



ITEM# UJKA365

A KUNISHIGE 'HORIMONO' KATANA SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1673)

Swordsmith:	<i>Bitchû no Kuni Mizuta jû Kunishige</i> (6th generation)
Measurements:	Length: 74.2cm (<i>ubu</i>) Curvature: 1.4cm Moto-haba: 3.14cm
Jihada:	<i>Gritty mokume hada with pronounced chikei</i>
Hamon:	<i>Surging waves of gunome-midare with sunagashi and plentiful kinsuji</i>
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (a sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #2-3:	NBTHK Hozon & NTHK-NPO Kanteisho (for the tsuba and koshirae)
Fujishiro rank:	Chû-jôsaku (ranked as an above average swordsmith)
Cutting ability:	Wazamono (maker of sharp swords)
Included:	Shirasaya, custom koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, booklet, description

SOLD

The Mizuta school derived its name from a group of swordsmiths that lived at Mizuta village in Bitchu province. Members of this school are said to be descendants of Ko-Aoe Tametsugu and the smith Kunishige, known as Ko-Mizuta. The most famous smith of the Shinto Mizuta school was Ôtsuki Yogoro Kunishige, also known as Ôyogo Kunishige. This long, muscular katana is the work of his son Katsubei, the final smith of the Ôtsuki branch of this respected school. This is a sword blessed with spiritual significance. Striking *horimono* (engravings) form the all-powerful *Tokkosho* and *Vaisravana*, one of four heavenly kings. Its dazzling *hamon* exudes a soulful, protective grittiness that contains plenty of *sunagashi* and *kinsuji hataraki* that can best be described as *Mizuta Sôshû*. A magnificent custom koshirae was built in Japan over a 2-year period with a guiding theme revolving around the land's most beloved symbol, the sun. From beautiful *maki-e drawings* on the *saya* to guardian *shisa* lions for *menuki* to a tipsy eccentric immortal god that loves wine(!), this inspiring katana unites lethal sharpness with creative traditions from the past to present.



Saki-kasane: 4.9mm

Moto-kasane: 7.4mm

Omosa: 825g

Kissaki: 3.64cm

Saki-haba: 2.03cm

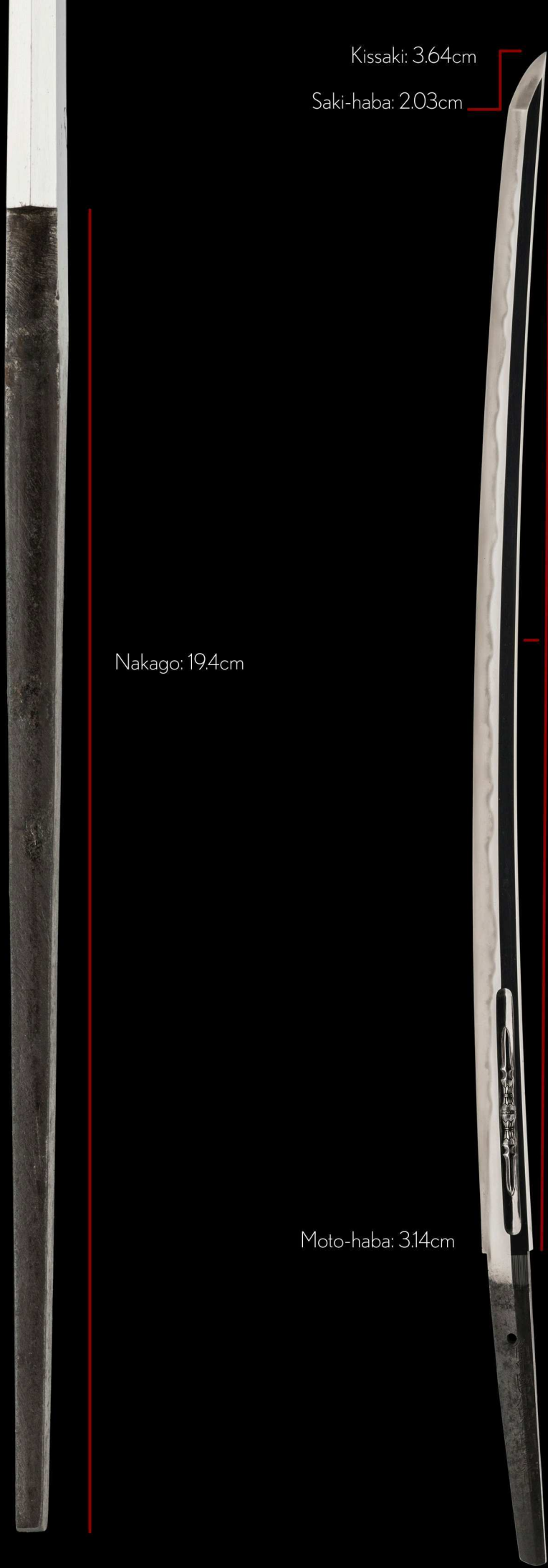
Nakago: 19.4cm

Moto-haba: 3.14cm

Nagasa: 74.2cm

Sori: 1.40cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



The *Mizuta school* derived its name from a group of swordsmiths that lived in *Mizuta village* in *Bitchû province*. Members of this school are said to be the descendants of *Ko-Aoe Tametsugu* and the smith *Kunishige* who lived during the *Kyôroku era* (1528~1532) was known as *Ko-Mizuta*.

In the Shinto period, their craftsmanship altered completely from *Sue-Bizen* and *Sue-Mihara* to a more electric *Soshû* influence with loads of visible *nie* crystals, a surging *gunome-midare hamon* and plentiful *hataraki* that includes *sunagashi* and *kinsuji*.

The most famous smith of the Shinto Mizuta school was *Ôtsuki Yôgoro Kunishige*, also known as 5th generation *Ôyogo Kunishige*. Unfortunately *Ôyogo* died early leaving his son, 6th generation *Katsubei*, under the care of his younger brother, swordsmith *Ichizô*.

Given the curvature of this long katana, we can attribute the work to *Katsubei*, who flourished during the *Kanbun* era (1661~1673). *Katsubei* was the final working smith of the *Ôtsuki* branch of the Mizuta school., ranked *chû-jôsaku* and *wazamono* for the sharpness that his swords possess.

The *surging Mizuta Soshû ô-gunome-midare hamon* dazzles under the light showcasing clusters of *nie* crystals. This is a sword that will energize the new caretaker each and every time it is unsheathed.

A brilliant custom koshirae was built by Unique Japan for the sword over a 2-year period. The set of *shisa lion menuki* was the inspiration for the enlightened sun design on the *saya* (scabbard) which radiates spiritual protection. Coupled with impressive *horimono* (engraving) at the base of the blade, we have here a katana that fully embodies the artistic and courageous spirit of a samurai.

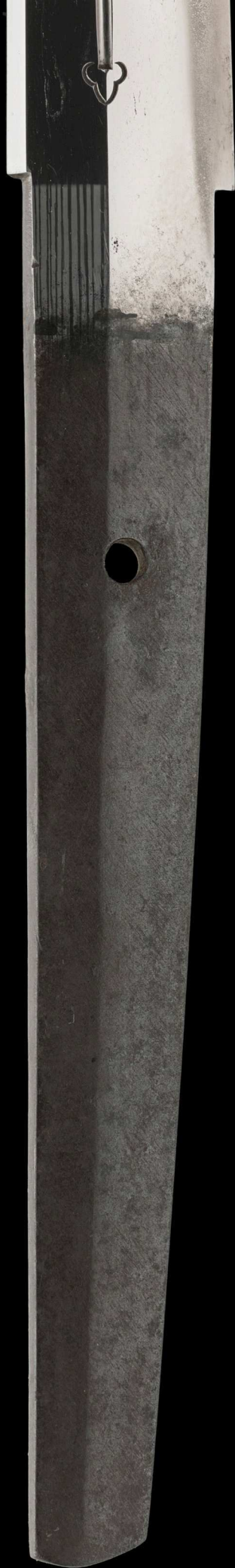




Location: *Mizuta, Bitchû Province*
Swordsmith: *Kunishige*

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

備 (Bi)
中 (tchû, no)
国 (Kuni)
水 (Mizu)
田 (ta)
住 (jû)
国 (Kuni)
重 (shige)
作 (saku)



The *nakago* (tang) exhibits a clean, well-aged patina with crisp diagonal (*sujikai*) file marks.

(*ura*, reverse)

28201601



No 1005031



鑑定書

一 刀 銘 備 中 国 水 田 住 国 重 作

長 二 尺 四 寸 五 分 弱

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

平成二十八年三月二十三日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



東京都 教育委員会
第 33666 号
昭和36年 12月 18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), March 23rd

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Bitchû no Kuni Mizuta jû Kunishige saku

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 4-sun 5-bu jaku (74.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



This *horimono* (engraving) depicts *tokkosho* (独鉈杵) or simply *dokko*. A single-prong *vajra* hilt that is used as a ritual object to symbolize both the properties of a diamond (indestructibility) and a thunderbolt (irresistible force).

According to Markus Sesko, this *horimono* is sometimes found on blades of the *Sue-Sôshû* school, aligning perfectly with this Kunishige katana.



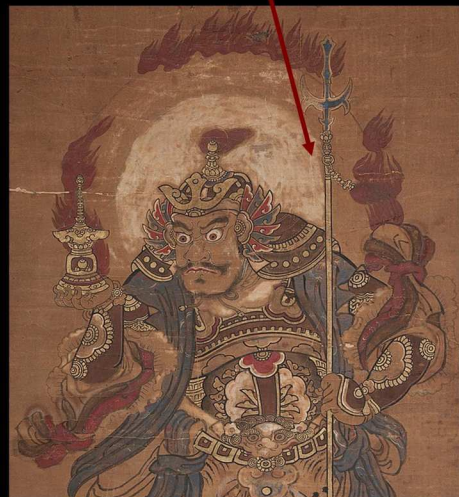
A tokkosho held in the Nara National Museum.

A symbol of the indestructible nature of Buddhist law and the power to defeat evil in its many forms. Tokkosho was made for the singular purpose of striking down evil in the name of good.



The *horimono* on the reverse side depicts *Hatahoko* (独鉾杵), a banner spear.

According to scholar Markus Sesko:
A hatahoko is a symbolic weapon used in esoteric Buddhism to decorate an altar place. The spear or lance is sometimes also referred to as Bishamon-ken (Sword of Bishamon) or just hoko. A hatahoko engraving is pretty rare."



The hatahoko is the weapon of *Vaisravana* or *Tamoten* in Japan - the God of War. *Vaisravana* is the regent of the North, Lord of Yakshas. He is one of the Four Heavenly Kings, each associated with a cardinal

For the vast majority of swords crafted after 1600 (*shintô* period), the *shinogi-ji* will display a straight-grain *masame-hada*.

This sword has clear plank grain *itame-hada* which is more characteristic on swords crafted during the *Kamakura* or *Nambokuchô* periods. It's unique and to be appreciated.



itame-hada in the *shinogi-ji*



A dazzling wavy *gunome-midare hamon* with a deep, deep *soshû-esque nioguchi* powers through the steel of this long katana.



Sharp, very sharp.



A close-up, low-angle shot of a sword blade, likely a katana, set against a dark background. The blade is illuminated from the side, highlighting its curved edge and the intricate patterns of the hamon (temper line). The hamon is a 'sôshû hamon', characterized by its 'fiery' appearance with bright, irregular, flame-like shapes. Below the hamon, the 'hatahoko horimono' (winged dragon) is visible, a traditional Japanese decorative motif. The lighting creates a strong contrast between the bright, reflective metal and the deep shadows, emphasizing the texture and craftsmanship of the blade.

A fiery *sôshû hamon* in perfect
harmony with the *hatahoko horimono*.



Feel the power.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

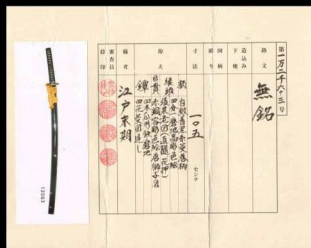


shakudô and gold *habaki*
criss-cross file marks

*Kuro-ronuri
kin sumi maki-e saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂塗金墨蒔絵鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black
with gold and black maki-e*

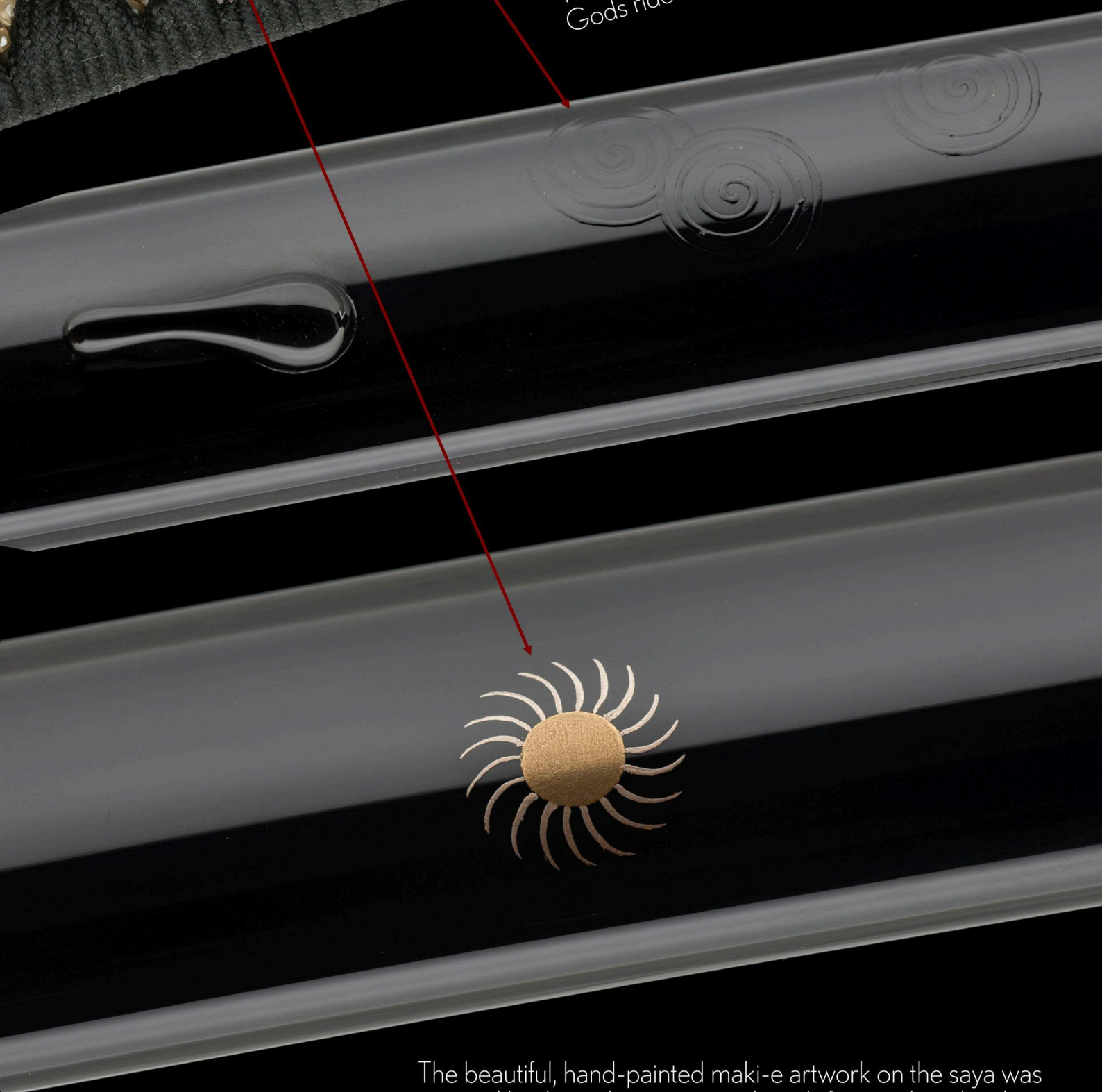
Crafted during the
Modern period



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



The shisa lion symbolizes the **sun** in Buddhism. Gods ride on shisa as messengers of vital news.



The beautiful, hand-painted maki-e artwork on the saya was inspired by the radiating sun and swirls featured on the shisa.



In *shintoism*, this solar symbolism centres around the figure of *Amaterasu*, the *sun deity*.

The most honoured *kami* (god) in the shinto pantheon, she is the daughter of the couple, *Izanagi* and *Izanami*.

Her name is derived from *amateru* meaning 'shining in heaven'. Her full name, *Amaterasu no Okami* translates to "*great divinity who lights up the sky*".

Divinity occupies an essential place in the history of Japan. In fact, all ancient texts specify that the *emperors of Japan are to be considered direct descendants of Amaterasu*.

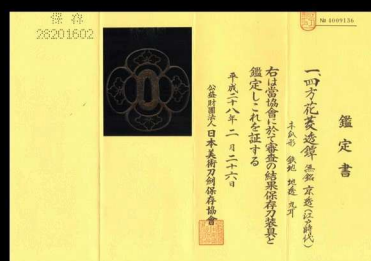
The maki-e artwork pays respect to Amaterasu and asks for her spiritual blessing.



Kyô-sukashi tsuba, a multi-lobed iron tsuba crafted in Kyôto during the Edo period.

The openwork depicts diamond shapes coupled with a petal motif known as *hanabishi*. Unsigned, crafted in Edo period.

This tsuba has been awarded an NBTHK Hozon certificate of authenticity as worthy of preservation.





The *menuki* (decorative grips on the hilt) showcase two beautiful *shisa* lions skillfully wrapped over aged *samekawa* (ray skin) as if they are leaping out to protect the owner.





High quality antique
samekawa (skin of a ray fish).

Notice how the shisa lion appears to be jumping
out from the beautifully braided black silk.

A happy immortal!

wine

phoenix feather



This brilliant *fuchi-kashira* depicts the eccentric *Zhang Guolao*, one of the *Eight Immortals* in the Taoist pantheon. In art he is depicted carrying a phoenix feather and the peach of immortality. He rides on a marvellous white mule that is capable of being folded like paper when not in use.

Zhang had a love for wine and winemaking as we can see in the expressive artwork on the *kashira* (pommel). Other members of the Eight Immortals drank his wine, which they believed to have healing or medicinal properties. Agree!

With his right hand he ties up his long beard and with his left arm he holds his emblem, a bamboo drum in the shape of a tube with two iron rods or mallets representing immortality.





辛 (Kanoto)

丑 (Ushi)

Discreetly stamped on the inside of the *koiguchi* (mouth of the scabbard), record that this custom koshirae was crafted starting in the Year of the Ox of this *Kanoto* era (2021).



Koshirae bag