



ITEM# UJKA379

SOLD

A KAGEHIDE TACHI

SIGNED, MID-KAMAKURA PERIOD (SHÔGEN ERA: 1259~1260)

- Swordsmith:** *Kagehide* (signed 景 *kage* with part of 秀 *hide* cut off, *suriage nakago*)
Measurements: **Length:** 69.4cm **Curvature:** 2.7cm **Motohaba:** 2.75cm
Jihada: Standing-out itame mixed with mokume, ji-nie, chikei, and midare-utsuri
Hamon: Ko-nie-laden ko-gunome mixed with ko-chôji, ko-midare, ko-ashi, yô, kuichigai-ba, fine tobiyaki, many kinsuji, sunagashi, certain areas of the ha are particularly nie-laden
Certificate 1: 46th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken (a sword designated as Profound and Important)
Certificate 2: NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (a koshirae Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Fujishiro: Jojo-saku (ranked as a highly superior swordsmith)
Authentication: Sayagaki by Tanobe Michihiro (Tanzan)
Included: Shirasaya, matching Edo-koshirae, sword bags, stand, kit, description

Unique Japan is pleased to introduce a rare and precious *tachi* signed by swordsmith *Kagehide* from the mid-Kamakura period, circa 1259. Kagehide is the younger brother of *Mitsutada* and helped found the successful *Bizen-Osafune* school that prospered for centuries in Bizen province.

There are only eleven signed works of Kagehide known - the most famous being the *jûyô-bunkazai* (important cultural property) *Kuronbogiri* that was once owned by warlord *Date Masamune* in the late 1500s. This *tachi* is blessed with the classic, dignified shape of the great swords of the Kamakura period. The *jihada* stands out to the eye, with pools of *itame* and *mokume* encasing swirling *chikei*. A remarkable amount of *hataraki* featuring *kinsuji*, *tobiyaki*, *sunagashi* fill the *ko-gunome* and *ko-chôji* *hamon* that has been beautifully laden with streams of *nie-crystals*.

A magnificent set of late Edo period matching *tachi-uchigatana-koshirae* cloud-dragon fittings crafted by the *Umetada* school with a *Yoshioka* school *shakudo* and gold *tsuba* exemplifies that this was a *tachi* owned and cherished by wealthy and prominent members of the samurai elite.

^
Saki-kasane: 3.4mm

Moto-kasane: 4.7mm

Omosa: 605g

Kissaki: 2.5cm
Saki-haba: 1.85cm

Nakago: 18.6cm

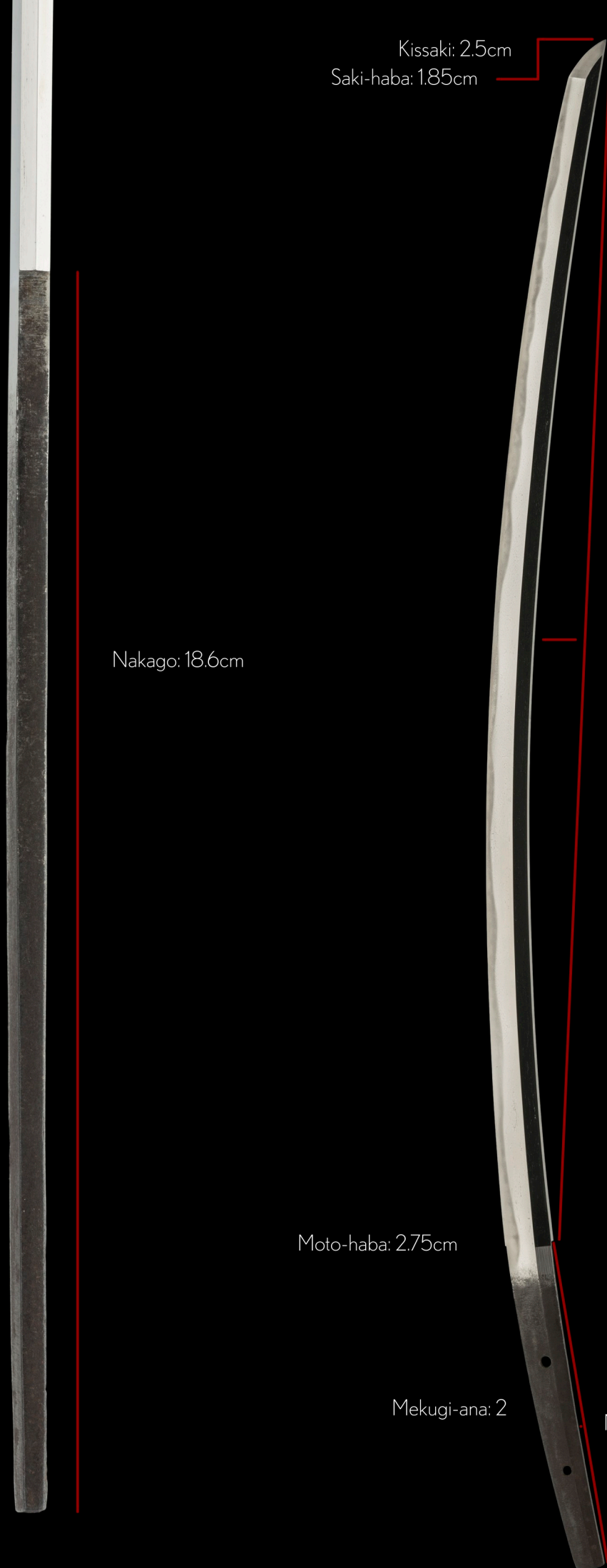
Moto-haba: 2.75cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

Nagasa: 69.4cm

Sori: 2.7cm

Nakago-sori: 0.2cm



Kagehide (景秀) helped develop the highly successful *Bizen-Osafune school* that his older brother *Mitsutada* (光忠) founded in the mid-1200s. *Kagehide* was active during *shōgen* era (1259~1260).

There exists a lesser-known theory that *Kagehide* was, in fact, an *Ichimonji school* smith that went on to found his own school in *Osafune* village.

There are only *eleven known signed works* by *Kagehide* (including this tachi) making his work immensely rare and coveted by *daimyo* families.

Kagehide is rated *jojo-saku*, a highly superior smith with swords reaching NBTHK Tokubetsu Juyo and Jūyō Bunkazai (important cultural property).

Koshizori

(curvature at the waist)

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

Majestic swords such as this *Kagehide tachi* from the *Kamakura* period carry *koshizori sugata*. These swords were carried on horseback as *tachi* 'wrapping' around the waist of the samurai.





Location: *Bizen province*

School/village: *Osafune*

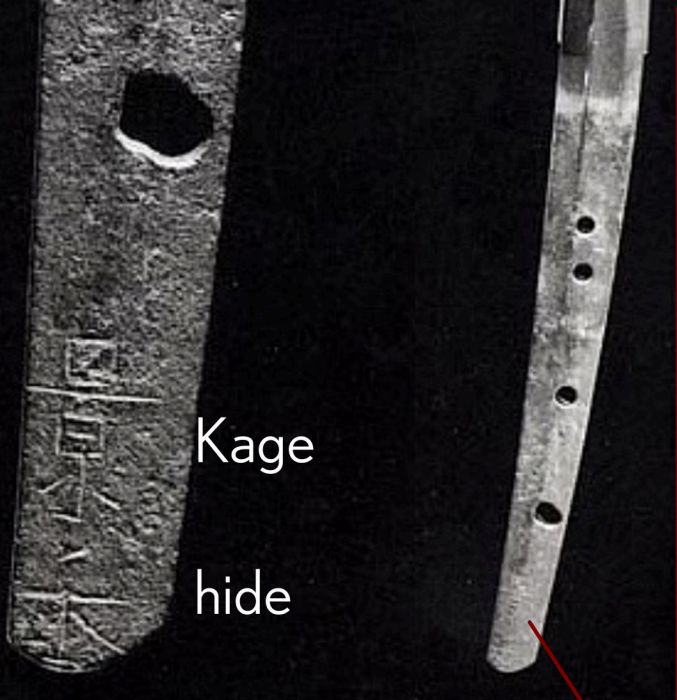
Swordsmith: *Kagehide*

(pronounced: kah-gei-hee-day)

suriage-nakago (shortened tang with signature)

The nakago is signed on the tachi side, thus making it a rare *zaimai* tachi. This tachi was first carried on horseback by samurai in the *mid-1200s*, during the heart of the Kamakura period - the golden age of Japanese swords.

景 (Kage)



Kage

hide

For reference purposes, this is the *nakago* of the famous *Kagehide Kuronbogiri tachi*. The 2nd character "hide" is also truncated.



(Kage) 景

translates to "shadow"

(hide) 秀

the top stroke of character "hide"



12200046

重要第七八〇號

指定書

一、太刀 銘 景(以下切)景秀 一口

法量 長々六九・四釐 反り二・七釐
 形状 鑄造 齋棟 腰反りつき 先(行)も反りつき 中鋒
 鍛 板目に全交り や肌立ち 地沸つき 地景入り 乱れ映り立つ
 刃文 小互の目に小丁子 小乱れ交り 小足・葉入り 小沸つき
 帽子 喰違風・飛焼を交え 金筋・砂流しさかんにかかり
 茎 磨上 鑿目(旧)不明(新)切り 目釘孔二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
重要刀劍に指定する

平成十二年十月五日

財団法人日本美術刀劍保存協會

會長 山中貞則



Jûyô Certificate No. 10780

Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation

Tachi, mei: Kage ika-kire Kagehide (景「以下切れ」 「景秀」)

Measurements

nagasa 69.4 cm, sori 2.7 cm

Description

Keijo: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, a deep *koshizori* that increases again towards the tip, *chû-kissaki*
 Kitae: rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *ji-nie*, *chikei*, and a
midare-utsuri

Hamon: *ko-nie-laden ko-gunome* that is mixed with *ko-chôji*, *ko-midare*, *ko-ashi*, *yô*, *kuichigai-
 ba*, fine *tobiyaki*, and many *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*, certain areas of the *ha* are particularly *nie-laden*
 and also *nie-zukure* appear

Bôshi: *notare-komi* with a brief *maru-kaeri*

Nakago: *suriage*, the old *yasurime* are indiscernible, the new *yasurime* are *kiri*, two *mekugi-ana*,

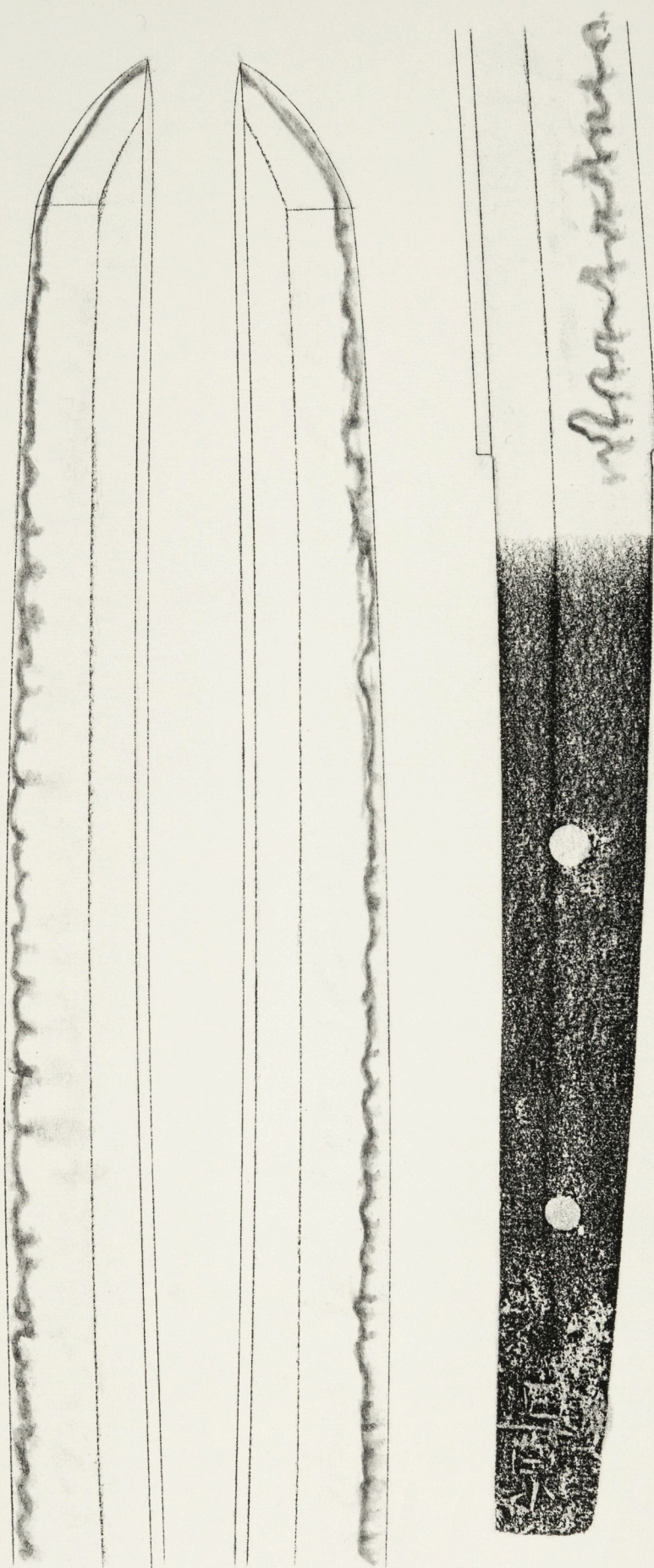
According to the result of the *shinsa* committee of our society we judged this work as authentic
 and rate it as *jûyô-tôken*.

October 5, 2000

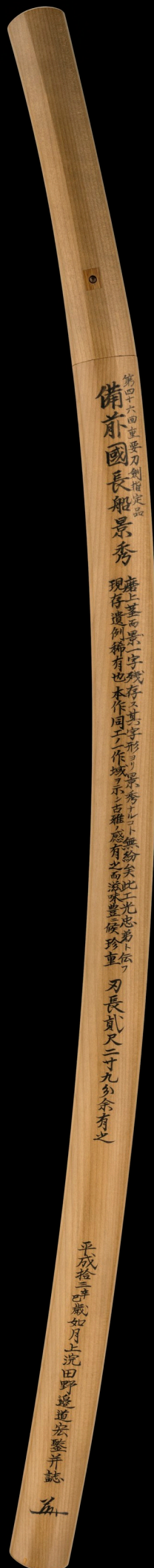
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK

[President] Yamanaka Sadanori (山中貞則)

太刀 銘 景(以下切)(景秀)



Jûyô tôken oshigata (hand tracing of the *hamon* pattern and *nakago*)



第四十六回重要刀剣指定品
Dai yonjûroku-kai jûyô-tôken shitei-hin
Designated as jûyô-tôken at the 46th jûyô-shinsa

備前國長船景秀
Bitchû no Kuni Osafune Kagehide
Osafune Kagehide from Bizen Province

磨上莖而景一時殘存ス其字形ヨリ景秀ナルコト
無紛矣此工光忠弟ト伝フ現存遺例稀有也本作同工
ノ一作域ヲ示シ古雅ノ感有之而滋味豊ニ候珍重
Suriage nakago shikamo Kage ichiji zanson-su sono jikei yori
Kagehide naru koto magai-nashi. Kono takumi Mitsutada
otôto to iu genzon irei keu nari. Honsaku dôkô no issakuiki o
shimeshi koga no kan kore ari shikamo jimi yutaka ni sôrô.
Chinchô.

The nakago is shortened but retains the character for “Kage” whose interpretation leaves no doubt that the original signature was that of Kagehide. It is said that Kagehide was the younger brother of Mitsutada but extant works by him [Kagehide] are rare. This blade shows one of the known styles by this swordsmith, it is of classical elegance and has a highly delicate charm. This sword is rare and precious.

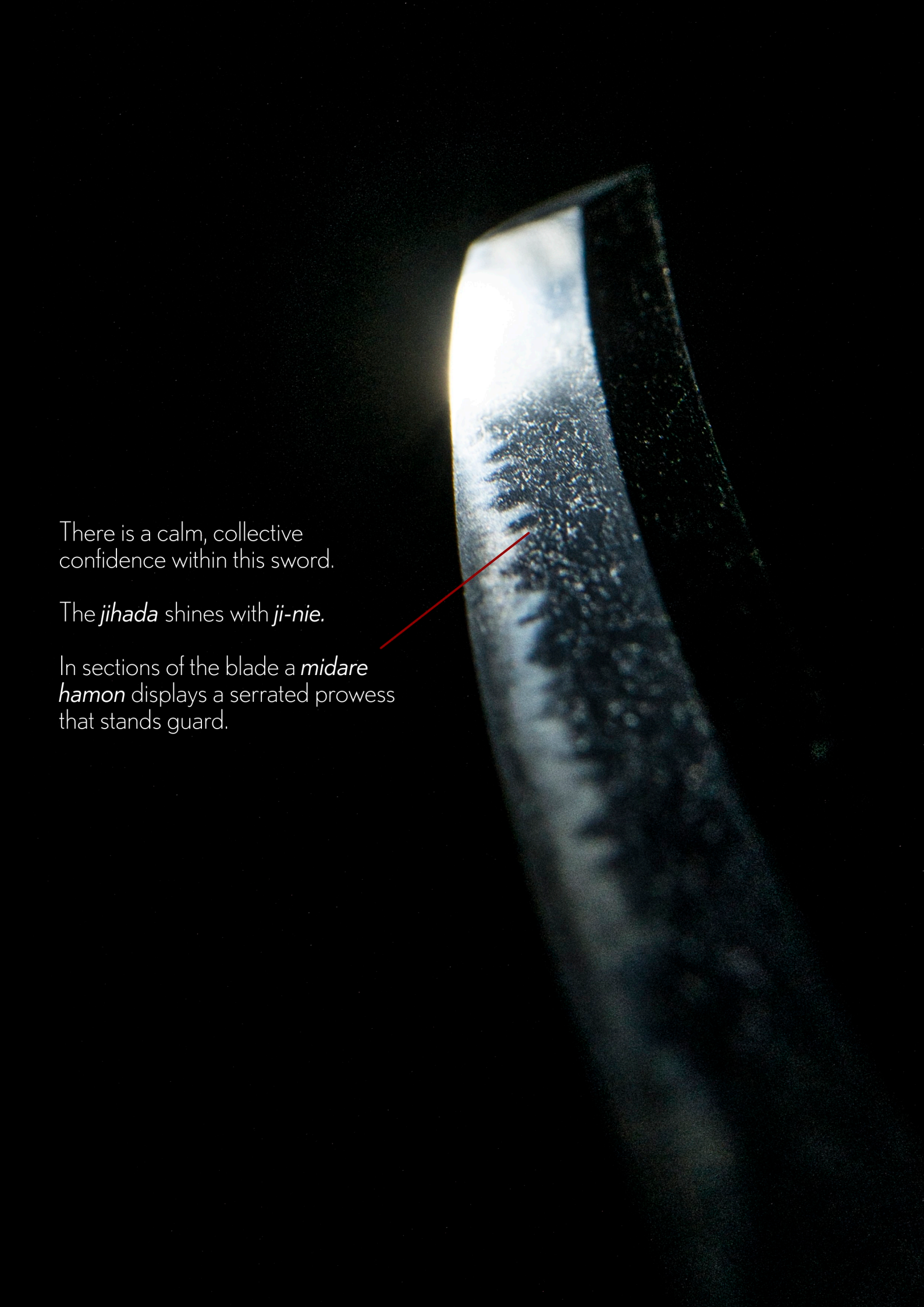
刃長貳尺二寸九分余有之
Hachô ni-shaku ni-sun kyû-bu yo kore ari
Blade length ~ 69.4 cm

平成拾參辛巳歲如月上浣田野邊道宏鑒誌「花押」
Heisei jûsan kanoto-hebidoshi kisaragi jôkan Tanobe Michihiro
kangamite narabi ni shirushite + kaô

Appraised and written by Tanobe Michihiro in the first third of February of 2001, year of the snake + monogram.







There is a calm, collective
confidence within this sword.

The *jihada* shines with *ji-nie*.

In sections of the blade a *midare
hamon* displays a serrated prowess
that stands guard.

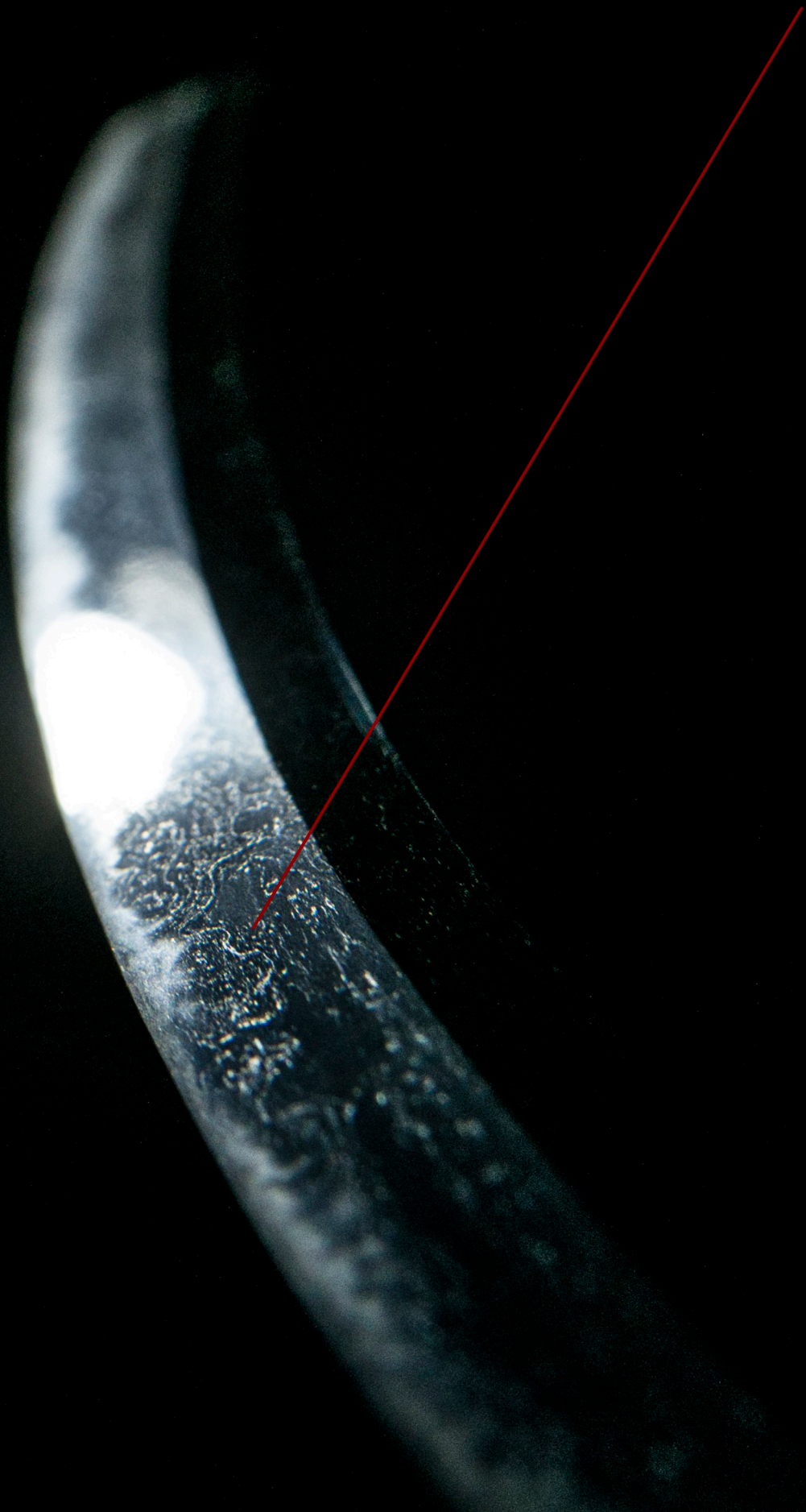


In this portion of the blade, the hamon is best described as *ko-midare* (tight vibrations).

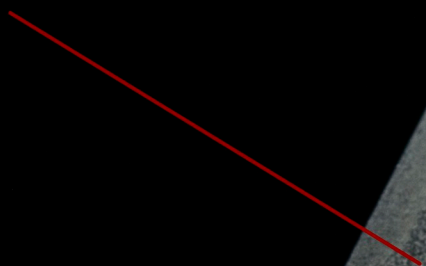


A glorious example of *chikei*
(lines of *nie* that rip through the *ji*, body).

Brilliant pools of swirling *itame* and *mokume-hada* that the NBTHK Jûyô certificate describes as 'standing out'.



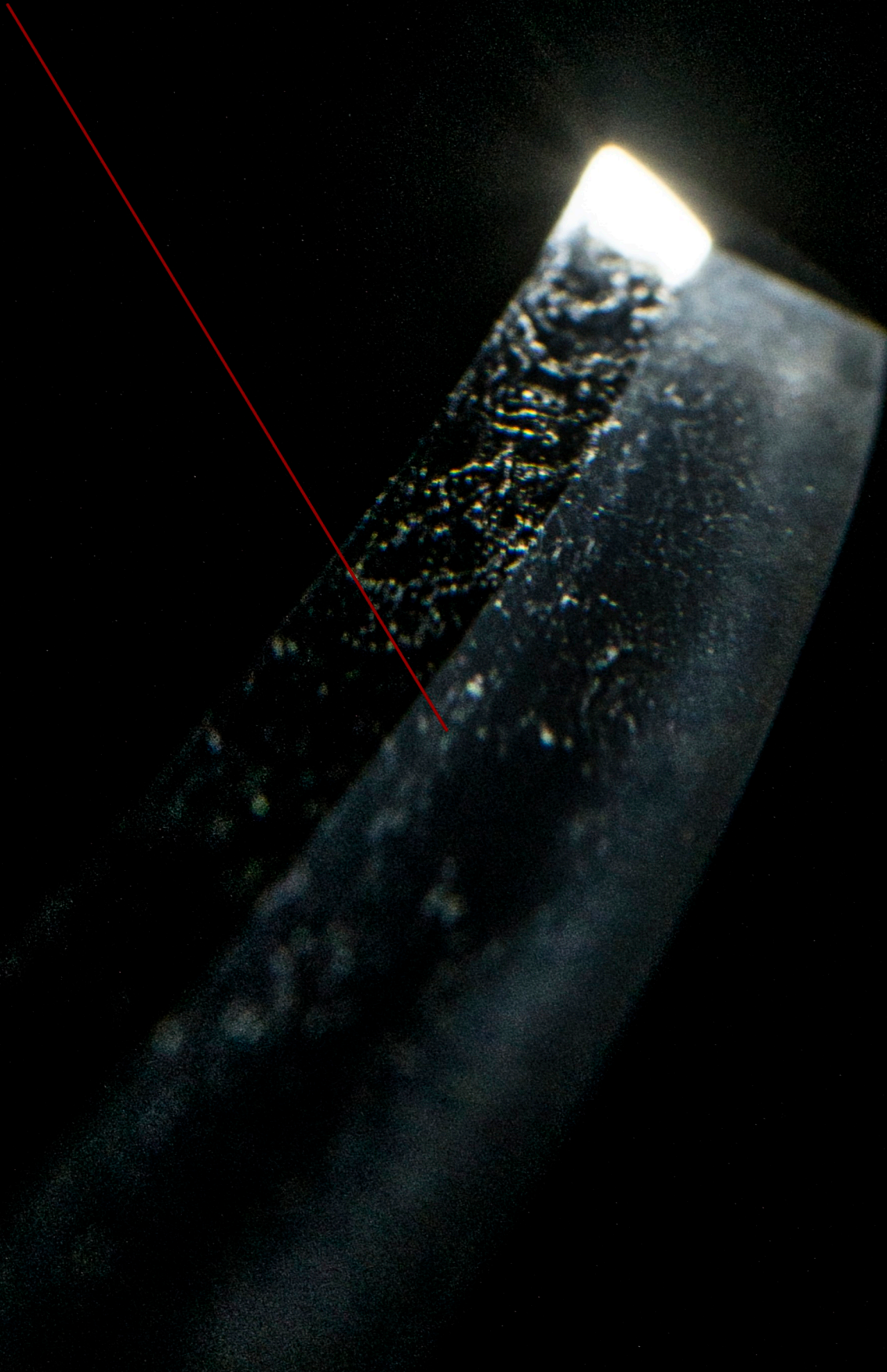
A vivid example of where visible *nie* crystals cluster along the *hamon*.



Literally meaning "reflection", *utsuri* is a beautiful, rather magical, misty reflection appearing in the *ji* (body of sword) above the *hamon*).


It is much loved and appreciated feature of swords, particular those made in the Bizen tradition in the Koto period.

The type of *utsuri* is called *midare-utsuri* - a smokey pattern that billows in a wavy formation following the hamon pattern.



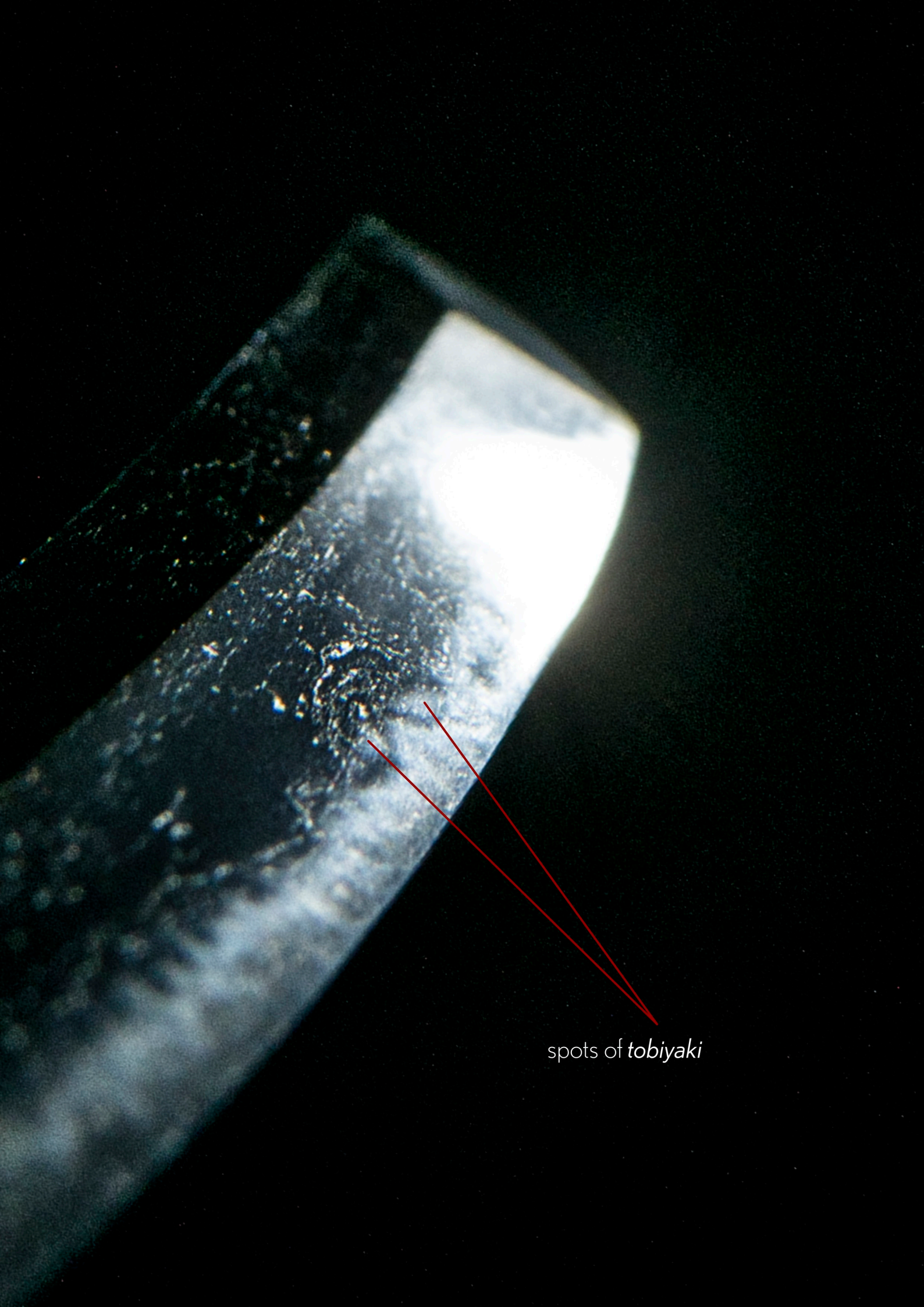
A key feature of prominent swords made in the Bizen tradition from the Koto period, is that a circular *itame/mokume-hada* forms in the *shinogi-ji*. Swords made in all traditions in the shinto period (post-1600) will generally display straight-grain *masame-hada*.

gorgeous spiral formations stand out in the *shinogi-ji*

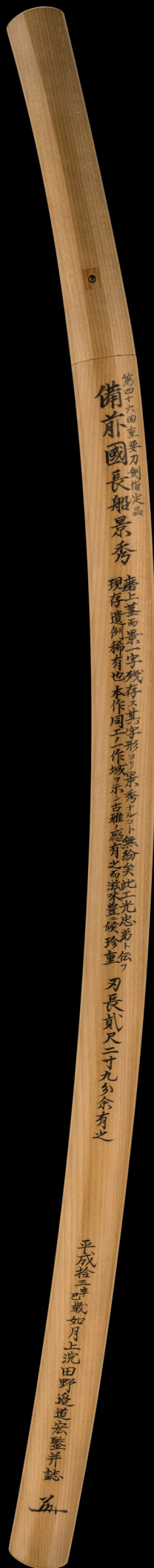
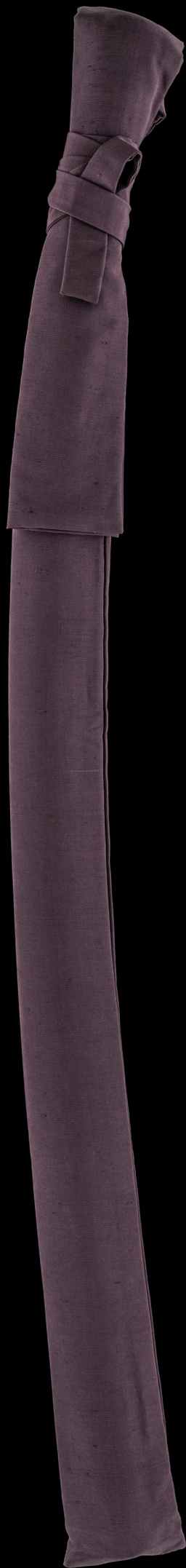
A close-up photograph of a sword's blade, specifically the shinogi-ji (the ridge between the blade and the hilt). The blade is dark and shows a complex, circular, spiral pattern of light and dark spots, which is the mokume-hada or itame-hada grain. A red line points from the text to this specific area of the blade.



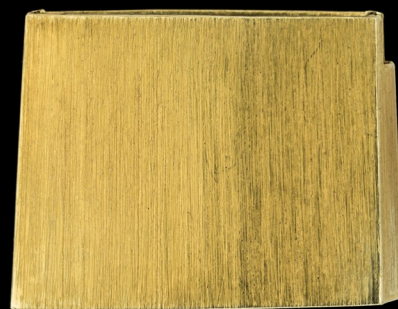
Parallel lines of *kinsuji* weave through the *hamon*.



spots of *tobiyaki*



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



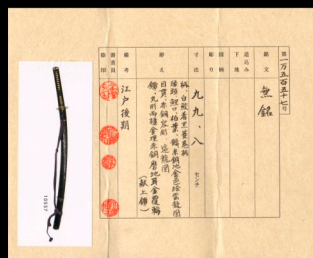
gold *habaki* with
vertical file marks

*Shakudô kaigu kuro-roiro-nuri
naname-kizami saya
uchigatana koshirae*

(赤銅皆具黒呂色塗斜刻鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae lacquered
in glossy black with
diagonally-ribbed saya*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

特 保
02202011

No. 2007220



鑑定書

一黒漆手綱刻鞘打刀拵

総真 雲龍図 無銘
目貫 這龍図
鐔 素文 無銘
柄 白鯊着 黒色糸諸撮巻

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀装具と
鑑定しこれを証する

令和三年一月十五日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 3rd year of Reiwa (2021), January 15th

One,

Uchigatana-koshirae with spirally engraved saya lacquered in black

Matching set of fittings depicting cloud dragon, unsigned

Menuki depicting crawling dragon

Tsuba with no motif, unsigned

*Hilt covered with white same and wrapped
morotsumami-maki style with black braids*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

All matching *tachi* fittings made of pure *shakudo* - a rich black alloy made of about 95% copper and 5% gold. Also referred to as 'raven's gold'.



inome (eye of a wild boar)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity
[matching tachi fittings from
Umetada school in Kyoto]

These pure *shakudo* fittings were made especially for a *tachi* sword, paying tribute to the *Kagehide tachi*. Each piece was finely carved with the depiction of clouds and served to reinforce the *saya* (scabbard).

The heart-shaped centre is called *inome* - meaning the *eye of a wild boar*. The *inoshishi* is known for its single-minded focus that the samurai greatly admired.



The dragon is one of the most powerful mythical symbols representing the *darkness of chaos* - living in the shadows - but also the *promise of possibility*. The most dangerous threat you face holds your potentiality in its clutches. You must continually conquer dragons to live to your full potential.

Kage means "shadow". With shadows casting off the scabbard and lurking dragons guarding the gold, this *koshirae* encourages heroic acts that ultimately lead to a meaningful and treasured life.






kashira (pommel)

All matching cloud-dragon fittings are attributed and certified by the NTHK-NPO to the renowned *Umetada school* from the late Edo period.

The Umetada family worked for many generations for the family of the *Ashikaga-shôgun* and made (besides swords), *habaki*, *seppa*, *tsuba* and *fuchi-kashira*. They were also responsible for the shortening of blades and the inlaying of the so-called *kinzôgan-meï* (gold-inlaid appraisal on a sword) on behalf of the *Hon'ami* family.

Certain Umetada artists were also entrusted with the arrangement of *entire mountings* (*koshirae*). This exceptional *uchigatana-koshirae* is one such prized example.



The unique rope-like *saya* (scabbard) would have been extremely expensive to produce in the 1800s, Edo period. It is a clear sign of the wealth held by the elite samurai who once proudly carried this tachi.

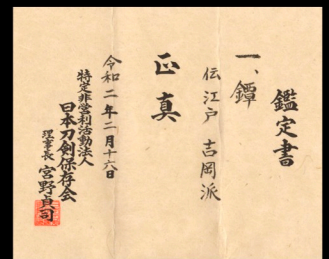
Parts of the lacquer are ageing gracefully with hints of the base peeking through.



This is a top-class black *shakudo tsuba* by the prestigious *Yoshioka Inaba no suke* school. Both holes have been filled with gold matching the bright golden rim.

Daimyô and *samurai* were required to own a *koshirae* with a glossy black lacquered *saya* (scabbard), discreet black plain *shakudô tsuba*, and white *same* (ray skin) *tsuka* (hilt) on occasions when visiting the shogunate castle. Exactly the type of *uchigatana koshirae* that this Kagehide tachi represents.

An NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity attributing the piece to the *Late-Edo period* circa 1780~1867 has been attained.





(reverse)



Note how the rim of the *tsuba* is diagonally filed in harmony with the design of the *saya*.

The beautiful matching cloud dragon theme continues on the *kurigata* (the fitting where the *sageo* cord is weaved through) and on the *kojiri* that reinforces the tip of the *saya* (scabbard).



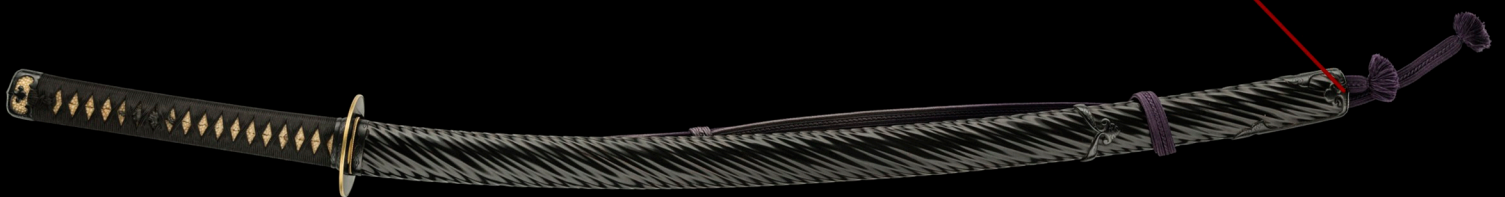


Dragons serve to protect the sword and owner. The scales on the dragon menuki are made with admirable attention to detail.





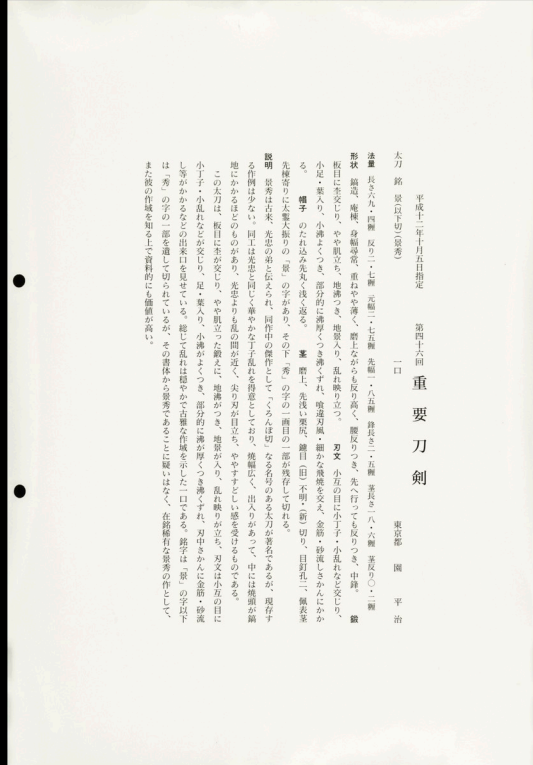
front view of the *kojiri*
(end cap of the scabbard)



東京教育委員会
第 284232 号
平成 12 年 9 月 12 日

第46回 重要刀剣 平成12年10月5日指定
太刀 銘 景 (以下切) (景秀)

小足、葉入り、小沸よくつき、部分的に沸掛くつき沸くすれ、映透刃肌、細かな肌籠を交え、金筋・砂流し・さかんにかか
る。 帽子 のたれ込み先丸く浅く返る。
先棟寄りに太鑿大振りの「景」の字があり、その下「秀」の字の一部分が残存して切れる。
説明 景秀は古来、光忠の弟と伝えられ、同作中の傑作として「くろんぼ切」なる名号のある太刀が著名であるが、現存す
る作例は少ない。同工は光忠と同じく華やかな丁子乱れを得意としており、焼幅広く、出入りがあって、中には焼頭が鎗
地にかかるほどのものがあり、光忠よりも乱の間が近く、尖り刃が目立ち、ややすずどしい感を受けるものである。
この太刀は、板目に歪が交じり、やや肌立った鍛えに、地沸がつき、地景が入り、乱れ映りが立ち、刃文は小互の目に
小丁子・小乱れなどが交じり、足・葉入り、小沸がよくつき、部分的に沸が厚くつき沸くすれ、刃中きかんに金筋・砂流
し等がみられるなどの出来口を見せている。総じて乱れは穏やかで、古雅な作風を示した一口である。銘字は「景」の字以下



46th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken Certificate
Traditionally rolled in protective tube.

All information will be precisely translated for the new caretaker. A printed and bound description of the sword from this catalogue will also be included along with a sword stand and a Unique Japan maintenance kit.

Osafune Kagehide

Brief overview of Kagehide's career and his position within the then craft of sword making:

Kagehide is traditionally regarded as the younger brother of Mitsutada (光忠), an approach which places him right at the roots of the Osafune School that was founded by Mitsutada. As for his active period, the *meikan* date Kagehide around Shōgen (正元, 1259-1260) and state that his alleged older brother Mitsutada was active from Ryakunin (暦仁, 1238-1239) to the early Bun'ei era (文永, 1264-1275). However, there exist some relatively classically interpreted works of Kagehide, e.g., the signed *tachi* from the former collection of Dr. Walter A. Compton which will be introduced later, that made Dr. Honma Junji once re-evaluate the current approach and associate Kagehide rather with the Ko-Bizen or the Fukuoka-Ichimonji School than with the Osafune School. Such an association has existed in the past, e.g., in the *Shinkan Hiden Shō* (新刊秘伝抄), compiled in 1579, and in the *Kaifun Ki* (解紛記), compiled in 1613. The former does list Kagehide as younger brother of Mitsutada, but with the comment "some say he was an Ichimonji smith," and the latter lists him straightforward as an Ichimonji School smith. That said, we face a similar issue with Mitsutada, i.e., sources that consider him as a descendent of one of the Ko-Bizen or Ichimonji lineages who later established his own local school in Osafune. Apart from that, we know both classical and flamboyant works by Mitsutada, and such that fall in between, a fact which leads to the currently prevailing theory that both Mitsutada and Kagehide continued first classical styles and then changed their workmanships in correspondence with advancements in forging techniques and changes in tastes.

Today, there are only very few, i.e., only eleven signed works of Kagehide known, the most famous one being the *meibutsu* *Kuronbogiri* (くろんぼ切) which will be introduced later and which was once owned by Date Masamune (伊達政宗, 1567-1636). After Date Masamune, this blade became a heirloom of the Date family and was designated as a *kokuhō* in 1931, with Masamune's descendant Count Date Okimune (伊達興宗, 1906-1947) as its owner. After WWII and in course of the reformation of the law for the protection of national treasures, the blade was designated as a *jūyō-bunkazai* in 1950.

The other known signed Kagehide works are eight *jūyō*, which includes the blade in question, and two *tokubetsu-jūyō*.

Comparison:

When it comes to quantities of works that hold the highest ranking statuses issued by the NBTHK and designations by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, we are facing the following numbers for Kagehide (as per January 2020):

- 21 blades have passed *jūyō* (9 *tachi*, 10 *katana*, 2 *wakizashi*)
- 3 blades have passed *tokubetsu-jūyō* (2 *tachi*, 1 *katana*)
- 1 blade is designated as a *jūyō-bunkazai* (the *meibutsu* Kuronbogiri)

When we compare these numbers with Mitsutada, we arrive at the following: 26 *jūyō*, 10 *tokubetsu-jūyō*, 14 *jūyō-bijutsuhin*, 17 *jūyō-bunkazai*, and 3 *kokuhō*. On the one hand, this underlines the rarity of Kagehide's works, but on the other hand, these numbers may suggest that Kagehide was indeed Mitsutada's younger brother and that his career was mainly about assisting Mitsutada in establishing the Osafune School.

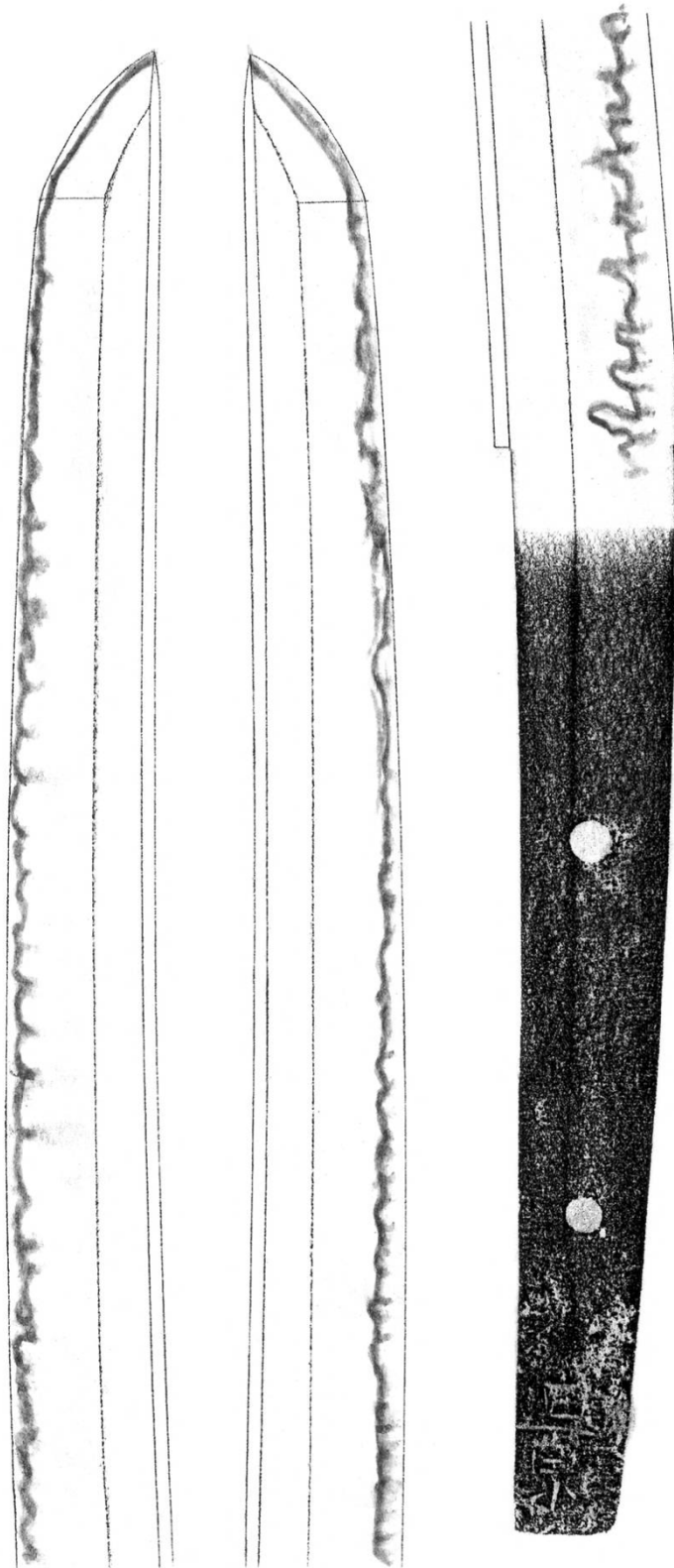
Conclusion:

Taking into consideration all *jūyō* and *tokubetsu-jūyō* blades of Kagehide, which are introduced in the following, we notice an interesting tendency. That is, a considerable number of these blades were handed down as being works of Kagehide, with the NBTHK mainly confirming these period attribution by explaining characteristics in workmanship that are known from Kagehide but with the prefix *Den*.

This state of facts renders the blade in question, henceforth referred to as KAGEHIDE-J46, as particularly important as it is one of the very few signed works of Kagehide in existence. In other words, the fact that the blade is signed leaves no room for speculation and represents thus a very important reference for the understanding of the scope of styles Kagehide was working in. Also, a relatively calm *ha* with protrusions that fume into the *ji* combined with a more vivid base is seen with Mitsutada as well (see references 1a and 1b introduced in the following). These close similarities in changes in workmanship between Mitsutada and Kagehide speak strongly in favor of two brothers who, as mentioned, changed their styles in accordance to advancements in forging techniques and changes in fashion rather than in favor of two completely unrelated smiths who worked at different times but in the very same variety of styles, making KAGEHIDE-J46 also an important reference for studies of the connection between Mitsutada and Kagehide in particular and the founding of the Osafune School in general.

1. 46th Jūyō Shinsa

Picture of 46th Jūyō Shinsa oshigata below; description omitted.



Designated as *Jūyō-Tōken* (a profound and important sword)
at the 46th *jūyō shinsa* held on October 5, 2000

tachi, mei: **Kage ika-kire** (景「以下切」) (“Kage” rest cut off; Kagehide, 景秀)

Measurements

nagasa 69.4 cm

sori 2.7 cm

motohaba 2.75 cm, *sakihaba* 1.85 cm

kissaki-nagasa 2.5 cm, *nakago-nagasa* 18.6 cm, *nakago-sori* 0.2 cm

Description

Keijo: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, normal *mihaba*, relatively thin *kasane*, despite the *suriage* a deep *koshizori* that increases again towards the tip, *chū-kissaki*

Kitae: rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *ji-nie*, *chikei*, and a *midare-utsuri*

Hamon: *ko-nie-laden ko-gunome* that is mixed with *ko-chōji*, *ko-midare*, *ko-ashi*, *yō*, *kuichigai-ba*, fine *tobiyaki*, and many *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*, certain areas of the *ha* are particularly *nie-laden* and also *nie-zukure* appear

Bōshi: *notare-komī* with a brief *maru-kaeri*

Nakago: *suriage*, shallow *kurijiri*, the old *yasurime* are indiscernible, the new *yasurime* are *kiri*, two *mekugi-ana*, the *haki-omote* side bears at the tip of the tang and towards the *nakago-mune* the large and thickly chiseled character “Kage” below of which parts of the very first stroke of the character “hide” are visible

Remarks

Traditionally it is believed that Kagehide (景秀) was the younger brother of Mitsutada (光忠), with his most famous masterwork being the *meibutsu tachi* *Kuronbogiri* (くろんぼ切). Extant works of Kagehide are rare. Like Mitsutada, he focused on a flamboyant and wide hardening in *chōji-midare* with noticeable ups and downs and with some areas even reaching the *shinogi*. However, his elements of the *midare* are more densely arranged than seen with Mitsutada and he applied more prominent *togari*, giving his *ha* a slightly more “serrated” appearance.

This *tachi* shows a rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and that features *ji-nie*, *chikei*, and a *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *ko-nie-laden ko-gunome* that is mixed with *ko-chōji*, *ko-midare*, *ashi*, *yō*, and plenty of *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. Some areas are particularly *nie-laden* and also *nie-zukure* appear and the *ha* is overall of a rather calm and classical appearance. The character “Kage” and parts of a second stroke of the *mei* are extant, with the latter being without doubt “hide” and the overall style matching that of Kagehide. Thus, this blade is regarded as a *zaimai* work of this smith, which are, as indicated, very rare, a fact which makes this blade also a very important reference for the understanding of the workmanship of this smith.

