82cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



The *Shitahara* (下原) *school* can trace its roots back five hundred years to swordsmith *Chikashige* (周重) who worked during the *Daiei* period from 1521~1528).

The school flourished with the support of the *Go-Hôjô* clan but after the fall of the clan, they became the official smiths of the *Tokugawa* family, producing swords and spears in the *Hachioji* area in *Tokyo* from the late *Muromachi* period until the end of the Edo period. Interestingly, they were the only school that worked in Tokyo prior to the 1600s and enjoyed the reputation for having produced powerful swords that samurai warrior class could entrust with their lives.

This handsome katana has been attributed to *Yasushige* (康重), *Chikashige's* eldest son, who received the name "*Yasu*" from *Hôjô Ujiyasu* (北条氏康), the third head of *Go-Hôjô* family. *Yasushige's* prime working time was during the *Eiroku* era circa 1558~1570.

After taking in its graceful curvature of this fine samurai sword, the eye gets drawn into the stunning whirlpools of *mokume* and *itame-hada* and even *nagare-hada* grain patterns - distinctive *shitahara-hada* - which converge at the blade's central area. Gorgeous chocolately *chikei* abounds. Beautiful lines of *kinsuji* further rip through the bright *gunome-midare hamon* the full length of the blade.

Backing up the sharp-sword making *wazamono* ranked reputation of *Yasushige*, this katana was tested by *tameshigiri* guru *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* on December 26th, 1660 by severing through *three stacked bodies in one stroke*. The result of the test documented in gold inlay on the nakago of the sword, even providing Nagahisa's age of 62 years at the time of the test. It's important to note that the majority of swords tested by Nagahisa were performed on blades made in the early *shintô* era (1600s) such as those crafted by *Yamato no Kami Yasusada*, so it's relatively rare to have a katana from the Muromachi period to have Nagahisa-certified *tameshigiri*.

A terrific set of *koshirae* from the late Edo period that features a *Mogarashi Sôten tsuba* with battling samurai accompanies this highly collectible katana.



Location: *Musashi province (Tokyo)*

School: *Shitahara*

Swordsmith: *Yasushige* (first generation)

ô-suriage-nakago (greatly shortened tang)

katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)



gakumei window

(*ura*, reverse)

This sword was once a much longer katana. It was shortened during the late Muromachi to early Edo period to a more practical katana length. The original *mei* (signature) is normally lost during the shortening process becoming an *o-suriage nakago*. However, in *gaku-mei* 'framed signature' swords - after the new nakago is formed, the *mei* is preserved and inlaid into the 'new' nakago. On the surface, this is rather an honourable act, preserving the signature of the original smith. This process, though, can be deceitful, whereby a signature from another sword (often by a famous smith) could be inlaid into another shortened sword. And this is what happened here. In the past, this window frame would have had a signature of a well-known smith (probably from the *Nambokuchō* period) and failed authenticity at the NBTHK, ie the characteristics of the sword did not match the known work of the signature that was in the inlaid window.

Therefore, that signature was carefully removed from the window in the recent past (not by Unique Japan), and resubmitted to the NBTHK. It has recently achieved NBTHK Hozon attributing the sword to *Yasushige* of the *Shitahara* school, a strong and accurate assessment.

A window into *gaku-mei*



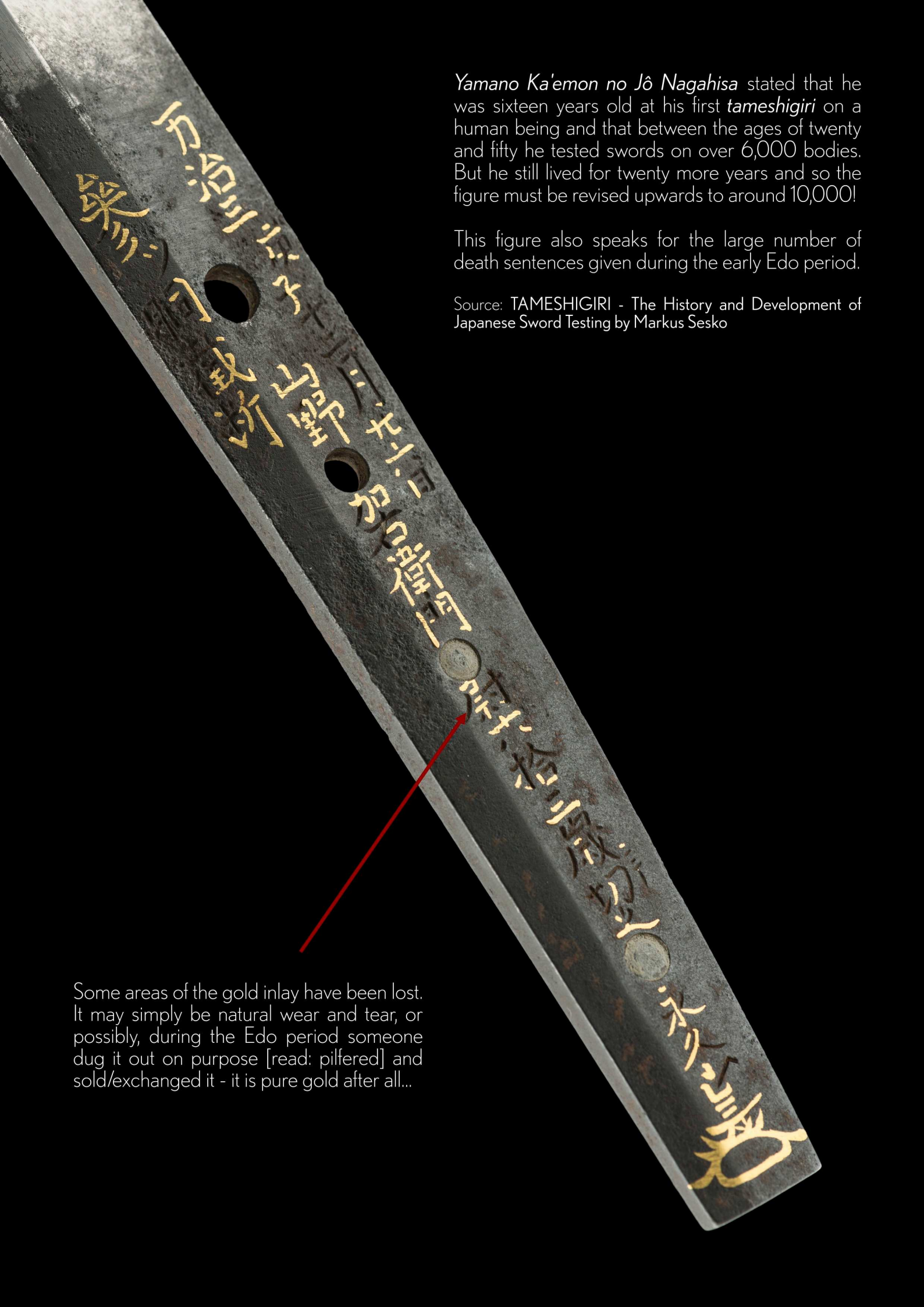
*Manji san kanoe-ne jûnigatsu nijûrokunichi
Mitsu-dô setsudan Yamano Ka'emon no Jô
rokujûsan sai kore o kiru Nagahisa + kaô*

This katana was tested by *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô*
Nagahisa by severing through three stacked bodies
in one stroke. Test performed on December 26th,
1660 when Nagahisa was 62 years old.

(Mi) 参
(tsu) ツ
(do) 胴
(setsu) 截
(dan) 断 (Yama) 山
(no) 野
(Ka) 加
() 右
(e) 衛
(mon (no)) 門
(Jô) 尉
(roku) 六
(jû) 拾
(san) 三
(sai) 歳
(kiru) 切
(kore) 之
(Naga) 永
(hisa) 久
(kaô) 花押



万 (Man)
治 (ji)
三 (san)
庚 (kanoe)
子 (ne)
十 (jû)
二 (ni)
月 (gatsu)
廿 (nijû)
六 (roku)
日 (nichi)



Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa stated that he was sixteen years old at his first *tameshigiri* on a human being and that between the ages of twenty and fifty he tested swords on over 6,000 bodies. But he still lived for twenty more years and so the figure must be revised upwards to around 10,000!

This figure also speaks for the large number of death sentences given during the early Edo period.

Source: TAMESHIGIRI - The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing by Markus Sesko

Some areas of the gold inlay have been lost. It may simply be natural wear and tear, or possibly, during the Edo period someone dug it out on purpose [read: pilfered] and sold/exchanged it - it is pure gold after all...

19200707



No. 378379

鑑定書

長三尺三寸五分

一、刀銘 賀州住兼若造(初代)

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

平成十九年八月三十一日

財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



SPECIMEN

NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

One, Katana

Mei (mumei)
Shitahara Yasushige

This sword has recently passed NBTHK Hozon and the certificate is arriving soon.

Unique Japan will scan and translate when in our possession.

**As a rule of the NBTHK, any sword made from the Muromachi period onwards (1400~) that is *unsigned*, the highest level of certification will be NBTHK Hozon. In terms of quality, had this sword been signed it would surely have been granted NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon.

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example certificate

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第七四九三号

捺 審 査 印 員	備 考	中 心	彫 刻	銚 子	刃 紋	鍛	造 り 込 み	銘 文
	永祿頃	目釘穴 四個 此二 認め 鑓 拵 手 下 が り		直 心 調 へ 込 み 返 り	巾 焼 巾 興 心 互 の 自 乱 れ 足 り	如 輪 杵 肌	鑄 造 り 庵 棟	全 象 最 一 万 治 三 年 庚 子 十 二 月 廿 六 日 夢 野 如 右 衛 門 尉 天 土 藏 切 之 永 天 花 押



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho Certificate of Authenticity

This katana was designated as *Authentic*
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

One, Katana

Mumei (attributed to *Shitahara Terushige*)

*Kinzôgan Manji sannen Kanoe-ne jûnigatsu nijûrokunichi
Mitsu-dô setsudan Yamano Ka'emon no Jô rokujûni-sai kore o kiru
Nagahisa + kaô*

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu kore ari (70.3cm)

Issued in 28th year of Heisei (2016), March 22nd

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)





ayasugi-esque
(waves)

itame-hada
(plank grain)

mokume-hada
(whirlpool burl grain)

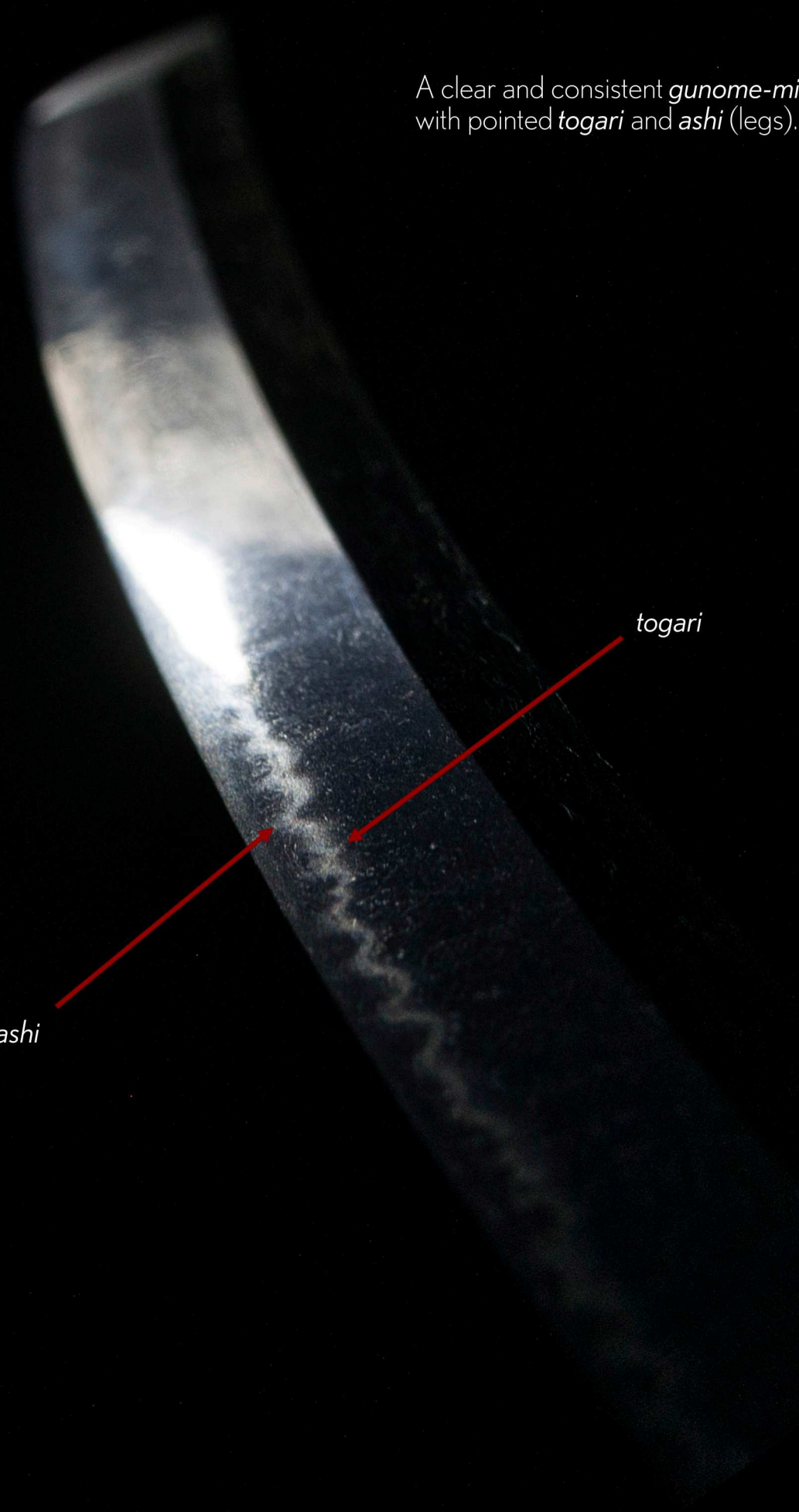
nagare-hada
(running grain)

A buffet of *jihada* grain patterns to feast your eyes on.

A clear and consistent *gunome-midare* with pointed *togari* and *ashi* (legs).

ashi

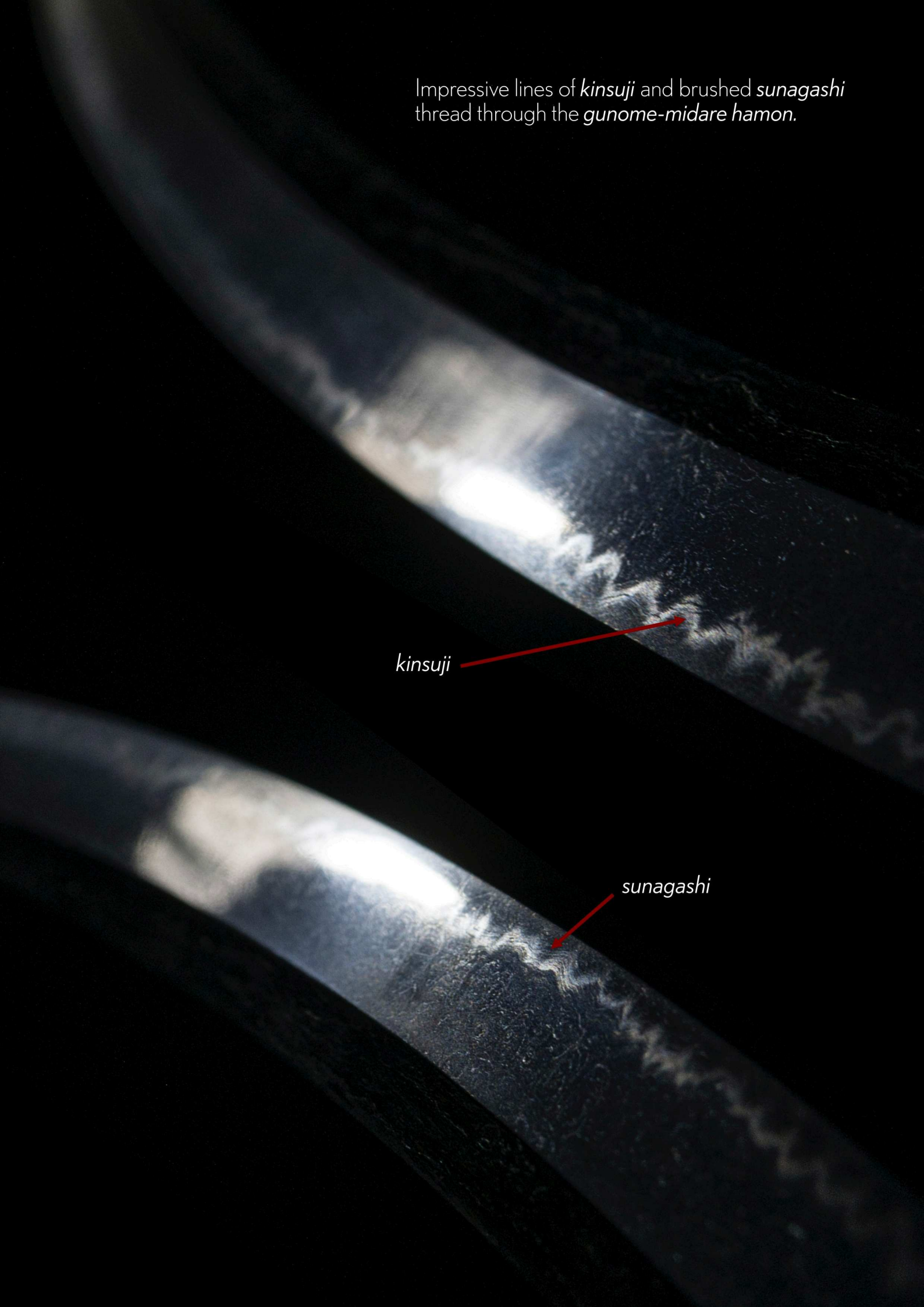
togari



Impressive lines of *kinsuji* and brushed *sunagashi* thread through the *gunome-midare hamon*.

kinsuji

sunagashi



There is a stormy aliveness to this sword that speaks to its turbulent late Muromachi period origins.



Kaen-boshi (candlelit)



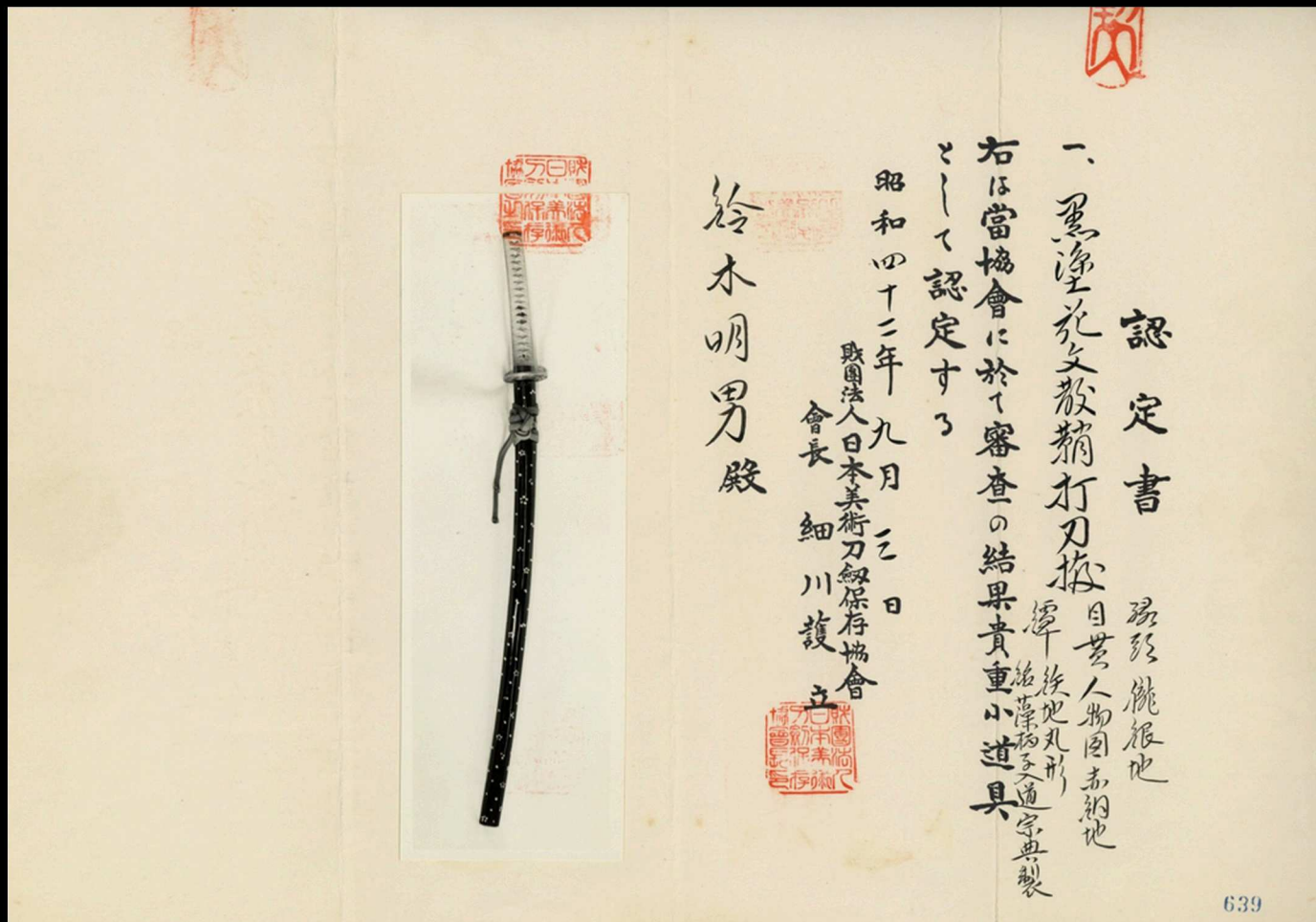
sayagaki potential



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold *habaki* with
copper ground



NBTHK Kichô
Certificate of Designation

A koshirae designated as *Precious*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword
Issued in the 42nd year of Showa (1967), September 3rd

One,

Uchigatana-koshirae lacquered in black with flying flowers pattern

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

(This is a very early NBTHK certificate issued many years
before modern NBTHK Hozon & Tokubetsu Hozon.)



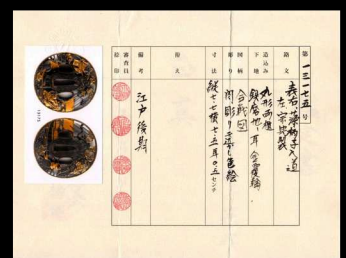
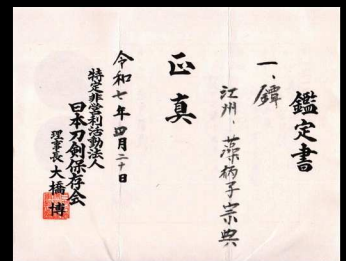
flower petals flying free...



Mogarashi Sôten worked in *Hikone*, *Ômi* Province, crafting fabulously detailed *Mino*-inspired carvings.

Famous for his autumn grass designs and dramatic samurai battle scenes, his densely carved, richly inlaid style became known as *Ômi-bori* and gained popularity even in distant Edo, modern day Tokyo.

This piece shows not only warriors in combat but also includes a phoenix in the lower left – likely symbolizing enduring military fortune.





藻 (Mo)

柄 (gara)

子 (shi)

入 (Nyû)

道 (dô)

(Sô) 宗

(ten) 典

(tsukuru) 製



(reverse)



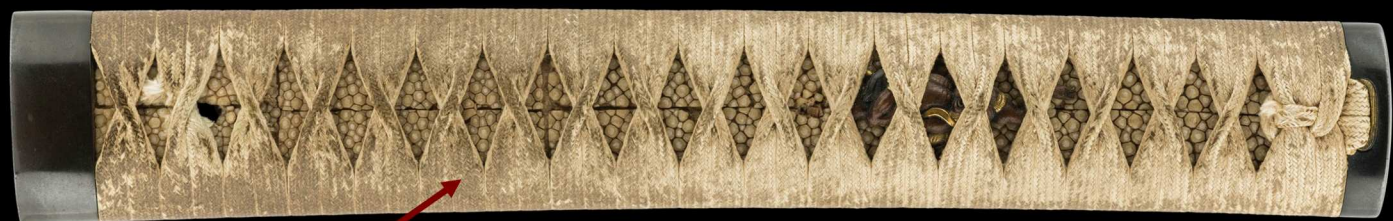
samurai battleground



Shōki: The Demon Queller

Shōki (known as Zhong Kui in China) was a beloved demon-hunting deity who rose to fame in *Tang* dynasty China and later became popular in Japan. Legend says he visited the sick *Emperor Xuanzong* in a dream, explaining he was a scholar who took his own life after failing imperial exams. Grateful for proper burial by a previous emperor, Shōki vowed to battle mischievous demons. The emperor recovered instantly and had Shōki painted just as he appeared in the vision.

During Japan's Edo period, families hung Shōki images during Boys' Festival, sometimes painted red to ward off smallpox. He is usually shown carrying a sword and wearing a court official's cap. Shōki is known as "the demon queller" for his ability to vanquish, exorcise, and even control *oni* (demons) and other demons. He is so feared by oni that even his image is said to scare them away. The demons he defeats sometimes become his servants. It is said that he commands/controls 80,000 demons.



A splendid *tsuka* (hilt) with beautifully preserved silk braiding from the Edo period (200 years old)





Shôki on the hunt





A pure *shibuichi fuchi-kashira*.

Shibuichi is an alloy made up of approximately 3/4 copper and 1/4 silver. The alloy became more popular with samurai during the second half of the Edo period when this set of koshirae was created. Its understated elegance is very samurai, and matches the overall aura of the koshirae. It also takes great skill to work with shibuichi as the material is harder and more brittle than *shakudô*.





Vintage koshirae bag
(Japanese maple leaf design)