



ITEM# UJKA395

A RYÔKAI KATANA

UNSIGNED, KAMAKURA PERIOD (SHÔÔ~ENKYÔ ERAS: 1292~1309)

Swordsmith: *Ryôkai (attribution, o-suriage mumei)*
Measurements: **Length:** 68.7cm **Curvature:** 0.8cm **Moto-haba:** 2.55cm **Weight:** 585g
Jihada: *Ko-itame mixed with ji-nie, masame-hada and shirake utsuri*
Hamon: *Suguha with ko-gunome, ko-ashi, kinsuji and sunagashi*
Horimono: *Short bôhi on both sides with kaki-toshi running through the nakago (tang)*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #2-4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (tsuba, koshirae & fittings designated as Authentic)
Fujishiro rank: **Jô-saku** (ranked as a superior swordsmith)
Included: Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, booklet, description

SOLD

Ryôkai is said to be the son of grandmaster **Rai Kunitoshi**. He left the celebrated Rai family at the age of 16 taking the priest name *Ryôkai*. Existing dated signatures range between the 5th year of *Shôô* era (1292) and the 2nd year of *Enkyô* era (1309) - these dates support his relation to Rai Kunitoshi whose active period was around *Kôan* era (1278~1288). This is a slender shortened tachi crafted over 700 years ago that is full of vibrancy to study and admire. The *jigane* is a dense *ko-itame* with fine *ji-nie* with some clear *masame-hada* and *shirake-utsuri*. The *hamon* features an eclectic mix of *suguha* with *ko-gunome* and *ko-chôji* and plenty of *ko-ashi*, *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. A gorgeous *aoi-gai* (mother-of-pearl) *uchigatana koshirae* from the Edo period shines like stars in the night sky. Samurai weaponry and armour are featured on the *fuchi-kashira*. Feel the history...



Saki-kasane: 3.3mm

Moto-kasane: 5.5mm

Omosa: 585g

Kissaki: 1.71cm
Saki-haba: 1.41cm

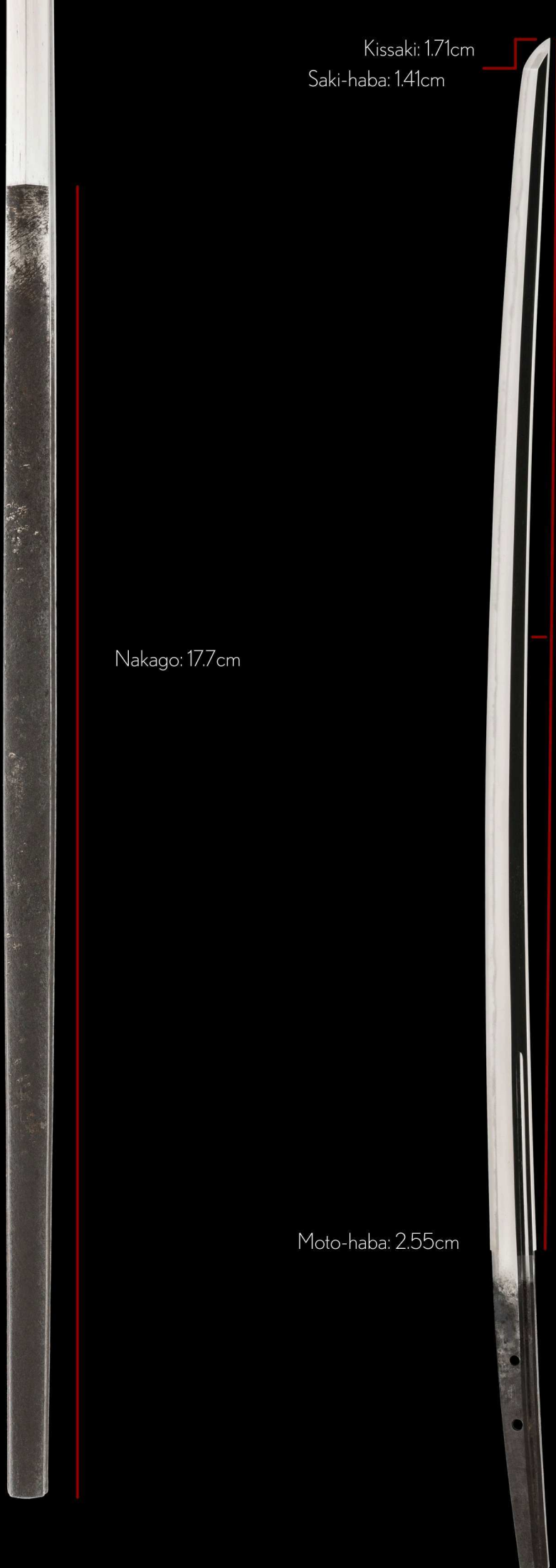
Nakago: 17.7cm

Moto-haba: 2.55cm

Nagasa: 68.7cm

Sori: 0.80cm

Mekugi-ana: 2




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Ryôkai was known to produce rather slender *tachi*, which we see here in this sword. The *jigane* is a dense *ko-itame* with fine *ji-nie* which shows some *masame* and *shirake-utsuri*. The *hamon* has a bluish tint that features an eclectic mix of *suguha* with *ko-gunome* and *ko-chôji* - we also see plenty of *ko-ashi*, *kinsuji* and *sunagashi*. The upper *kissaki* area is rather gorgeous with layers of straight grain *masame-hada* uniquely folded and preserved for us to enjoy 700 years later.

Ryôkai is ranked as *jô-saku* - a superior swordsmith - an impressive achievement given the class of smiths that were also at the top of their respective games at the end of the golden Kamakura period.



The image displays two views of a sword tang (nakago) against a black background. The tang is a long, tapered metal piece with two circular holes. The left view shows the tang from a side angle, highlighting its taper and the two holes. The right view shows the tang from a more direct perspective, also showing the two holes. A red arrow points from the text below to a groove on the right side of the tang.

This sword was once a long tachi during the late *Kamakura period*. In approximately the late *Muromachi* to early *Edo* period (late 1500s ~ early 1600s), it was greatly shortened to its *ô-suriage nakago* and lost its *mei* (signature).

The nakago features *kaki-tôshi* - grooves that extend right through the butt end of the tang.

特 保
30201812

No 1010406



鑑定書

一 刀 無銘（了戒）

長二尺二寸六分強

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀劍と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成三十一年 二月二十五日

公益財団法人 日本美術刀劍保存協會



和歌山県 教育委員会
第 24831 号
平成8年9月5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

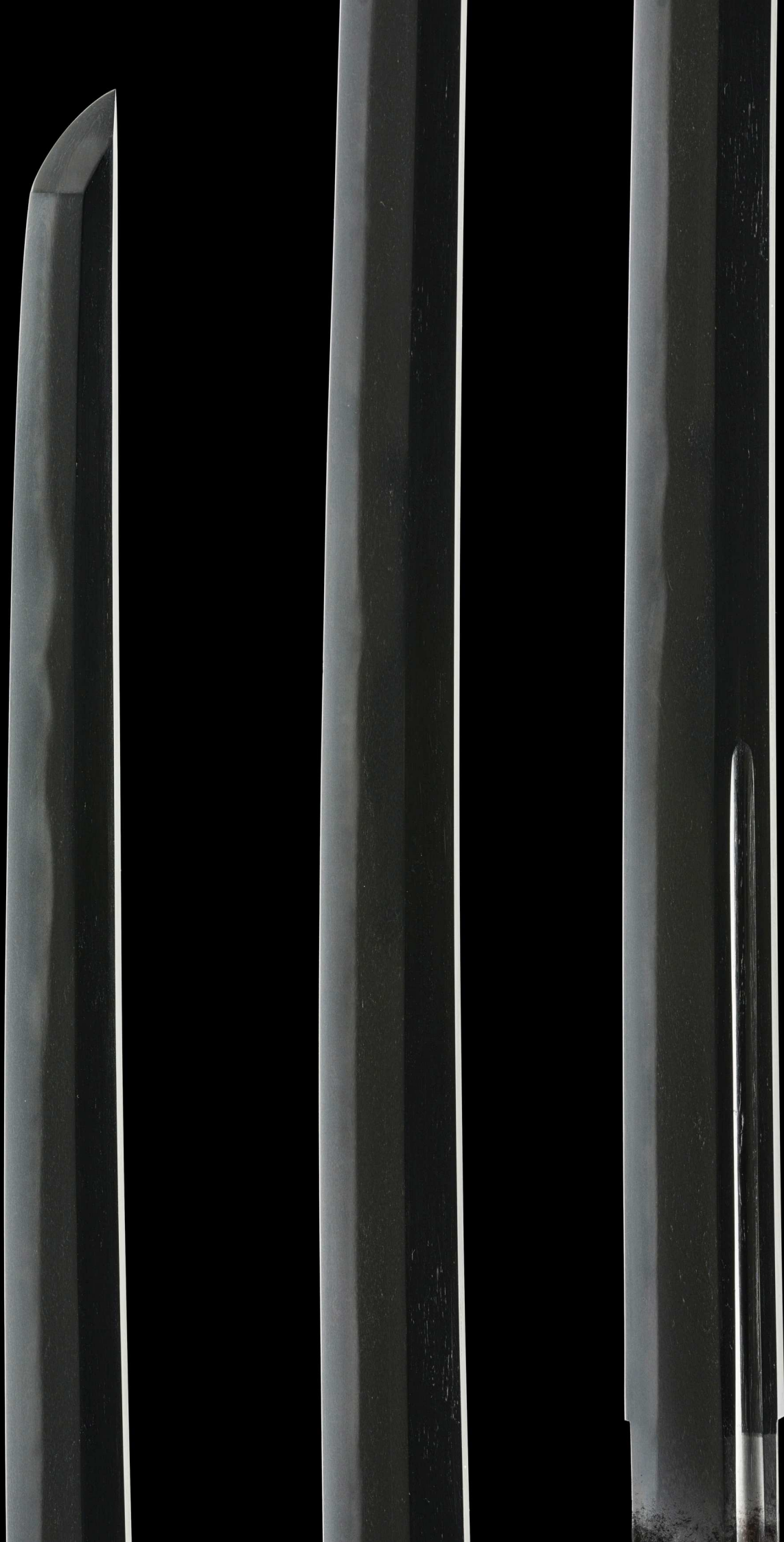
Issued in the 31st year of Heisei (2019), February 25th

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Ryôkai

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 6-bu kyô (68.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

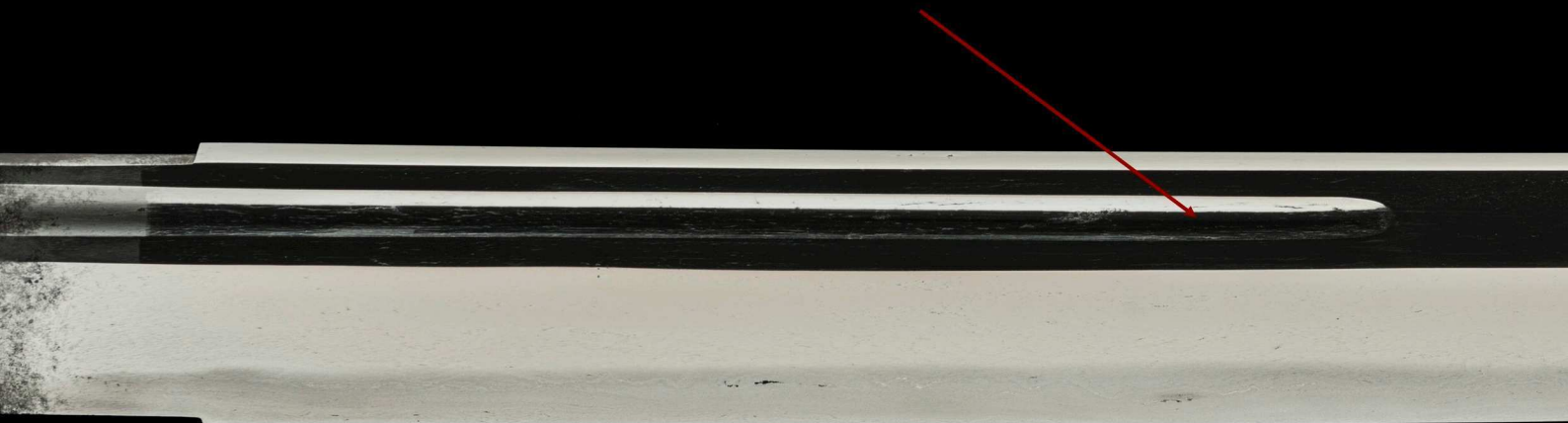






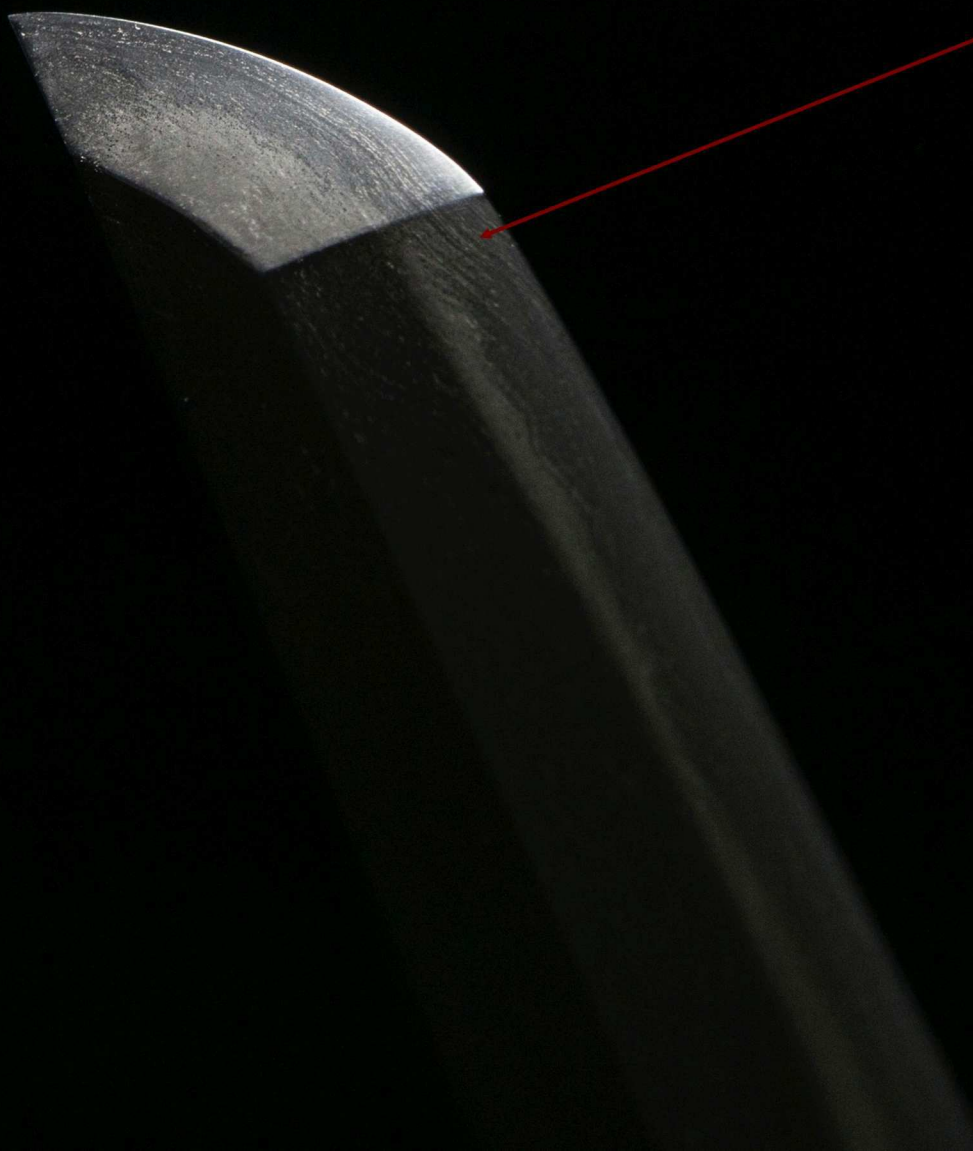
The katana has a *hi* (groove) that fills the centre of the *shinogi* (ridge line) on the lower section on both sides of the blade.

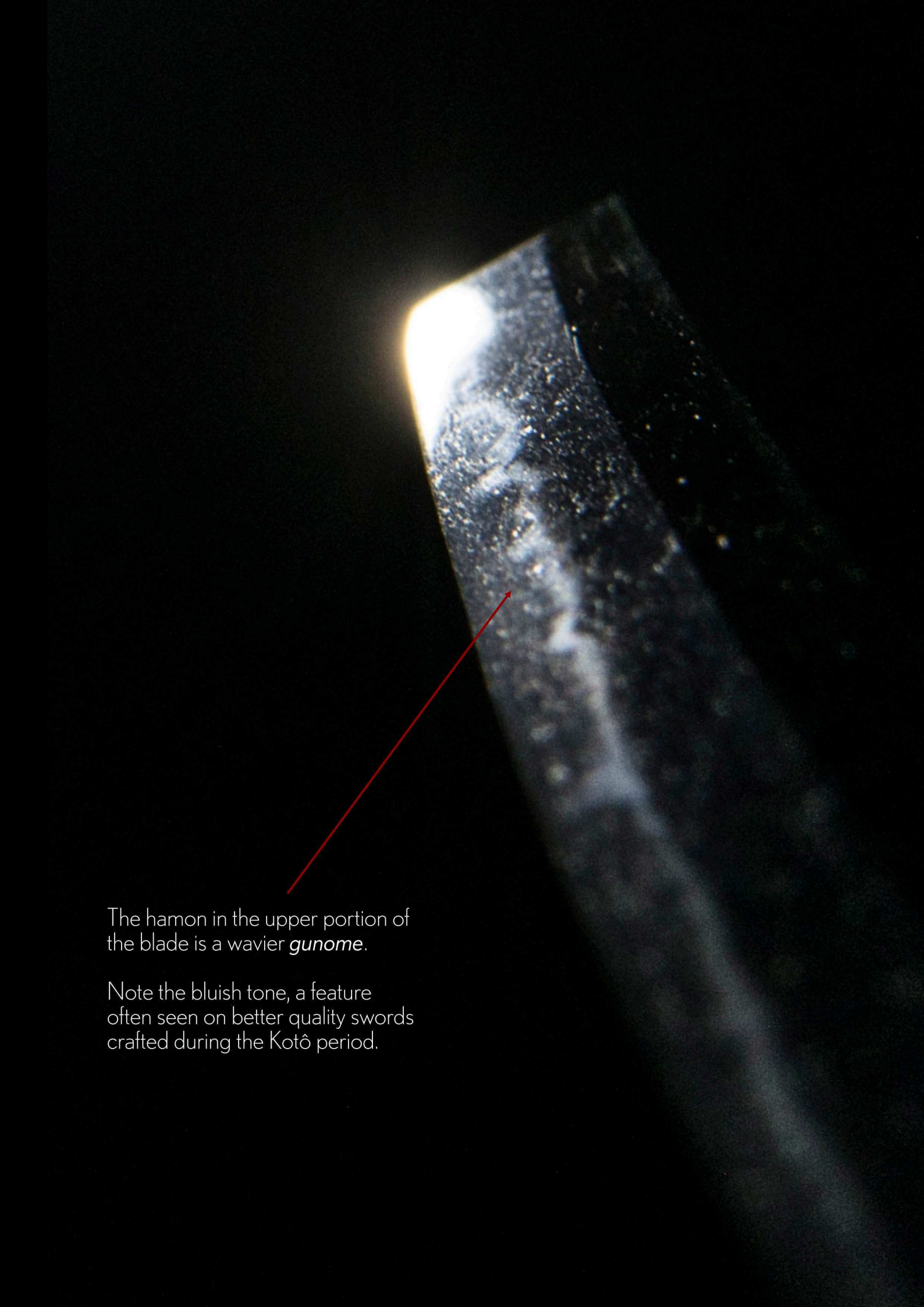
The top end of the grooves are referred to as *maru-dome* (rounded).






Beautifully forged layers of free-flowing straight grain *masame-hada*.





The hamon in the upper portion of the blade is a wavier *gunome*.

Note the bluish tone, a feature often seen on better quality swords crafted during the Kotô period.

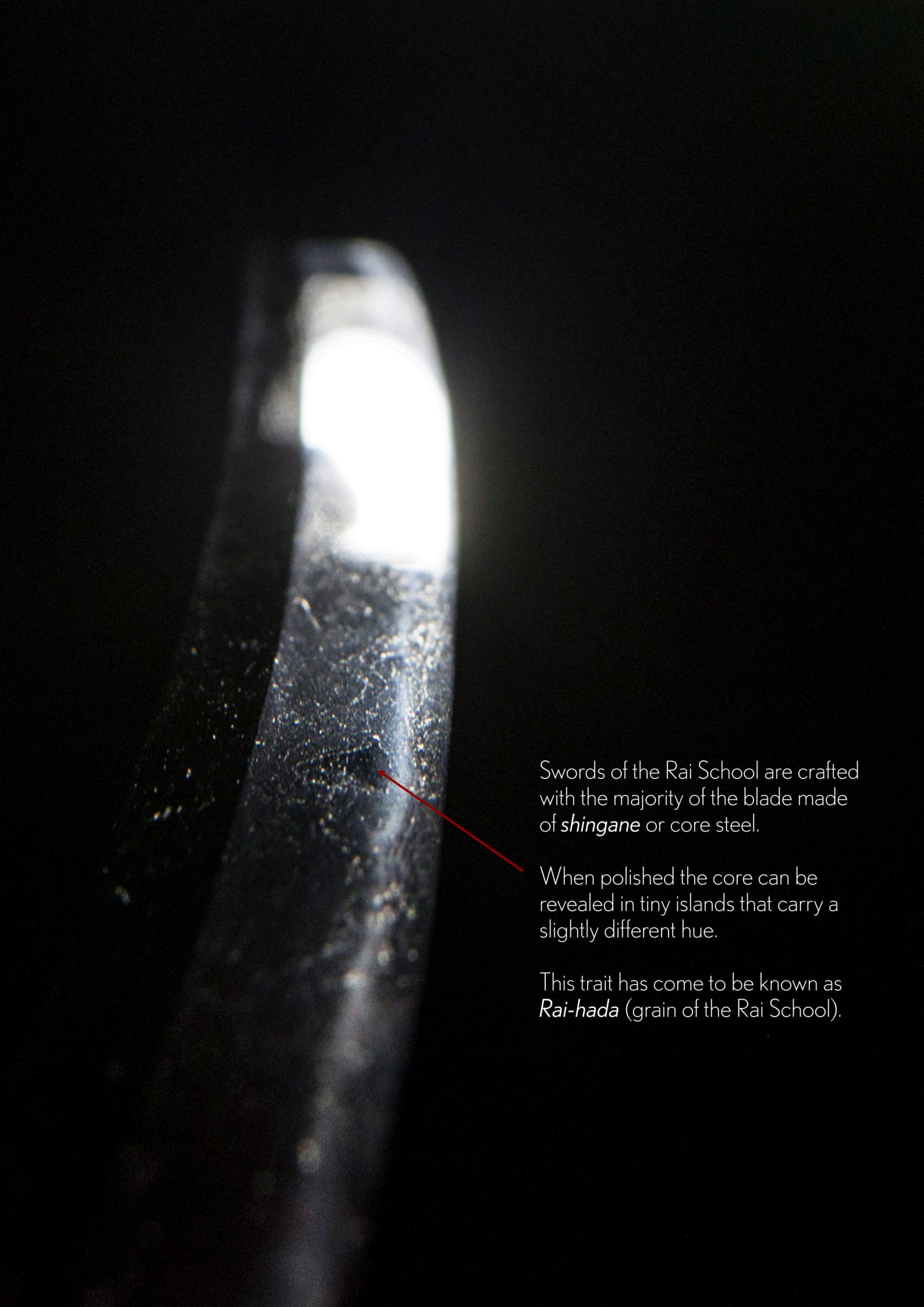
A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (edge line) and ko-ashi (small legs). The blade is dark and textured, with a bright, reflective edge. Three red arrows point from the text labels to specific features on the blade. The top arrow points to the upper part of the hamon, the middle arrow points to the lower part of the hamon, and the bottom arrow points to the serrated ko-gunome.

ko-ashi (small legs)

As we travel down the blade, the hamon tightens and a serrated *ko-gunome* appears.




A long stream of *sunagashi*
brushing its way through the hamon.



Swords of the Rai School are crafted with the majority of the blade made of *shingane* or core steel.

When polished the core can be revealed in tiny islands that carry a slightly different hue.

This trait has come to be known as *Rai-hada* (grain of the Rai School).

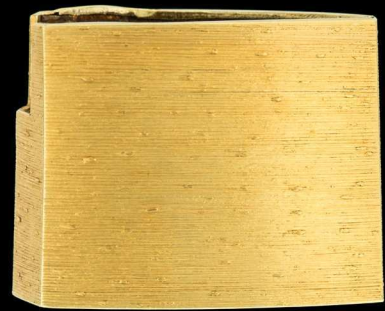
A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the shirake-utsuri (white frost) pattern. The blade is dark and textured, with a bright, glowing edge. A red arrow points to a specific area on the blade. The background is dark, making the blade stand out.

Light shadows of *shirake-utsuri*
can be seen on the blade.

giant bolt of *kinsuji*



Newly crafted *shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold-wrapped
habaki with crisp
horizontal file marks



sprinklings of mother-of-pearl dance like stars of the night sky...

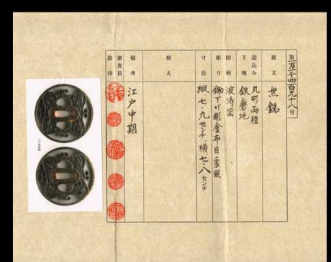
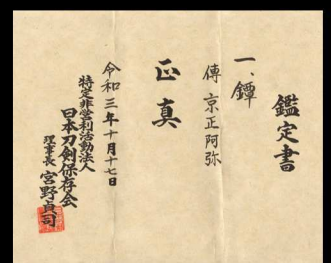




This stunning polished iron tsuba has been attributed to the *Kyô-Shôami school* dating back to the middle Edo period - circa 1700~1780.

Its quadratic design within a circular shape depict powerful, rolling waves. It appears to encompass a nautical reference - the exploration to all corners of the globe via the high seas. An impressively preserved gold *nunome-zogan* design carving pattern has been etched around the rim of the tsuba.

Tsubas were made in Kyotô carry the prefix "*Kyô*". They were generally crafted by artists from the *Kyô-Shoami* and *Awa-Shoami* groups. A NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity accompanies the piece.



Nunome-zôgan - lit. "fabric/texture" describes a technique where the surface of the ground metal is prepared by rough crosshatching with a file or a fine chisel. Afterwards, soft gold or silver fragments or wires are hammered into these depressions.

This technique was in use during the late Muromachi period among *Shôami* artists and is mainly seen during the subsequent Edo period on *Nanban-tsuba* and work of the *Higo Hayashi* and *Shimizu schools*.

The actual ornamentation is not as firmly connected to the surface, so we frequently find works where parts of the nunome design is lost due to rust or abrasion, leaving only the preparative file mark pattern.

Markus Sesko
Encyclopedia of Japanese Swords



nunome-zôgan



The iron *fuchi-kashira* features elements of samurai weaponry and armour. It has been certified to the *Tōryūsai* school based in *Edo* (Tokyo) from the late Edo period.



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity.



tachi



Kobayashi Kiyochika: Samurai with Iron Mask



mempo (mask) and dô (cuirass)

Saihai

A baton carried by *samurai* commanders. It was both a sign of rank and a signal device.



Kabuto (helmet)



Tethered horses made of black *shakudô* and gold form the *menuki* on the *tsuka* (hilt). Tachi were once carried on horseback thus paying a historical reference.

The *menuki* were recently secured onto black-lacquered *samekawa* (ray skin) and expertly braided over with silk in a wine-red colour.





Koshirae bag