



ITEM# UJKA400

## A NAKAJIMA-RAI KATANA

UNSIGNED, NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (SHÔHEI ERA: 1346~1370)

<b>Swordsmith:</b>	<i>Nakajima-Rai (attribution, o-suriage mumei)</i>
<b>Measurements:</b>	<b>Length:</b> 69.5cm <b>Curvature:</b> 1.2cm <b>Moto-haba:</b> 2.90cm <b>Weight:</b> 660g
<b>Jihada:</b>	<i>Vivid mokume mixed with ji-nie and abundant chikei</i>
<b>Hamon:</b>	<i>Suguha-chô in bright nioguchi, ko-nie-deki mixed with ko-gunome, ashi and yô</i>
<b>Horimono:</b>	<i>Bôhi on both sides with kaki-nagashi running partway through the nakago (tang)</i>
<b>Certificate #1:</b>	<b>NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon</b> (designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation)
<b>Certificate #2-4:</b>	<b>NTHK-NPO Kanteisho</b> (tsuba, koshirae & fittings designated as Authentic)
<b>Fujishiro rank:</b>	<b>Jô-saku</b> (ranked as a superior swordsmith)
<b>Authentication:</b>	<b>Sayagaki by Tanzan-sensei</b> (Tanobe Michihiro)
<b>Included:</b>	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, booklet, description

**SOLD**

The *Nakajima-Rai* school emerged as a distinguished branch of the *Rai* tradition under the leadership of master swordsmith *Rai Kuninaga*, who studied under *Rai Kunitoshi*, a designated national treasure. During the *Gentoku* era (1329-1331), Kuninaga relocated from Kyôto to the Nakajima region of *Settsu* province, which led to his moniker "*Nakajima-Rai*." This exceptional katana exemplifies the turbulent *Nambokuchô* period of the 14th century, featuring a broad, sturdy construction with striking *mokume* burl-wood-grain pattern in the steel. The blade showcases quintessential *Rai* craftsmanship through its prominent *ashi* (legs) and *yô* (leaf-like) patterns. The sword is further enhanced by an elegant Edo-period *handachi-koshirae* and *Tanobe-sensei sayagaki* that highlighted the blade's "*exquisite steel quality*" and "*refined suguha hamon*."



Saki-kasane: 3.8mm

Moto-kasane: 6.3mm

Kissaki: 3.59cm

Saki-haba: 2.10cm

Nagasa: 69.5cm

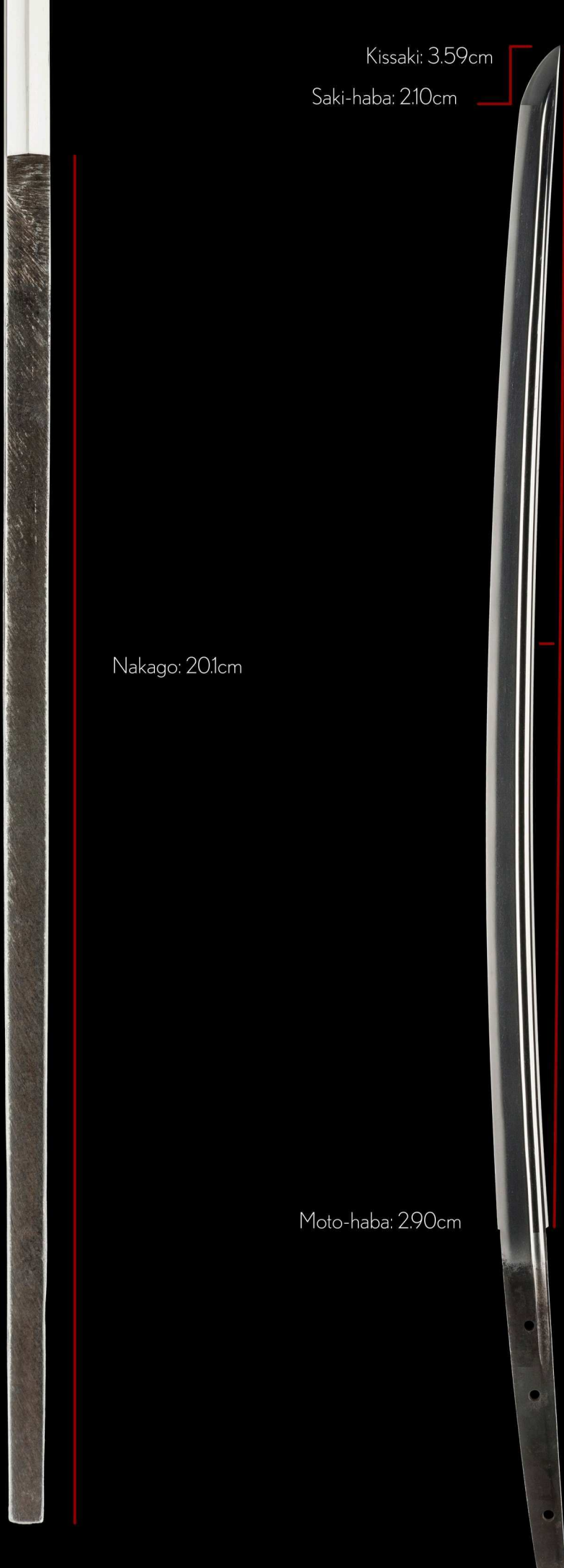
Nakago: 20.1cm

Sori: 1.20cm

Omosa: 660g

Moto-haba: 2.90cm

Mekugi-ana: 3



The *Kamakura period* (1185-1333) was marked by a gradual shift in power from the nobility to landowning military men in the provinces. This era was a time of dramatic transformation in the politics, society, and culture of Japan. The *bakufu*, or government led by *samurai* (warrior chieftains) controlled the country from their base in Kamakura, near modern Tokyo. Because the emperor remained the head of state in his capital in Kyoto, a binary system of government, whereby *emperors reigned but shoguns ruled*, was established and endured for the next seven hundred years.

In 1333, a coalition of supporters of *Emperor Go-Daigo* (1288-1339), who sought to restore political power to the throne, toppled the Kamakura regime. Unable to rule effectively, however, this new royal government was short-lived.

In 1336, a member of a branch family of the *Minamoto* clan, *Ashikaga Takauji* (1305-1358), usurped control and drove Go-Daigo from Kyoto. Takauji then set a rival on the throne and established a new military government in Kyoto. Meanwhile, Go-Daigo traveled south and took refuge in *Yoshino* district in *Nara*. There he established the *Southern Court*, in contrast to the rival *Northern Court* supported by Takauji.

The whole country was in turmoil. Kyoto was ravaged time and time again. This time of constant strife that lasted from 1336 to 1392 is known as the *Nanbokucho period* (Period of Southern and Northern Courts).

Swordmaking flourished during this period. Many notable swordsmiths moved outside of war torn Kyoto to supply the high demand for blades. *Rai Kuninaga* was one of these swordsmiths that left Kyoto for *Nakajima* in *Osaka*. Eventually *Ashikaga Yoshimitsu* merged victorious and the northern dynasty was confirmed. The Muromachi period thus ensued.




*Ashikaga Takauji (Northern Court)*



*Emperor Go-Daigo (Southern Court)*





This sword was once a very long tachi during the *mid-1300s* of the *Nambokuchô period*. The sword is now *ô-suriage nakago* - greatly shortened at least twice since then to suit the battle requirements of the subsequent time periods.

The nakago features *kaki-nagashi* - grooves that extend to the middle of the butt end of the tang.

The nakago tells a story. Notice how the patina changes slightly, darker and more rusty are older shortenings.

The *hi* (groove) did not originally extend into the nakago. It was only after several shortenings that it ended where it is today.

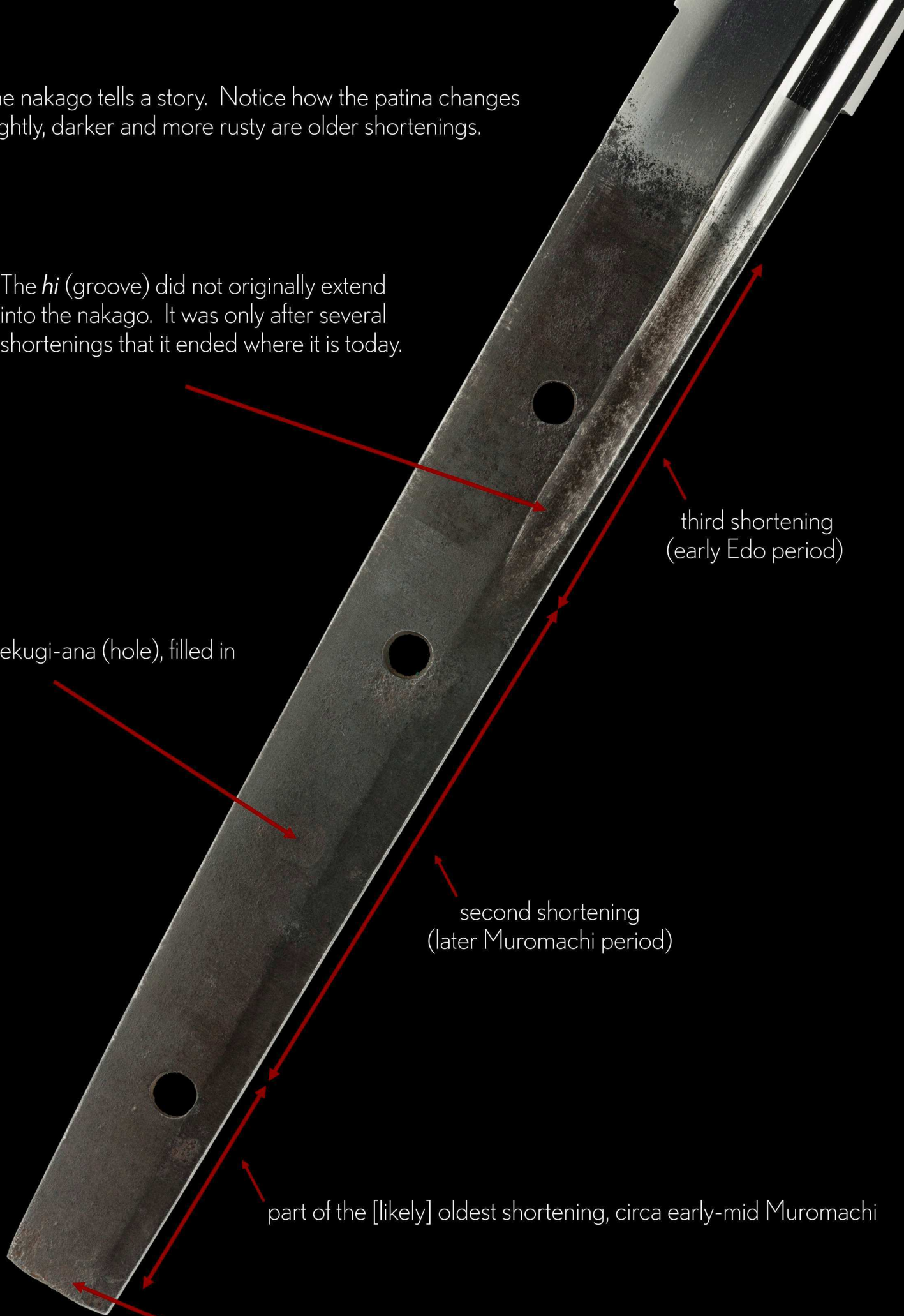
old mekugi-ana (hole), filled in

third shortening  
(early Edo period)

second shortening  
(later Muromachi period)

part of the [likely] oldest shortening, circa early-mid Muromachi

original deep rust to when the sword was first forged



01201909

No 1012533



鑑定書

一刀 無銘 (中島来)

長二尺二寸九分強

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

令和元年十二月二日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



長崎県 教育委員会  
第 9109 号  
昭和34年2月12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 1st year of Reiwa (2019), December 2nd

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)  
*Nakajima Rai*

*Nagasa* (length)  
2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu kyô (69.5cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)



中島来  
*Nakajima Rai*  
 Nakajima Rai

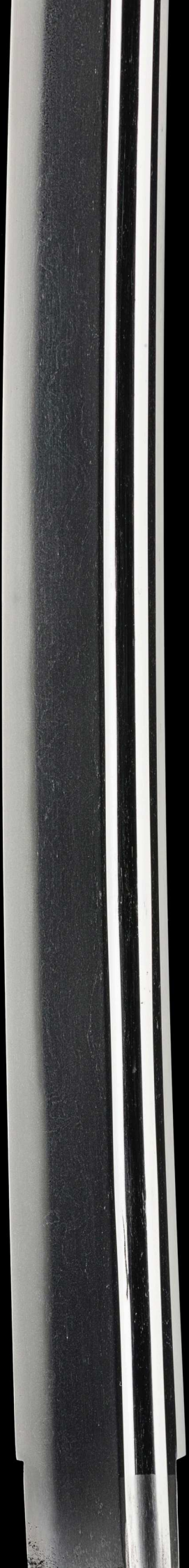
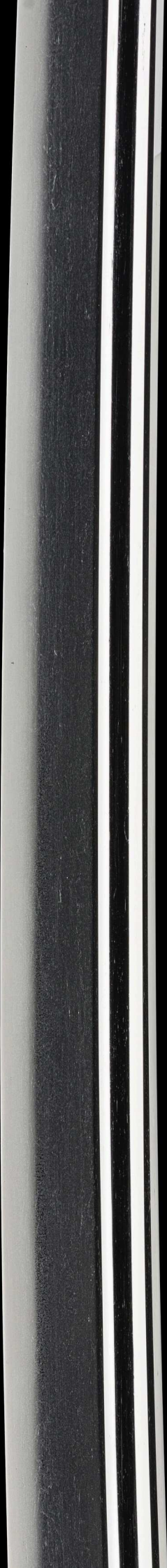
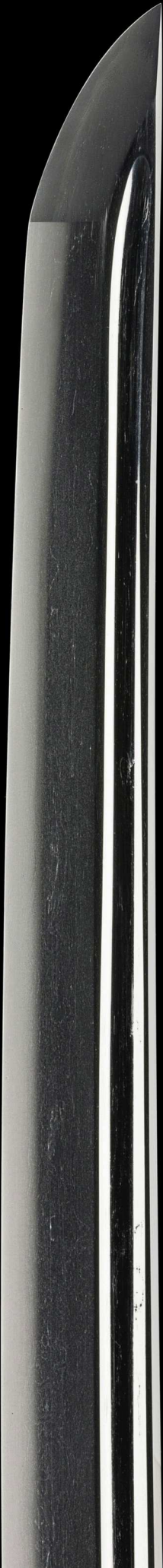
大磨上無銘也来国俊門人ナル国長ハ後ニ撰州中島ニ移住シ鍛刀シタルニ因リ中島来ト通称セラル本刀ハ精妙ナル地鉄ニ鍛へ小沸出来ノ端正ナ直刃ヲ焼キ足・葉頻リニ入り帽子ヲ丸ク纏メルナド身幅廣目デ稍延心ノ鋒ノ形状ト併セテ同工ト鑿スベキガ妥當ナル優品哉

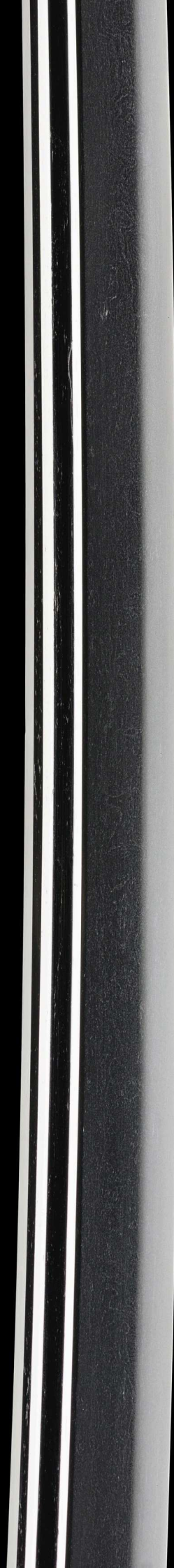
*Ô-suriage mumei nari Rai Kunitoshi monjin naru Kuninaga wa nochi ni Sesshû Nakajima ni ijû shi tantô shitaruni yori Nakajima Rai to tsûshô seraru. Hontô wa seimyô naru ji-gane ni kitae ko-nie deki no tansei naru sugu-ha o yaki ashi yô shikirini hairi bôshi o maruku matomeru nado mihaba hirome de yaya nobi-gokoro no kissaki no keijô to awasete dôkô to kansubeki ga datô naru yûhin kana.*

Kuninaga, student of Rai Kunitoshi, later moved to Nakajima in Sesshû Province and earned the nickname Nakajima Rai. This ô-suriage blade shows exquisite jigane with elegant suguha in ko-nie deki, and plenty of ashi and yô. The bôshi is round, with a rather wide mihaba, and a slightly extended kissaki - qualities that point to a masterwork of Kuninaga.

長貳尺二寸九分余  
*Nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu amari*  
 Blade length ~69.5cm

時在己亥林鐘探山識 (花押)  
*Jizai tsuchinoto-i Rinshô Tanzan shirusu + kaô*  
 Written by Tanzan [Tanobe Michihiro] in the sixth month of the year of the boar (June 2019) + monogram

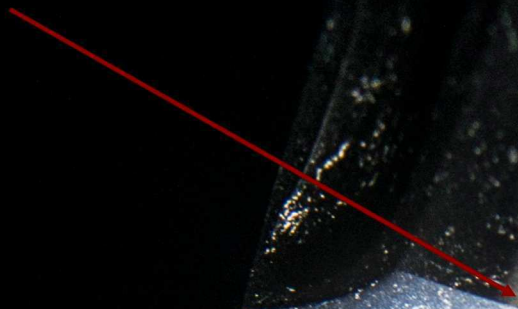




Gorgeous swirls of dark *chikei* form rounded islands of *mokume-hada*.



Impressive line of *kinsuji*  
piercing through the hamon.



Smooth *ko-maru* (rounded) *bôshi* (hamon in the tip area).






The *hamon* along the lower third of the blade features long *ashi* (legs) that are particularly attractive.



Clean *suguha* (straight) hamon that carries a sense of pride.

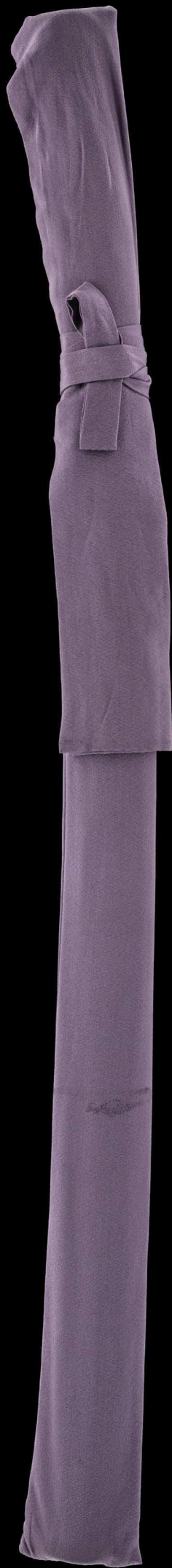
Note the bluish tint to the blade, a sign of a well-crafted sword.

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, showing the hamon (tempered edge) and the Yô markings. The blade is dark, and the hamon is a lighter, polished edge. The Yô markings are small, light-colored clusters of crystals. Two red arrows point to these markings. The background is black.

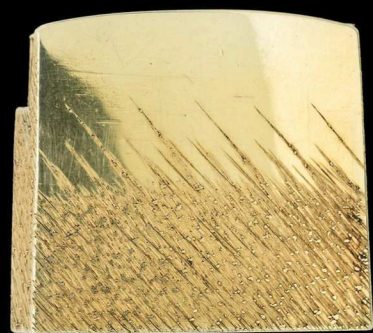
Yô (leaves) are delightful clusters of *nie* crystals inside the hamon.

Take no prisoners.





Shirasaya  
(protective scabbard)

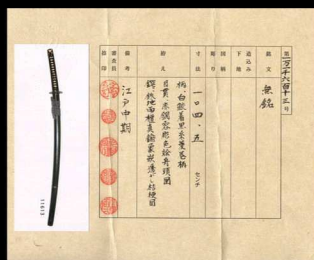
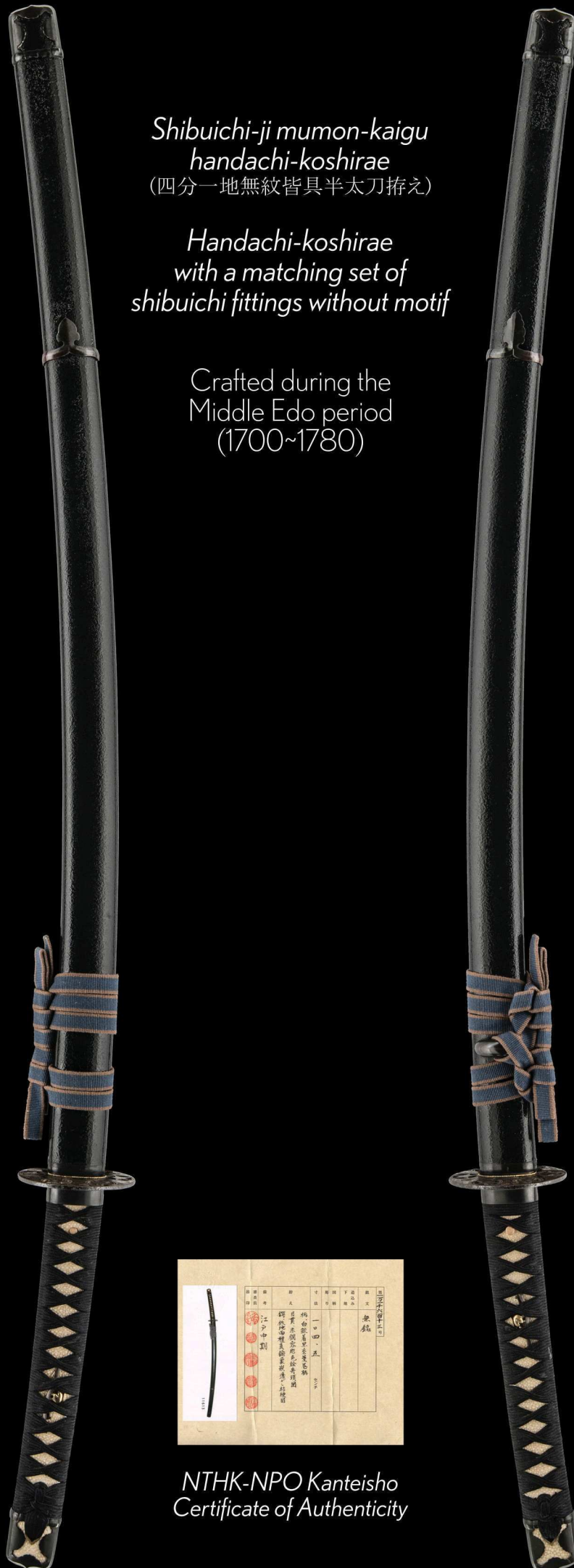


gold-wrapped *habaki* with  
rain pattern file marks

*Shibuichi-ji mumon-kaigu  
handachi-koshirae*  
(四分一地無紋皆具半太刀拵え)

*Handachi-koshirae  
with a matching set of  
shibuichi fittings without motif*

Crafted during the  
Middle Edo period  
(1700~1780)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho  
Certificate of Authenticity



all matching fittings

*Soroi Kanagu* (matching fittings)

Certified by the NTHK-NPO to a tachi craftsman circa mid-Edo period (1700~1780)

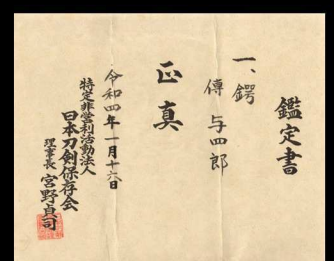




This polished iron tsuba has been attributed to the *Yoshihiro school*, which originated from the *Heianjo-zôgan* school. From the middle part of the 16th century the majority of high relief inlay along with *mon sukashi* (open work with family crests) made around *Kaga* province and *Kyotô* was considered the work of the Yoshiro.

Well-preserved openwork was done in brass inlay. The star-shaped motif is that of the cherished bellflower (*kikyô no zu*).

An NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity attributing the piece to the *early-Edo period* circa 1603~1700 has been attained.



The star-shaped Japanese bellflower, *kikyô*, is a vivid purple five petal flower which is the symbol of unchanging *love*, *honesty*, and *obedience*. *Kikyô* is often used as patterns in *kimonos* and *obi*, the kimono belt, and also used as *kamon* (family crests), known as *kikyô-mon*.

The flower blooms at the end of summer and is intimately associated with the autumn season in Japanese culture. *Kikyô* is considered one of Japan's "*Seven Flowers of Autumn*," and a popular theme in *haiku* and other Japanese literature. During the *Heian* era (794 -1185), these flowers were common in the gardens of the aristocracy.



*Bellflower and Dragonfly*  
from an untitled series known as *Large Flowers*

Artist: *Katsushika Hokusai*  
circa 1833-1834





The *menuki* depicts a man on a boat, likely a fisherman.  
A peaceful scene.





Koshirae bag