



ITEM# UJKA389

SOLD

A RAI KUNIYASU KATANA

UNSIGNED, MID-NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (JÔJI ERA: 1362~1368)

Swordsmith:	<i>Chiyozuru Kuniyasu</i> (shôdai, founder of Chiyozuru school)		
Measurements:	Length: 71.2cm (ô-suriage)	Curvature: 2.45cm	Moto-haba: 3.15cm
Jihada:	Standing-out itame mixed with mokume & nagare and chikei over a dark jigane		
Hamon:	Bright chû-suguha with ko-gunome, nie-hotsure, ko-ashi, fine kinsuji & sunagashi		
Certificate:	NBTHK Jûyô Tôken (a sword designated as Profound and Important)		
Fujishiro rank:	Chûjô-saku (ranked as an above average swordsmith)		
Included:	Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, booklet, description		

SOLD

This powerful katana is the work of *Rai Kuniyasu*, originally from the Rai school of *Yamashiro province* (Kyotô). Kuniyasu is said to be the grandson of *Rai Kunisue*. In 1337, Kuniyasu moved from Kyoto in search of a pure water source to forge his blades. He eventually settled in beautiful *Echizen province* (modern-day Fukui prefecture) along the Sea of Japan and founded the *Chiyozuru school* meaning 'a thousand generations of cranes', symbolizing longevity.

The wide *mihaba* (width) that extends the full length of the blade and the substantial *koshizori* gives an overall sense of grandeur. The *jigane* has a mysteriously darkish tone juxtaposed with a beaming *suguha hamon* that serves as a beacon of light - ready for action. This is a healthy katana approaching 700-years-of-age that is ripe for collectability. Potential custom koshirae project.

^
Saki-kasane: 4.8mm

Moto-kasane: 7.5mm

Omosa: 790g

Kissaki: 4.25cm
Saki-haba: 2.25cm

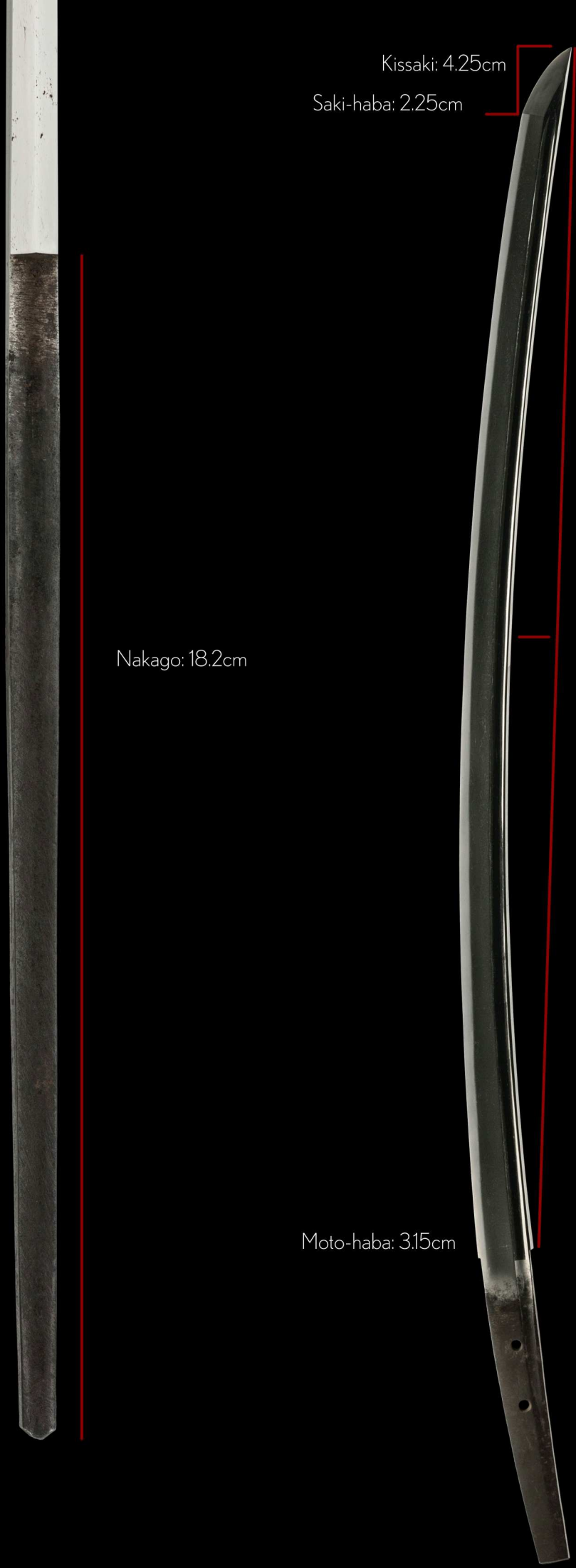
Nakago: 18.2cm

Moto-haba: 3.15cm

Nagasa: 71.2cm

Sori: 2.45cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



This powerful katana is the work of *Rai Kuniyasu*, originally from the *Rai school* of *Yamashiro province* (Kyotô). Kuniyasu is said to be the grandson of *Rai Kunisue*.

In 1337, at the start of the *Nambokucho period* where Kyoto was embroiled in a vicious war, Kuniyasu moved from Kyoto in search of a pure water source to forge his blades. He eventually settled in *Echizen province* (modern-day Fukui prefecture) and founded the *Chiyozuru school*.

The wide *mihaba* (width) that extends the full length of the blade is what immediately hits the eye. This katana also has substantial *koshizori* that gives it an overall majestic shape.

The *jigane* has a mysteriously darkish tone juxtaposed with a beaming *suguha hamon* that serves as a beacon of light - ready for action. This is a healthy, near 700-year-old katana that's ripe for collectibility.

Koshizori
(curvature at the waist)

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





Even though this katana has an *ô-suriage nakago* (greatly shortened), the blade has retained most of its impressive curvature that extends even into the nakago.

26201460

重要第一三五〇三號

指定書

一、刀 無銘 来国安 一口

法量 長さ七一・二種 反り二・四五種
形状 鑄造庵棟 身幅広く元先の幅差殆ど開かず 磨上げながらも
腰反り高く先へも反り加わり大鋒

鍛 板目に在目、流れ肌を交え肌立ちごころとなり地沸厚くつき
地景頻りに入り銚色やや黒みかかる

刃文 中直刃に僅かに小互の目が交じり刃縁細かに沸はつれ小定入り
沸厚くつき金筋砂流し細かにかかり匂口明るい

帽子 浅くのたれ込み小丸掃きかける

彫物 表裏に椿桶を掻き流す
茎 大磨上 籠目勝手下がり目釘孔二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果

重要刀 劍に指定する

平成二十六年十月十六日

公益財団法人日本美術刀劍保存協會



和歌山 教育委員会
第 28057号
平成25年 9月 5日

Jûyô Certificate No. 13503
Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation
Katana, mumei: attributed to Rai Kuniyasu (来国安)

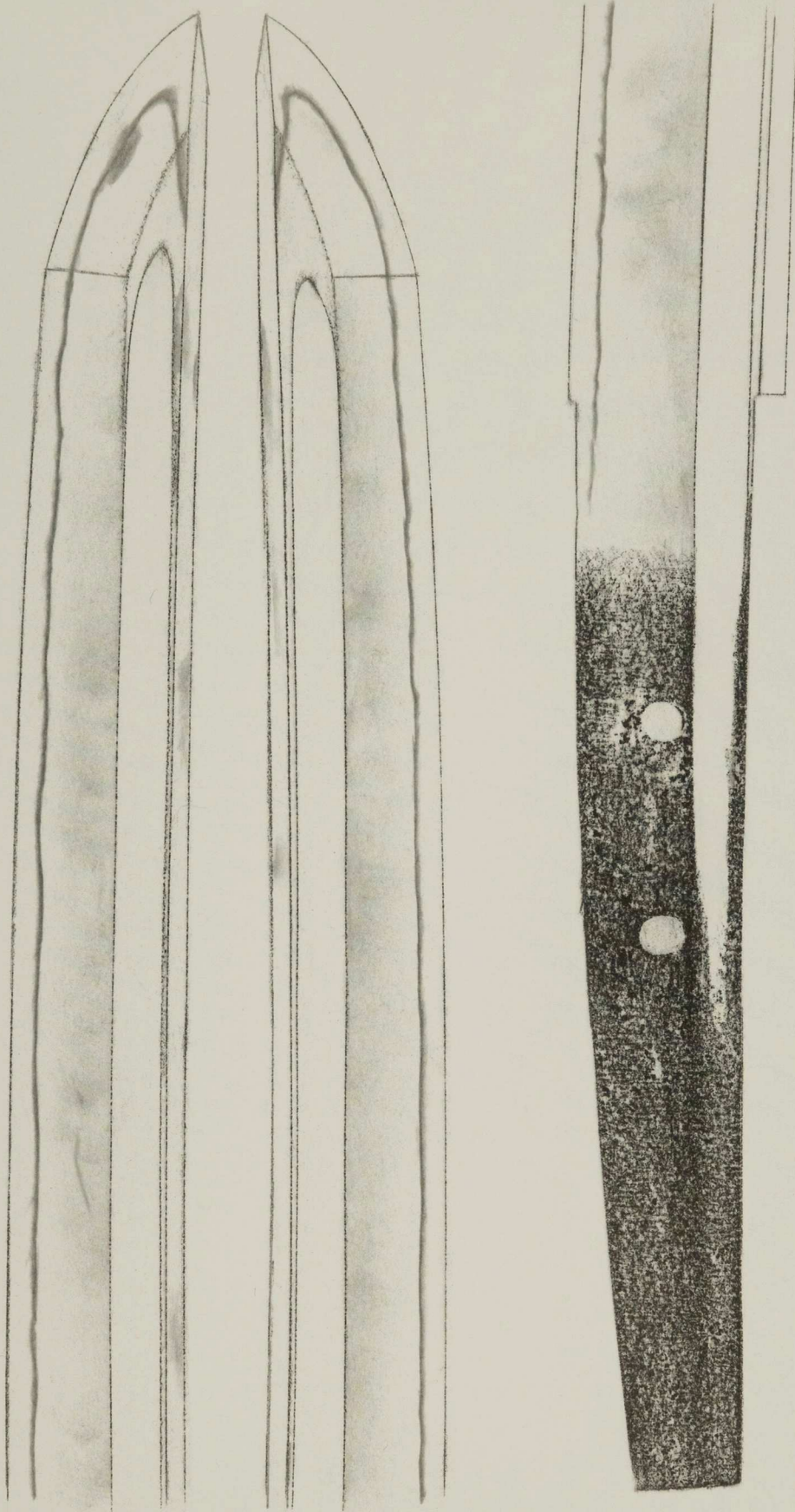
Measurements
nagasa 71.2 cm, sori 2.45 cm

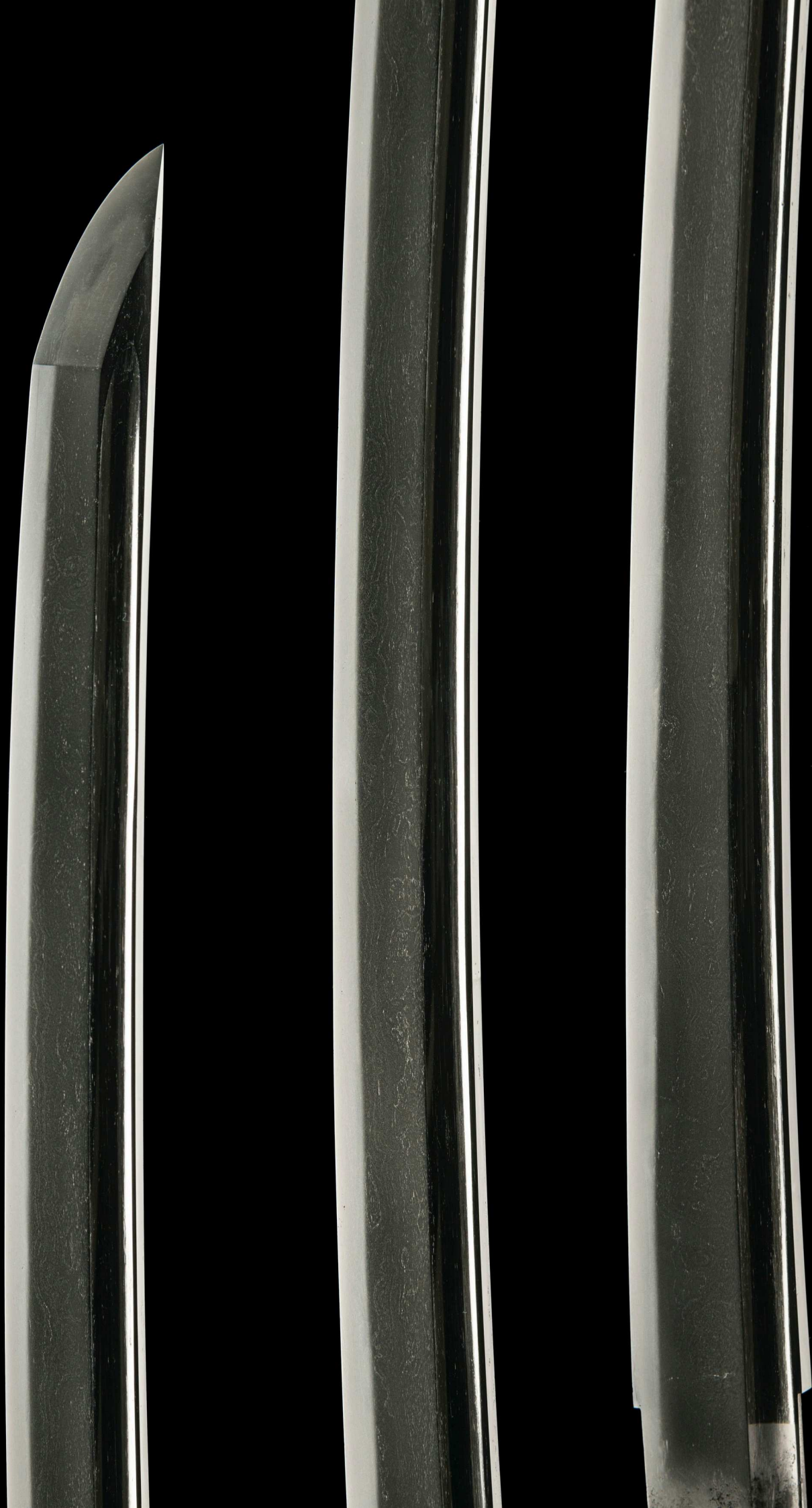
Description:
Keijo: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, wide *mihaba*, no noticeable taper, despite the *suriage* a deep *koshizori* that increases again towards the tip, *ô-kissaki*
Kitae: rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare* and that features plenty of *ji-nie* and much fine *chikei*, the steel is somewhat blackish
Hamon: *nie-laden chû-suguha* with a bright *nioiguchi* that is mixed with a little bit of *ko-gunome*, fine *nie-hotsure*, *ko-ashi*, and fine *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*
Bôshi: gently undulating *notare-komi* with a *ko-maru-kaeri* that features *hakikake*
Horimono: on both sides a *bôhi* which runs as *kaki-nagashi* through the tang
Nakago: *ô-suriage*, *katte-sagari yasurime*, two *mekugi-ana*

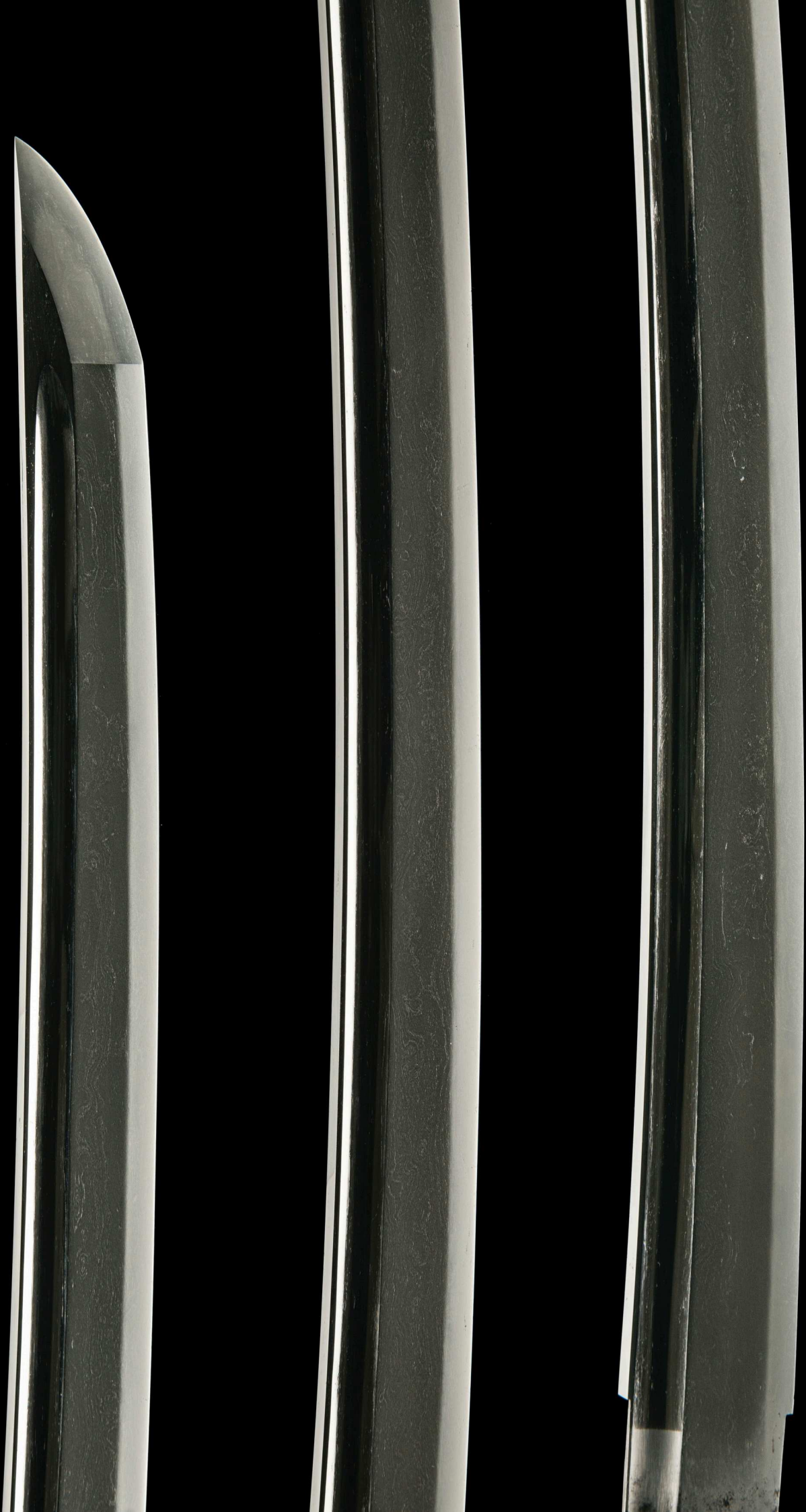
According to the result of the shinsa committee of our society we judged this work as authentic and rate it as jûyô-tôken.

October 16, 2014
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK

刀 無銘 来国安

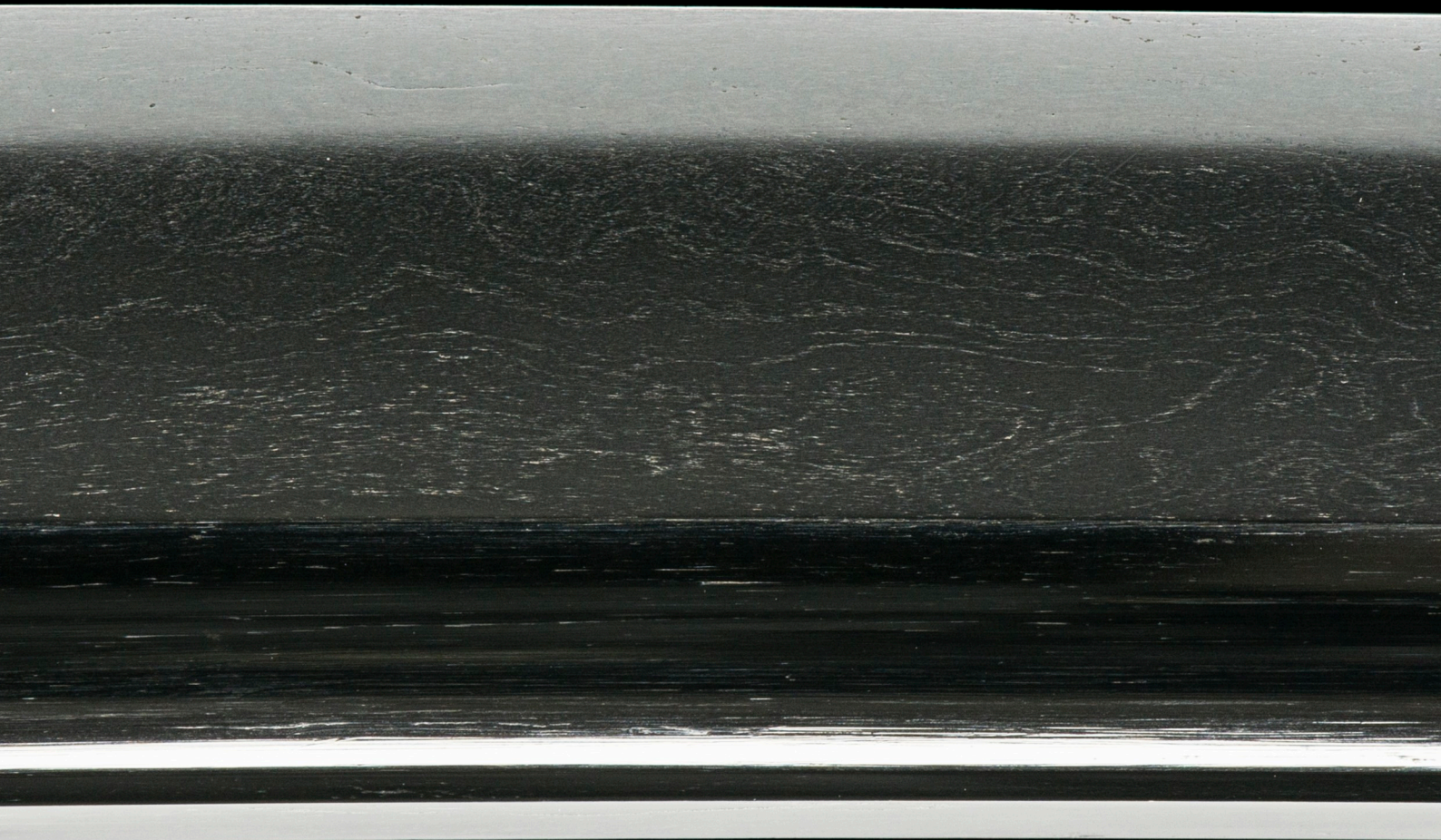








An *o-kissaki* (oversized tip) dominates the katana. This kissaki is typical of the size seen during the vicious *Nambokucho period* (circa 1333~1392) where the Kyoto region was engulfed in war. Many swords fighting at this time became chipped in battle and thus the tips are reshaped smaller. This sword, however, has retained its original shape thus making it all the more collectible.



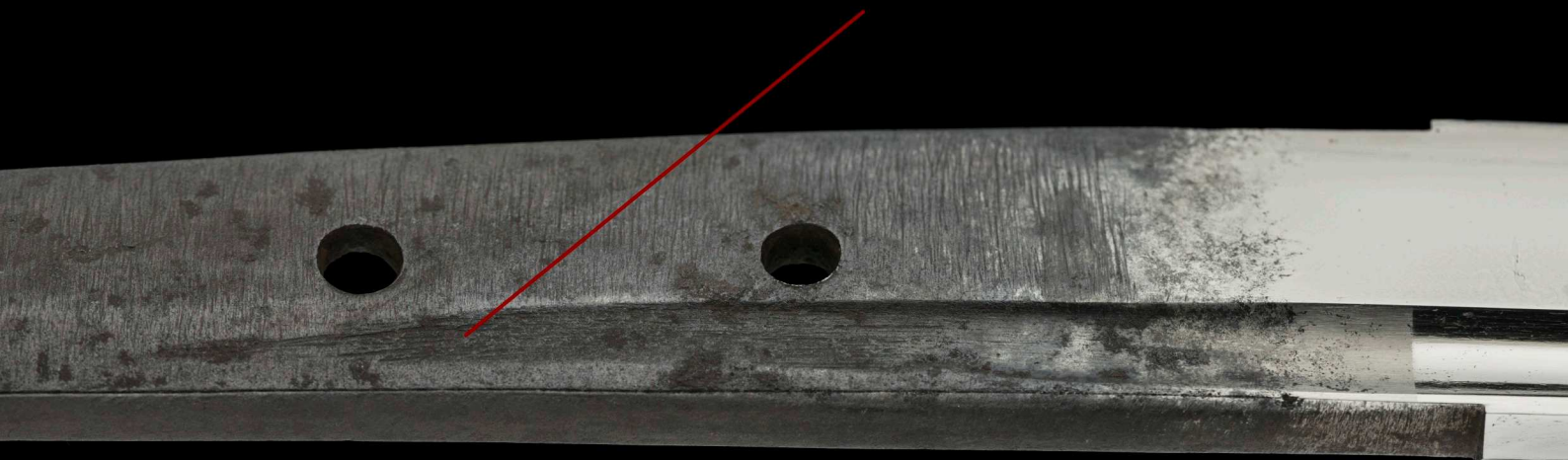


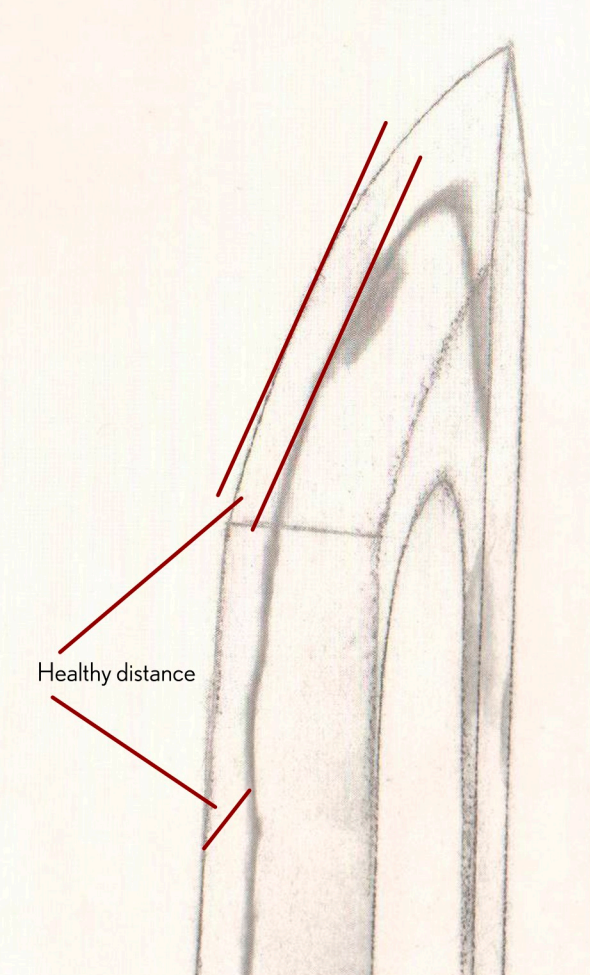
A *hi* (pronounced "hee") is a groove engraved on the *shinogi-ji*, the surface between the *mune* (spine) and the *shinogi* (ridge line) or the *hira-ji* (area between the *hamon* and *shinogi*).

A groove helps to make a sword lighter and aids in the cutting performance by taking on i-beam construction properties of absorbing energy.

On this sword, there is a *bo-hi* on the *omote* (front) and *ura* (back) of the blade. The groove then becomes pointed and tapers about halfway down the *nakago* (tang).

This is known as *kaki-nagashi*.



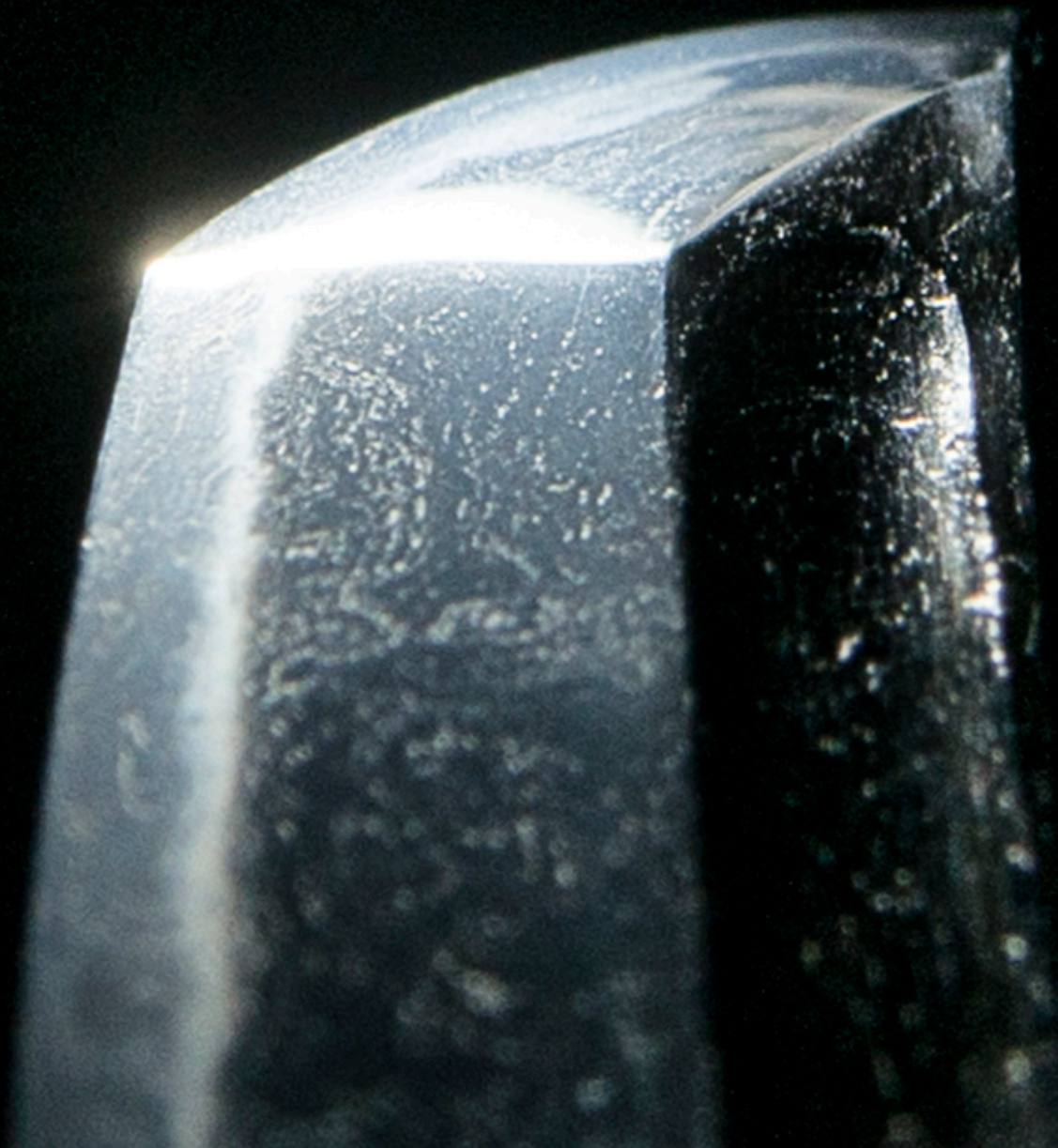


An important point to pay attention to when assessing the health of a Japanese sword is to see *how much distance* there is from the *hamon* to the cutting edge.

Very often on swords older than 600 years, from the *Kamakura* and *Nambokucho* periods, a blade is narrowed significantly due to its numerous polishes. More polishes means the blade narrows and the hamon begins to "hug" the cutting edge. This narrowing is especially noticeable in the *kissaki* (tip) area that is often reshaped after battle altercations.


It's a beautiful thing when we see ample distance such as on this *Rai Kuniyasu* katana. A wide sword is a healthy sword suggesting it is in similar condition from when it was first made.

This is a primary reason why this katana was awarded prestigious NBTHK Jûyô Tōken.



The *hamon* in the tip of the sword is called the *boshi*. It takes great skill by the swordsmith. The boshi on this sword is *hakikake*, literally 'sweeping'.



A close-up photograph of a sword's tip, showing a curved blade with a dark, textured surface. A red line points from the text to a specific area on the blade. The background is black.

A beautiful birthmark of clustered *nie* crystals forms on the *boshi, hamon* in the *kissaki* (tip).

The NBTHK Jûyô certificate describes the *jihada* (skin of the sword) as having a "rather standing-out *itame* that is mixed with *mokume* and *nagare*..."

We can explore these three elements in this image.

Nagare-hada
flowing grain pattern

Mokume-hada
rounded grain pattern

Itame-hada
plank grain, elongated shaped
standing out (noticeable)



elegant curvature

Clean, consistent *suguha hamon*.

A bright *nioguchi* of the straight and exacting *suguha hamon*.

The *jigane* (surface steel) exudes a dark hue - characteristic of swords that were crafted along the Sea of Japan. The old province of *Echizen* is now named *Fukui prefecture*.





Here we see *nie-hotsure* - a section of nie crystals along the hamon line that together appear like a frayed piece of cloth.

The history of *Echizen-uchihamono* (Echizen-forged knives) dates back to 1337 when renowned swordsmith *Chiyo-zuru Kuniyasu* moved from Kyoto to the Fukui area in search of a pure water source to forge his blades. After settling in Echizen, he continued to make swords but also began making sickles and other implements for local farmers, shifting his focus from weaponry to domestic tools.

In 1979 Echizen was the first area in Japan to be officially recognized for these traditional blade crafts by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.



On a personal note, my first sword is an *o-wakizashi* by *Echizen Narisada*. I selected the sword because of my fond memories of having travelled to Echizen (Fukui province) where I toured and subsequently represented (through Unique Japan) some of the very finest kitchen knife makers. Echizen is a lovely part of Japan that I recommend travelling to.



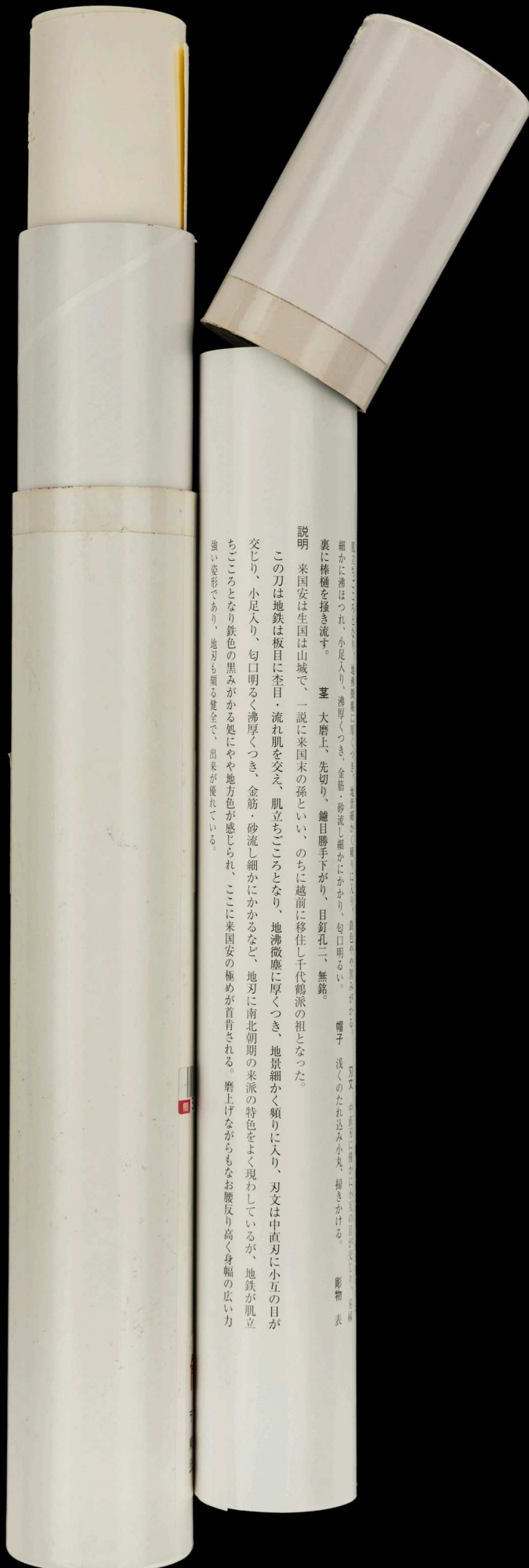
Pablo Kuntz at a kitchen knife factory in Takefu, Echizen (Fukui province)
Photographer: *Yasu Nakaoka* (January 2010)



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

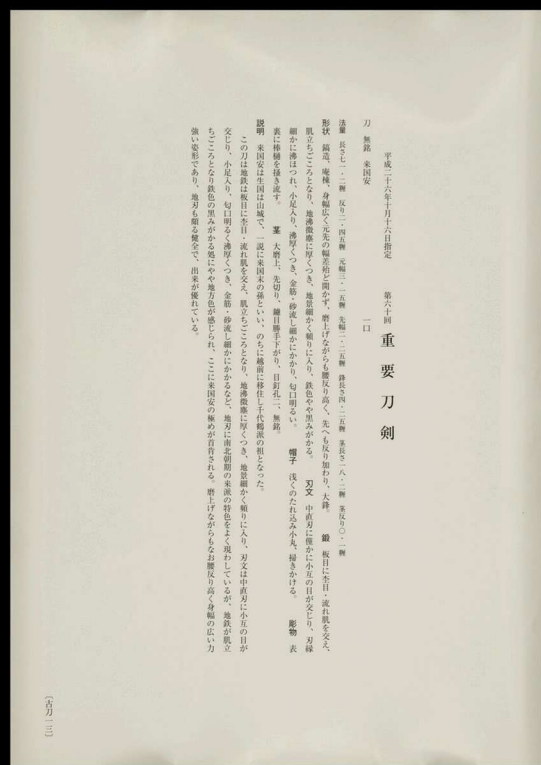


gold-wrapped *niju-habaki*
with perpendicular file marks



細かに沸はつれ、小足入り、沸厚くつき、金筋、砂流し細かにかかり、匂口明るい。 帽子 浅くのたれ込み小丸、掃きかける。 彫物 表
裏に棒樋を掻き流す。 茎 大磨上、先切り、鍔目勝手下がり、目釘孔二、無銘。

説明 来国安は生国は山城で、一説に来国末の孫といひ、のちに越前に移住し千代鶴派の祖となった。
この刀は地鉄は板目に柵目・流れ肌を交え、肌立ちころとなり、地沸微塵に厚くつき、地景細かく頼りに入り、刃文は中直刃に小互の目が交じり、小足入り、匂口明るく沸厚くつき、金筋・砂流し細かにかかると、地刃に南北朝期の来派の特色をよく現わしているが、地鉄が肌立ちころとなり鉄色の黒みがかる処にやや地方色が感じられ、ここに来国安の極めが首肯される。磨上げながらも腰反り高く身幅の広い力強い姿形であり、地刃も頗る健全で、出来が優れている。



60th NBTHK Juyo Token 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.

The *Chiyozuru school* name was inspired from Kuniyasu's nickname as a child *Chiyozurumaru*.

The Japanese kanji for *Chi-yo-zuru* (千代鶴) means "*a thousand generations of cranes.*"

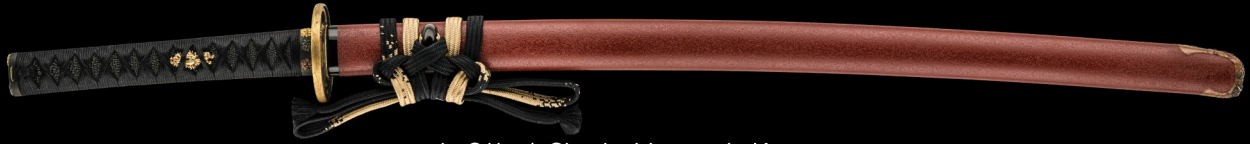
The crane symbolizes longevity. In Japan, a famous saying goes, *tsuru wa sennen, kame wa mannen* meaning '*a crane lives for a thousand years, a turtle lives for 10 thousand years.*'

As an option, the new caretaker may wish to embark on a custom *koshirae* project with Unique Japan using a **theme of cranes** thus paying tribute to not only Chiyozuru and the school he founded, but also to invite love and longevity to his or her home.



An example of a *fuchi-kashira* with a crane design (inspiration only).

Building Your Own Custom Koshirae



ujka211 - A Shodai Hisamichi Katana
'Red dragon' Koshirae



ujwa130 - A Tadashige o-Wakizashi
'Ray skin' Koshirae

Many top quality samurai swords that Unique Japan acquires come stored in a *shirasaya* only. A *shirasaya* acts like a humidifier, protecting the steel for the long term.

Just as the samurai would have ordered a custom *koshirae* (outdoor mounts) during the Edo period, you too can have a traditional set of *koshirae* crafted for your sword (or matching *daishô*) like a tailored suit in a theme that connects with your spirit.

At Unique Japan, we have proudly created dozens of custom *koshirae* projects for our clients over the years - each with their own style and energy.

The *tsuka* (hilt), *saya* (scabbard), *samekawa* (ray skin), silk, and lacquer is all handcrafted by skilled craftspeople in Japan. The *tsuba*, *fuchi-kashira*, *menuki* and other fittings are carefully sourced samurai antiques largely from the Edo period.

This unique blend of modern life meeting traditional history is what makes each creation so personally rewarding for every client.

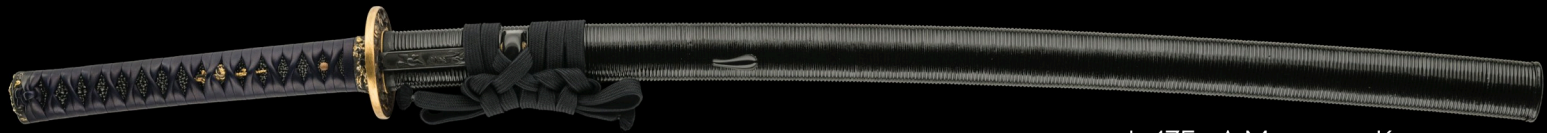
The investment required ranges from \$5,000 to over \$10,000 depending on the quality of the fittings and the complexity of the lacquerwork. Each project also demands patience as many will take one year to complete (but it's well worth it).

Please contact Unique Japan for further details.



ujka173 - A Sadatsugu Juyo Katana
'Wave theme' Koshirae

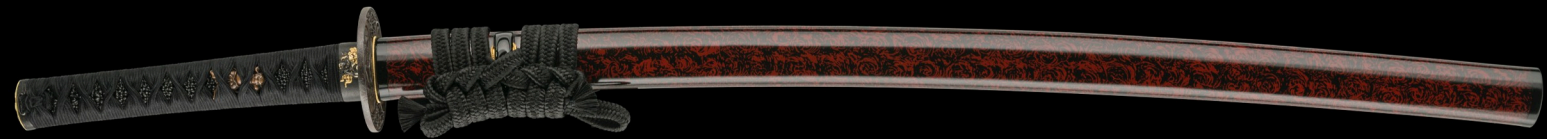
Recently completed custom koshirae projects



ujka175 - A Masatsugu Katana
Traditional *Kizami Uchigatana* Koshirae (3mm tracks)



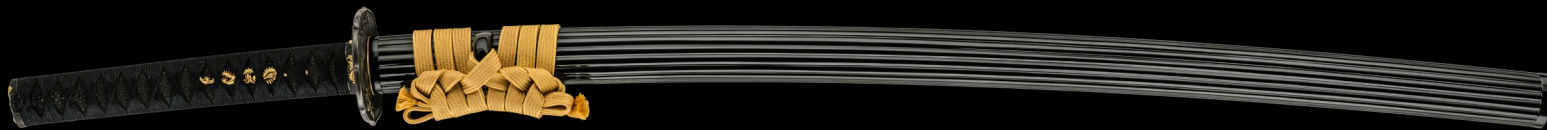
ujka252 - A Jûyô Hatakeda Sanemori Tachi
Gorgeous *Handachi* Koshirae with deep red *ishime* finish



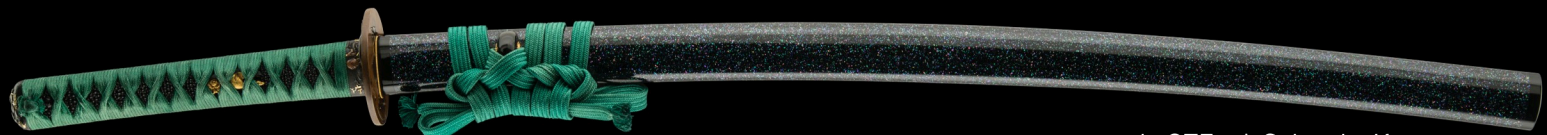
ujka322 - A Jûyô Niô School Katana
Benevolent guardian kings theme with *zen* whirlpool design



ujka350 - A Jûyô Shigezane Katana
Longevity *matsu* (pine) theme with *Naitô* family *kamon*



ujka291 - A Norikatsu Katana
Long straight grooves celebrating *masame-hada*



ujka275 - A Suketaka Katana
Deep space *aoi-gai* (mother-of-pearl) theme



ujka298 & ujwa191 - A Jûyô Yamato Shizu Daisho
Rising phoenix theme with *Hoso fuemaki* (thin strips) lacquerwork



ujka279 & ujwa121 - A Hizen Masahiro/Yukihiro Daisho
Samurai and *Kagura* (dance) theme with rustic iron lacquerwork

