



ITEM# UJKA403

A NAOTANE '3-BODY CUTTING TEST' KATANA SIGNED & DATED, SHINSHINTÔ PERIOD (BUNKA ERA: OCTOBER 6, 1815)

Swordsmith:	<i>Taikei Shôji Naotane (shodai, first generation)</i>		
Measurements:	Length: 69.9cm (<i>ubu</i>)	Curvature: 2.1cm	Motohaba: 2.9cm
Jihada:	<i>Densely forged ko-itame with ji-nie, fine chikei, and midare-utsuri</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Ko-nie-laden gunome with a wide, bright, and clear nioiguchi mixed with many ashi</i>		
Certificate:	60th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken (<i>designated as Profound and Important</i>)		
Certificate #2:	NTHK-NPO Kanteisho (<i>a koshirae designated as Authentic</i>)		
Fujishiro:	Saijô-saku (<i>grandmaster swordsmith, highest rank</i>)		
Authentication:	Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei (<i>Tanobe Michihiro</i>)		
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo-period koshirae, stand, kit, booklet, printed description		

SOLD

Taikei Naotane was born *Shôji Minobe Naotane* in Yamagata city, Dewa province, in 1778. His family was of samurai class for he carried the family name *Shôji* at a time when the vast populace did not have a surname. It was not until 1870 that everyone in Japan was required to have a surname. As a young man, Naotane left the northern country for *Edo* (Tokyo) and became an apprentice of the hugely influential *saijô-saku* (grandmaster swordsmith) *Suishinshi Masahide*. A keen and talented student, Naotane quickly learned the methods taught by his master and selected *Taikei* as his crafting name. Like *Suishinshi*, Lord *Akimoto* of *Tatebayashi* retained and

employed him in *Kozuke* province.

In 1821, Naotane received the honorary title of *Chikuzen Daijō*, and again in 1848, the title of *Minosuke*. Naotane eventually took over leadership of the school when Masahide and his son both died in 1825. Like his sensei Masahide, Naotane favoured the reintroduction of old methods of sword-making over modern practicality. He was successful in all traditions, especially his ability to craft in the *Sōshū* and *Bizen* disciplines.



Unique Japan is very proud to introduce a remarkable katana by *Taikei Shōji Naotane* that has been awarded 60th NBTHK *Jūyō Tōken* certification. It is dated to October 6th, 1815.

This blade performed a *tameshigiri* (cutting test) **severing three human bodies in one stroke**. This feat alone is rare and impressive. However, what makes this katana extra special is that the test was completed by Naotane's master student, *Sawara Shigetane* – a swordsmith - not by a professional sword tester. And that it was commissioned by a *Hatamoto*-ranked samurai.

To give further perspective, of the circa 12,000 *jūyō tōken* certified swords, there are only about **130 swords** with a *tameshigiri* cutting test. And of those 15 are anonymous, that is, they only record the cut that was performed and/or the number of bodies the blade cut through. Eight were carried out by non-professional sword testers, e.g., certain *samurai* retainers who were testing swords for their fiefs.

According to the *Markus Sesko*, author of **TAMESHIGIRI – The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing** – who personally researched this sword:

“NAO60 [Taikei Naotane of the 60th *jūyō* session] appears to be the **only *Jūyō blade*** that bears a cutting test that is explicitly mentioned as having carried out by a swordsmith, in the very case, by Naotane's master student Shigetane (重胤). All others, i.e., the vast majority of cutting tests seen on blades ranked *jūyō* or higher, are go back to professional testers like the *Yamano* (山野) or *Yamada* (山田) families. This makes NAO60 an **utmost rarity**, not only being the only work of Naotane with a cutting test among the ranks of *jūyō*, as indicated, but also seen against the entire bulk of blades with cutting tests of said ranks.”

Mr. Sesko further elaborates on an interesting link to another commissioned *jūyō daishō*:

Apart from Shigetane's cutting test, NAO60 is further inscribed with the reference that it was made for a certain *Kakei Takahiro* (寛孝寛). One of the three *daishō* by Naotane that passed *jūyō* in *jūyō shinsa* 17, which will henceforth be referred to as NAO17, was made for the very same person.



The *Kansei Chôshû Shokafu* (寛政重脩諸家譜), the *Daimyô* and *Hatamoto* register of the *Bakufu*, lists 15 branches of the *Kakei* (筧) family serving as *Hatamoto*. Takahiro is listed therein as having born the first name *Yûkichi* (勇吉) and as having his first encounter with the *Shôgun* on the ninth day of the second month Kansei nine (February 9, 1797) at the then age of eleven years. This calculates his year of birth as *Tenmei* eight (天明, 1787). Accordingly he was 29 years old when he received NAO60.

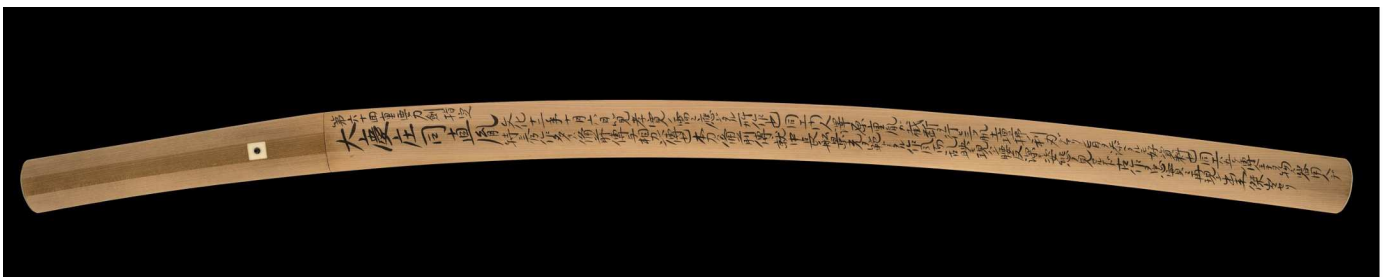
Also striking is the similarity between NAO60 and NAO17 in terms of the reference to the deity *Kangiten*, both written out and in the form of Sanskrit characters, and to the deities *Dainichi Nyorai* and *Nikkô Bosatsu* in the form of Sanskrit characters only.

This suggests that Kakei Takahiro was a devout Buddhist, particularly worshipping *Kangiten*, who is known as an extremely efficacious god who grants whatever is asked of him without fail, including impossible wishes.

NAO17 - *oshigata* of both tangs of the *Daishô* that passed in *jûyô* 17.

What's captivating about this katana is that it has a genuine *kotô* period feel to it. This truly is a master-class achievement in recreating sword-making techniques of the early 1300s known as the *fukkotô* movement that was started by his master Masahide, a trend that tried to revive the old forging styles of the *kotô* era. This museum-grade katana marks an opportunity to collect of his great and most notable works that will bring immense pride and curative responsibility.

As Tanobe-sensei writes on his *sayagaki*, "this blade follows the Bizen tradition, in concrete terms the style of Osafune Kagemitsu, and with the presence of *midare-utsuri* and the shape with deep *koshizori*, the blade, which is of an excellent *deki*, is a very faithful recreation of a *kotô*-era work."



Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei



Edo-period *uchigatana koshirae* with *kamon maki-e*

^
Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 7.0mm

Kissaki: 2.57cm
Saki-haba: 1.83cm

Nagasa: 69.9cm

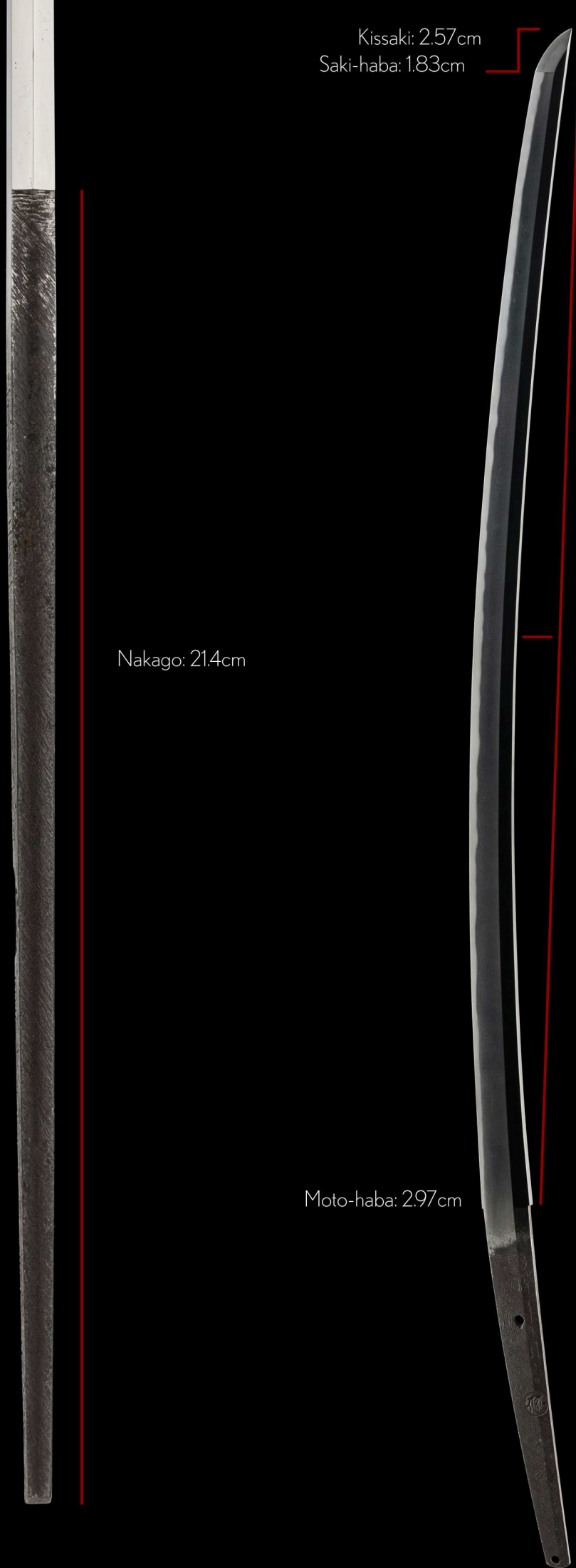
Nakago: 21.4cm

Sori: 21.0cm

Omosa: 685g

Moto-haba: 2.97cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Shoji Minobe Naotane was born in *Yamagata* city, *Dewa* province, in 1778. His family was surely of samurai class for he carried the family name *Shôji* at a time when the vast populace did not have a surname. It was, in fact, not until 1870 that everyone in Japan was required to have a surname.

As a young man, Naotane left the northern country for *Edo* (Tokyo) and becoming an apprentice of *Suishinshi Masahide*. He quickly mastered the methods taught and selected *Taikei* as his crafting name. Like Suishinshi, Lord *Akimoto* of *Tatebayashi* retained and employed him in *Kozuke* province.

In 1821, Naotane received the title of *Chikuzen Daijo*, and again in 1848, the title of *Minosuke*. Naotane became so skilful that he became the most important smith in the school taking over leadership when Masahide and his son both died in 1825.

Taikei Naotane was ranked as *saijo-saku*, a grandmaster swordsmith. His talents are said to have surpassed his master's achievements. Like his teacher Masahide, Naotane favoured the reintroduction of old methods of sword-making over modern practicality. He was successful in all traditions, especially the *Bizen* and *Sôshû* disciplines.

Naotane was very active, producing blades for about 55 years from 1800 to 1856. He died on February 22nd, the 5th year day of Ansei, 1858, at the age of 79.

This remarkable katana was crafted for *Kakei Takahiro* and dated on October 6th, 1815. Its elegant shape resembles that of a *torii* (archway to a shinto shrine). It was forged in the *Bizen Kagemitsu* tradition, with a lovely *midare-utsuri* and a densely-folded *ko-itame hada*. The hamon is a bright, wavy *gunome* with long *ashi* that extend to the cutting edge.

An impressive 3-body cutting test was performed with this blade by one of Naotane's most notable students, *Sawara Shigetane*. The nakago also features brilliant carvings of prominent *bonji* characters. A striking set of koshirae from the late Edo period further compliments this masterwork from one Japan's most accomplished swordsmiths of the 19th century.



*Bunka jūninen jūgatsu muika + bonji, Kakei Takahiro no motome ni
ôjite kore o tsukuru, mitsu-dô dotan-barai Sawahara Shigetane*

Dated on the sixth day of the tenth month in the twelfth year of
Bunka era (October 6, 1815) plus *bonji* on the request of client
Kakei Takahiro --- [*Naotane's master student*] *Sawahara Shigetane*
performed a cutting test with this sword, severing through three
bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below.

(Mi) 三
(tsu) ツ
(dô) 洞
(do) 土
(tan) 壇
(barai) 拂
(Sawa) 澤
(hara) 原
(Shige) 重
(tane) 胤

文 (Bun)

化 (ka)

十 (jū)

二 (ni)

年 (nen)

十 (jū)

月 (gatsu)

六 (mui)

日 (ka)

𑖀𑖩 *Kangiten* (Nandikesvara)

應 (ôjite)

笥 (Kakei)

孝 (Taka)

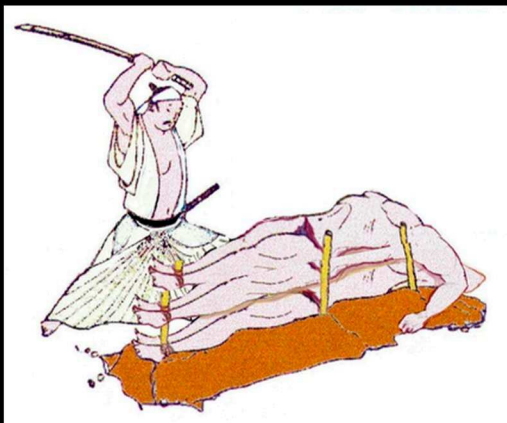
寬 (hiro, no)

需 (motome, ni)

造 (tsukuru)

之 (kore)





According to *Markus Sesko*, author of *TAMESHIGIRI: The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing*:

[This is the] only Jûyô blade that bears a cutting test that is explicitly mentioned as having carried out by a swordsmith, in the very case, by Naotane's master student Shigetane (重胤). All others, i.e., the vast majority of cutting tests seen on blades ranked jûyô or higher, go back to professional testers like the Yamano or Yamada families.

This makes [this katana] an utmost rarity, not only being the only work of Naotane with a cutting test among the ranks of jûyô, as indicated, but also seen against the entire bulk of blades with cutting tests of said ranks."



Kangiten

Kakei Takahiro who commissioned this katana to Naotane was clearly a devout *Buddhist*, In particular for the fact he worshipped *Kangiten* who is known as an extremely efficacious god who grants whatever is asked of him without fail, including impossible wishes.

Daishô Kangiten - Taikei Shôji Naotane + kaô + three bonji

Nandikesvara - Taikei Shôji Naotane + monogram + three bonji describing Suryaprabha, Vairocana and Deva King

Location: *Musashi Province*

Title: *Taikei*

Family name: *Shôji*

Swordsmith: *Naotane* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

kessho-yasurime (decorative file marks)

(Dai) 大

(shô) 聖

(Kan) 歡

(gi) 喜

(ten) 天

(Tai) 大

(kei) 慶

(Shô) 庄

(ji) 司

(Nao) 直

(tane) 胤

(kaô) 花押

(Suryaprabha) *Nikkô Bosatsu*

(Vairocana) *Dainichi Nyorai*

(Deva King) *Kongô Rikishi*

卍
𑖀
𑖀
𑖀





Niô guardians

(Deva King)
Kongô Rikishi



Niô or *Kongô Rikishi* are two wrath-filled and muscular guardians of the Buddha standing today as Deva statues at the entrance of many Buddhist temples.

They are *dharmapala* manifestations of the bodhisattva *Vajrapani*, the oldest and most powerful of the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon.



26201460

重要第一三六〇三號

指定書

一刀銘

大慶庄司直胤(花押)(梵字三ッ重)
 (種中)大聖歡喜天
 文化十二年十月六日(梵字)応賢孝寛需造之
 三ッ胴土壇拂沢原重胤

法量 長さ六九・九釐 反り二・一釐
 形状 鑄造 庵棟 身幅尋常 元先に幅差があり 反り深く
 やや輪反り 風を帯び 中鋒
 鍛 小板目肌 地沸つき 地景入り 乱れ映り 立ち 部分的に
 映りか 刃の焼頭に繋がる
 刃文 小互の目を連れて 足よく入り 足部分的に 刃先に抜ける 匂口
 深く 小沸よくつき 匂口明るく 冴える
 帽子 小く乱れ込み 小丸に返る
 茎 生ぶ 鑢目筋違に化粧つく 目釘孔二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
 重要刀剣に指定す

平成二十六年十月十六日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



静岡 教育委員会
 第 2627号
 昭和 26年 5月 18日

Jûyô Certificate No. 13603
 Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation
 Katana, mei: Taikei Shôji Naotane (大慶庄司直胤)

Measurements
 nagasa 69.9 cm, sori 2.1 cm

Description

Keijo: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, normal *mihaba*, noticeable taper, deep *sori* that tends to *torii-zori*, *chû-kissaki*

Kitae: densely forged *ko-itame* that features *ji-nie*, fine *chikei*, and *midare-utsuri*, which partially connects with the *yakigashira* of the hamon

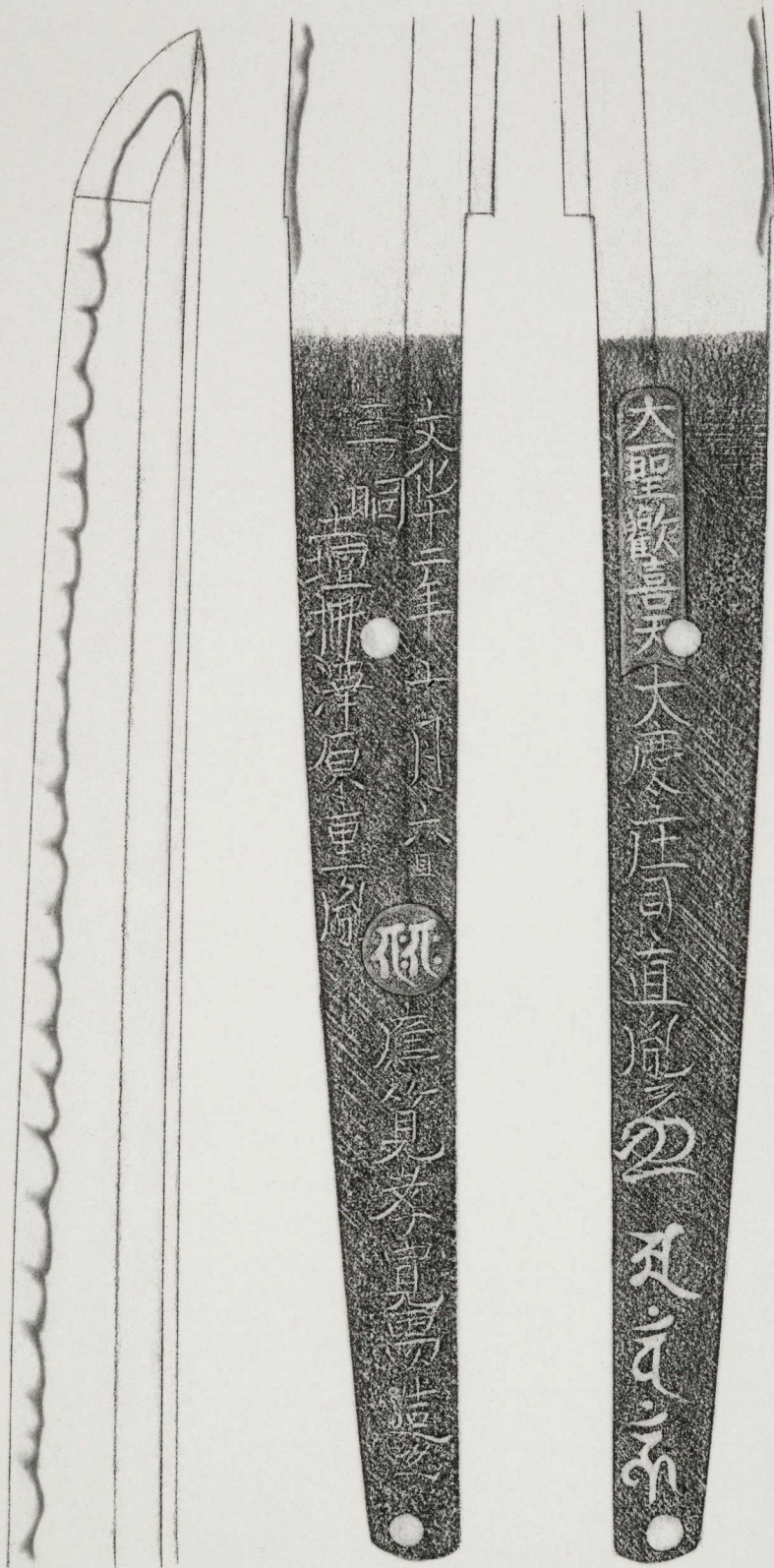
Hamon: *ko-nie* laden and connected *gunome* with a wide, bright, and clear *nioiguchi* that is mixed with ample *ashi*, which almost reach the cutting edge in places

Bôshi: slight *midare-komi* with a *ko-maru kaeri*

Nakago: *ubu sujikai-yasurime* with *kesshō*, 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
銘

大慶庄司直胤(花押)(梵字三ッ重)
 (櫃中)大聖歡喜天
 文化十二年十月六日(梵字)心算孝寬需造之
 三ッ洞土壇拂沢原重胤



第六十回重要刀剣指定
Dai rokujū-kai Jūyō-Tōken shitei
Jūyō-Tōken at 60th Jūyō Shinsa

大慶庄司直胤
Taikei Shōji Naotane
Taikei Shōji Naotane

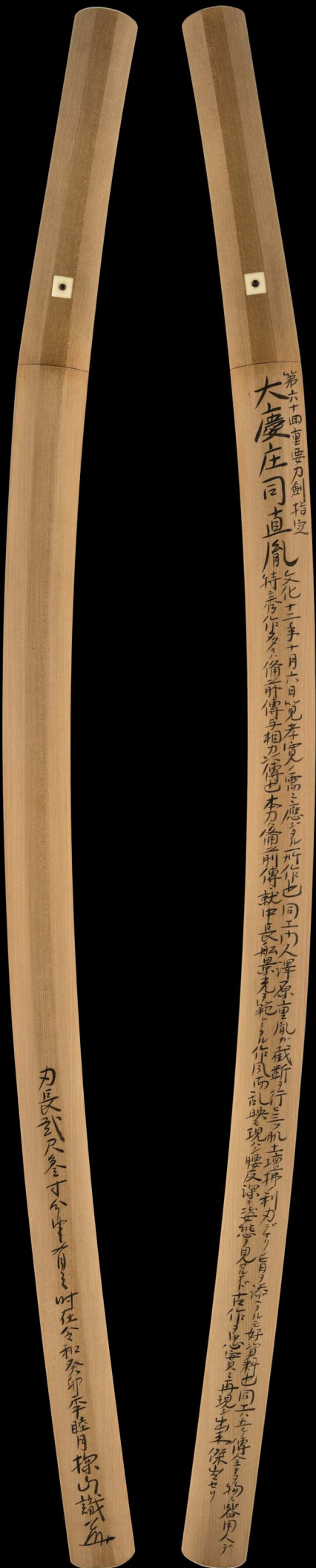
文化十二年十月六日寛孝ノ需ニ應ジタル所作也同工門人澤原重胤ガ截断ヲ行ヒ三ッ肌土壇拂ノ利刃デアリシ旨ヲ沿へタルモ好資料也同工ハ五ヶ傳全テヲ物ス器用人デ特ニ秀作多キハ備前傳与相刃傳也本刀ハ備前傳・就中長船景光ヲ範トミタル作風而乱映モ現ハシ腰反深キ姿態ヲ見セルナド古作ヲ忠實ニ再現シ出来傑出セリ

Bunka jūninen jūgatsu muika Kakei Takahiro no motome ni ōjitetaru shosa nari. Dōkō monjin Sawahara Shigetane ga setsudan o okonai mittsu-dō dotan-barai no rijin de ari shi mune o soetaru mo yoi shiryō nari. Dōkō wa Gokaden subete o mono-su kiyōjin de toku ni shūsaku ōki wa Bizen-den yo Sōshū-den nari. Hontō wa Bizen-den, nakanzuku Osafune Kagemitsu o han-to shitaru sakufū shikamo midare-utsuri mo arawashi koshizori fukaki shitai o miseru nado kosaku o chūjitsu ni saigen-shi deki kesshutsu-seri.

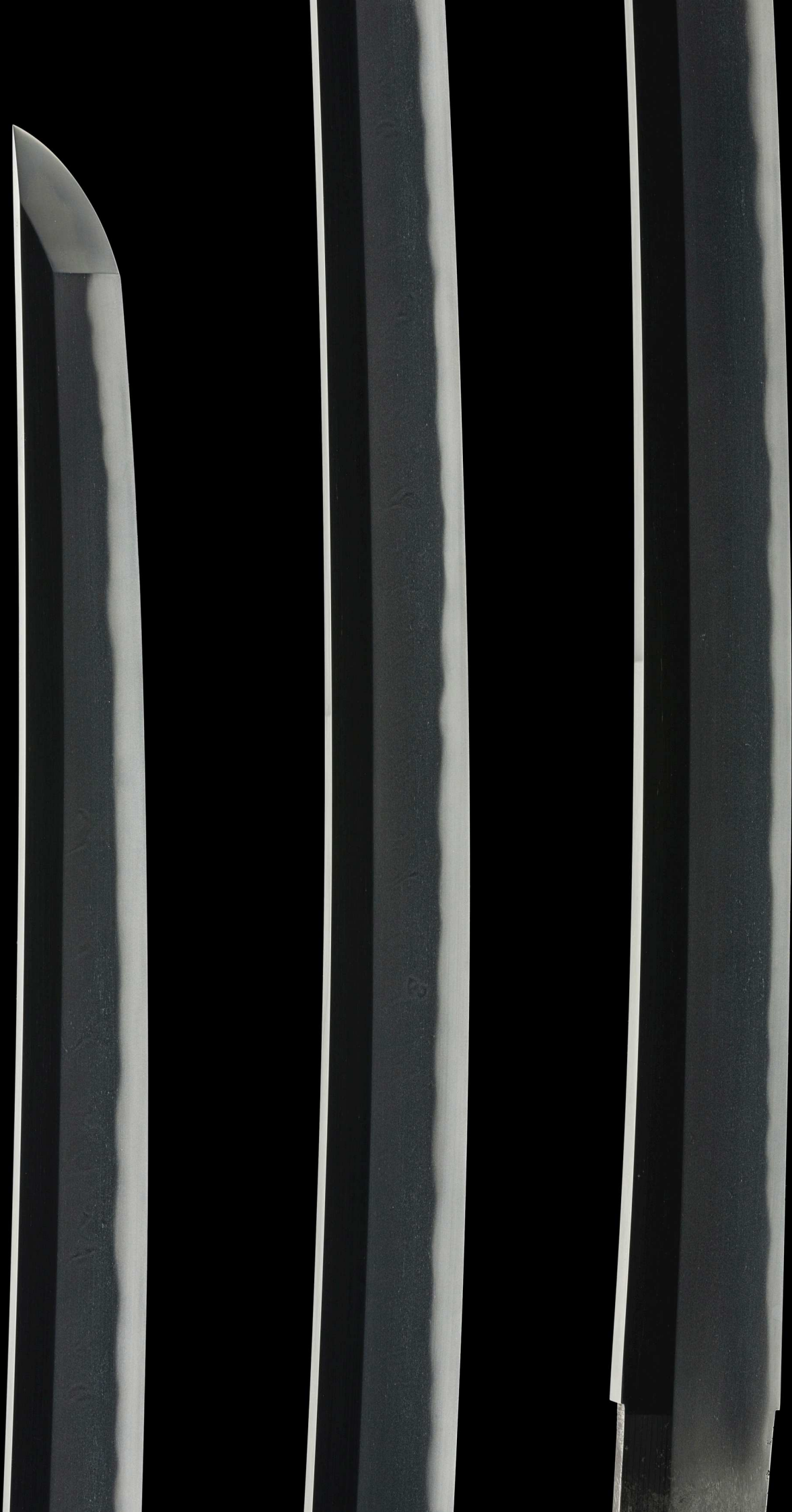
[This blade] was made on the sixth day of the tenth month of Bunka twelve (October 6, 1815) commissioned by *Kakei Takahiro*. It is also inscribed that Naotane's student *Sawahara Shigetane* performed with it a cutting test that severed through three bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below, testifying the blade's cutting ability, which also makes it an important reference. Naotane was capable of working in all Five Traditions, but most of his masterworks are interpreted in the Bizen and Sōshū traditions. This blade follows the Bizen tradition, in concrete terms the style of *Osafune Kagemitsu*, and with the presence of *midare-utsuri* and the shape with deep *koshizori*, the blade, which is of an excellent *deki*, is a very faithful recreation of a *Kotō-era* work.

刃長貳尺參寸分半有之
Hachō ni-shaku san-sun bu han kore ari
Blade length ~ 69.6 cm

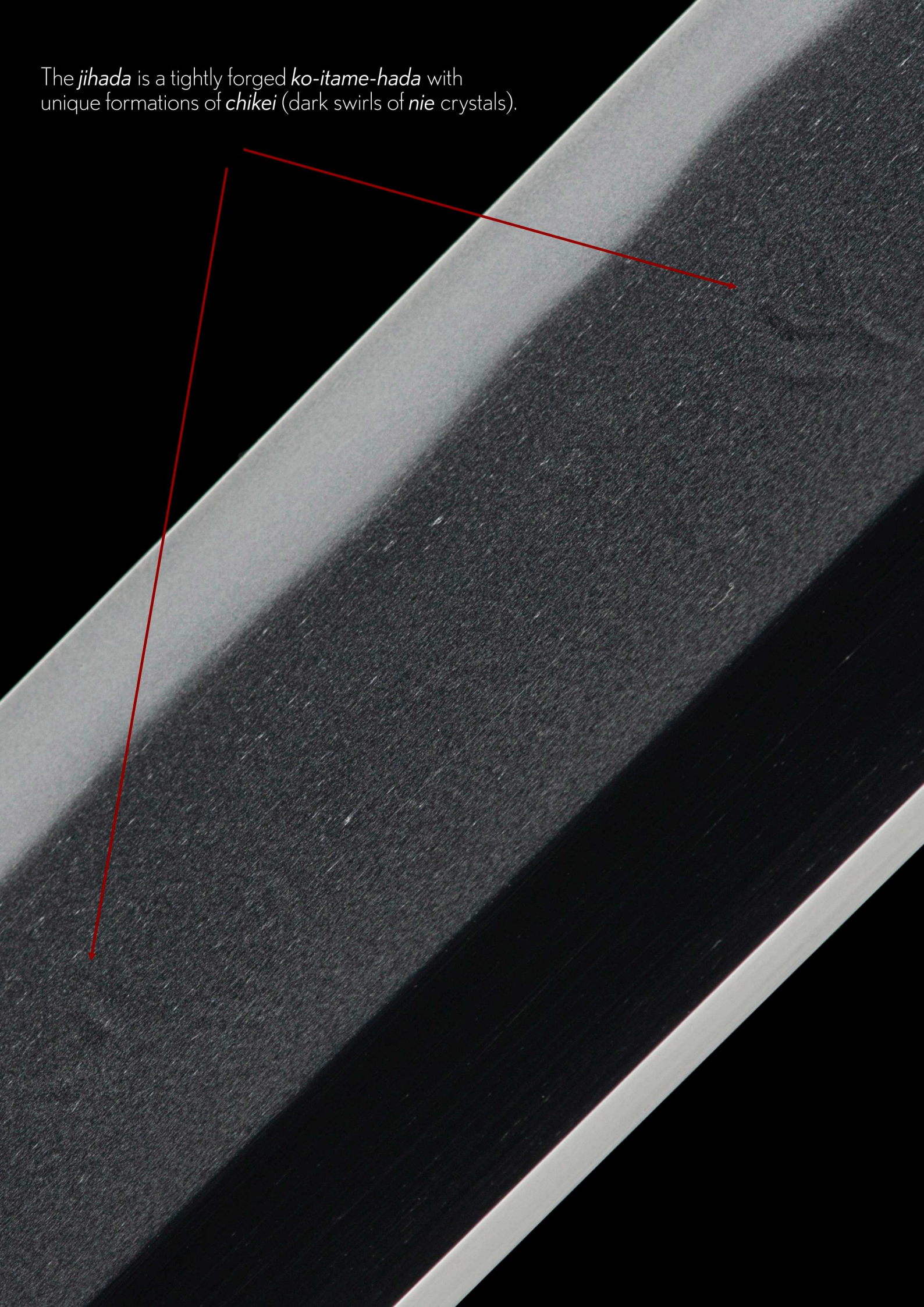
時在令和癸卯季睦月探山識「花押」
Jizai Reiwa mizunoto-usagidoshi mutsuki Tanzan shirusu + kaō
Written by Tanzan sensei [Tanobe Michihiro] in January of the Year of the Hare of the Reiwa era (2023) + monogram.

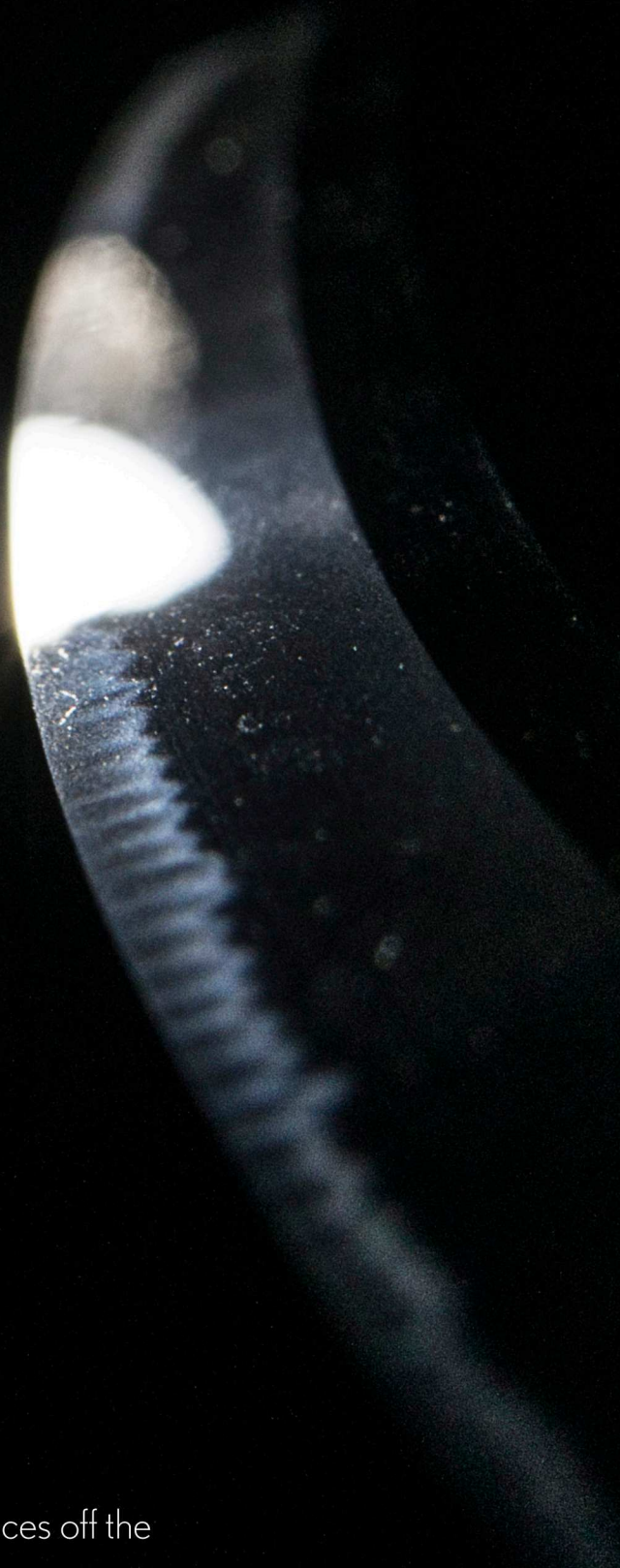






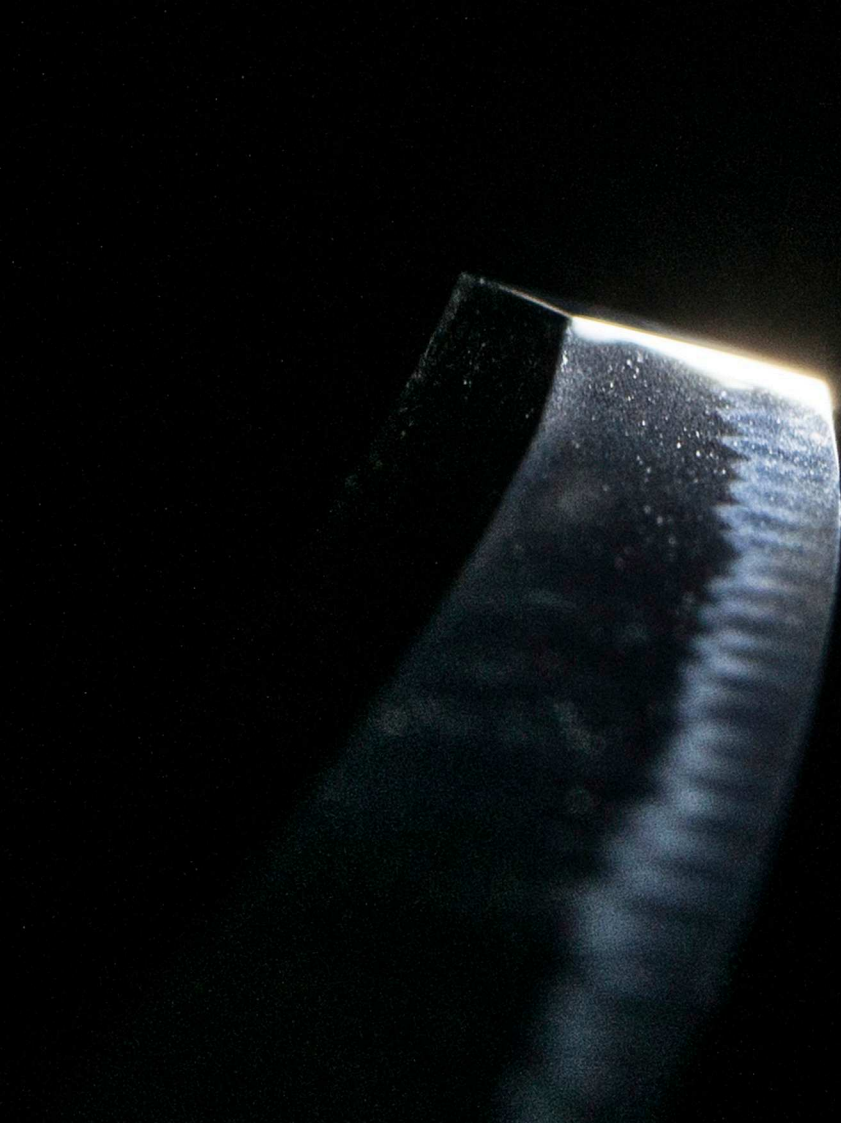
The *jihada* is a tightly forged *ko-itame-hada* with unique formations of *chikei* (dark swirls of *nie* crystals).





A clear bluish hue dances off the wavy *gunome hamon*.

This is class.



Naotane was one of only three smiths ranked as *saijô-saku*, a grandmaster swordsmith during the *shinshintô* period. His talents are said to have surpassed his master Masahide's achievements and became one of the most important swordsmiths of the late Edo period.

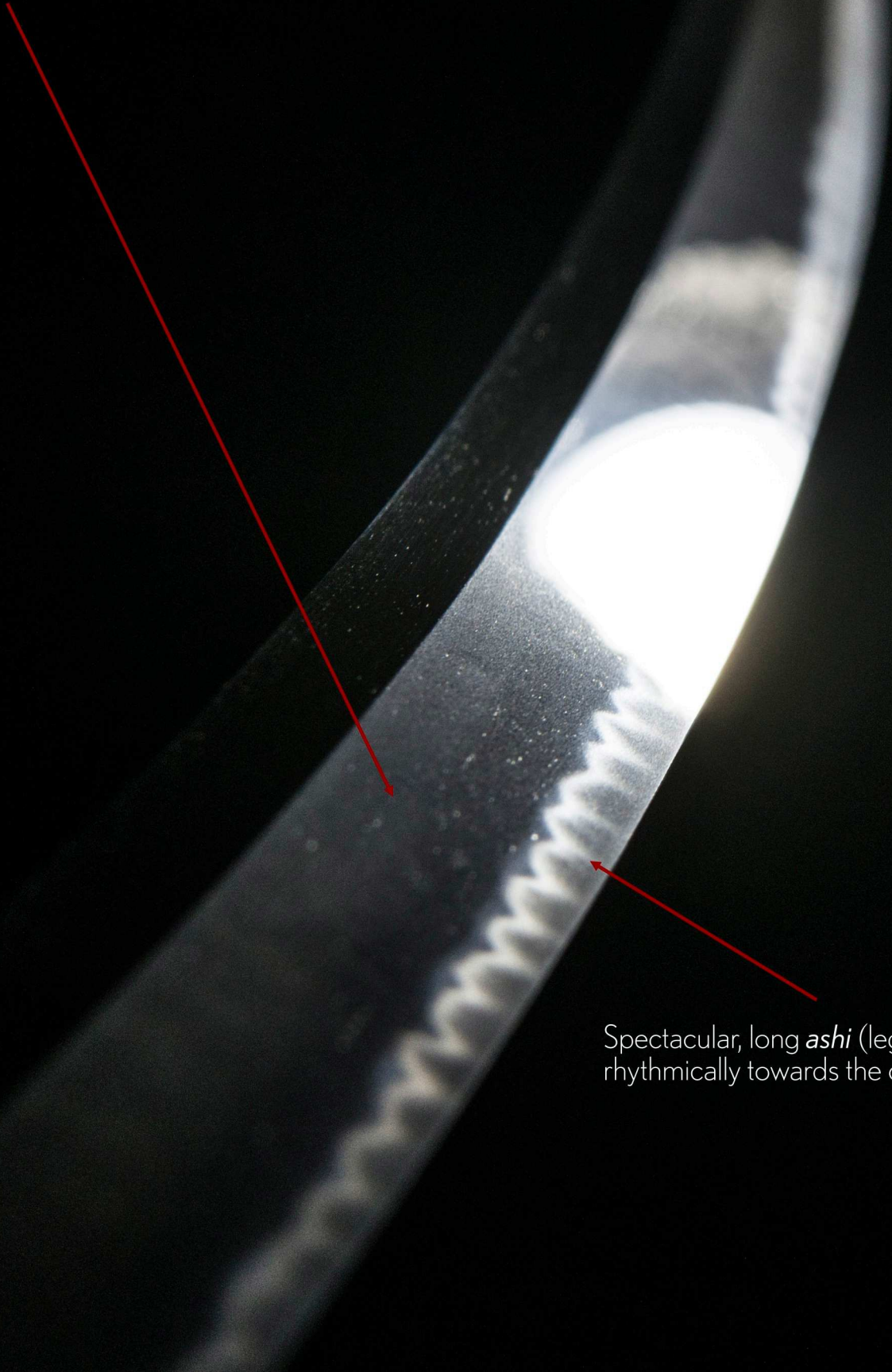


Portrait of Taikai Naotane by Takada Enshû circa 1850
destroyed in the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923.

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

It is an appreciated feature of swords made in the Bizen tradition since the Koto period.

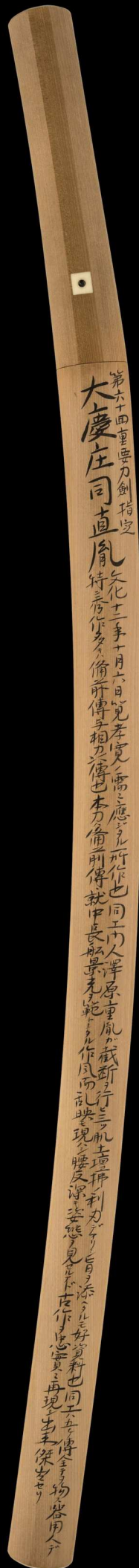
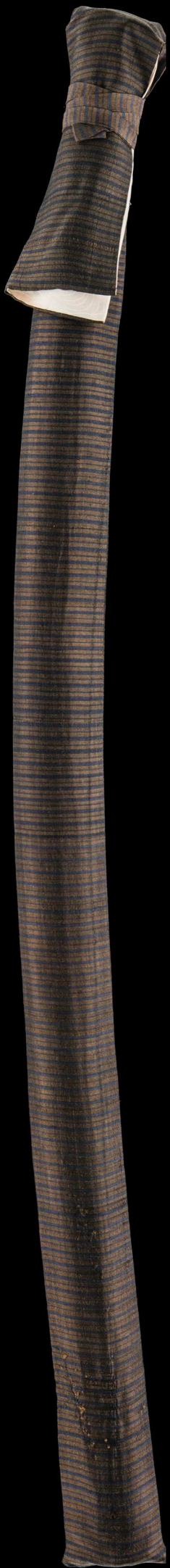
Here we see a light *midare-utsuri* - a smokey pattern that billows in a wavy formation following the hamon pattern.



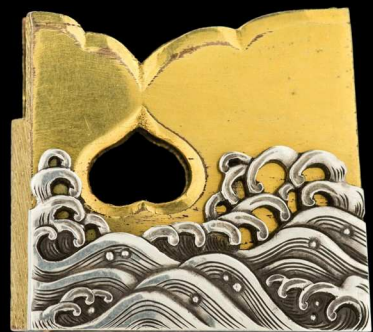
Spectacular, long *ashi* (legs) that stretch rhythmically towards the cutting edge.



A nihontô eclipse.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



A gold habaki with
'Hokusai-esque'
silver waves



front



back



side

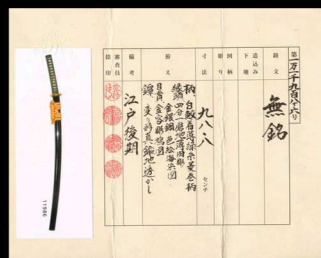


inspiration

*Kuro-ro-urushi
sumi-maki-e nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂漆墨蒔絵塗鞘打刀拵)

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

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)

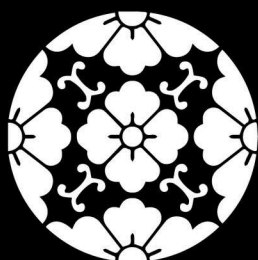


NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

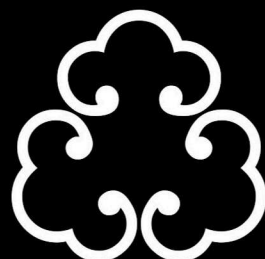


These emblems/crests appear to be original creations by the *maki-e* artist. The designs were inspired from *fusenryô*, a circle of flowers, originally used on fabric.

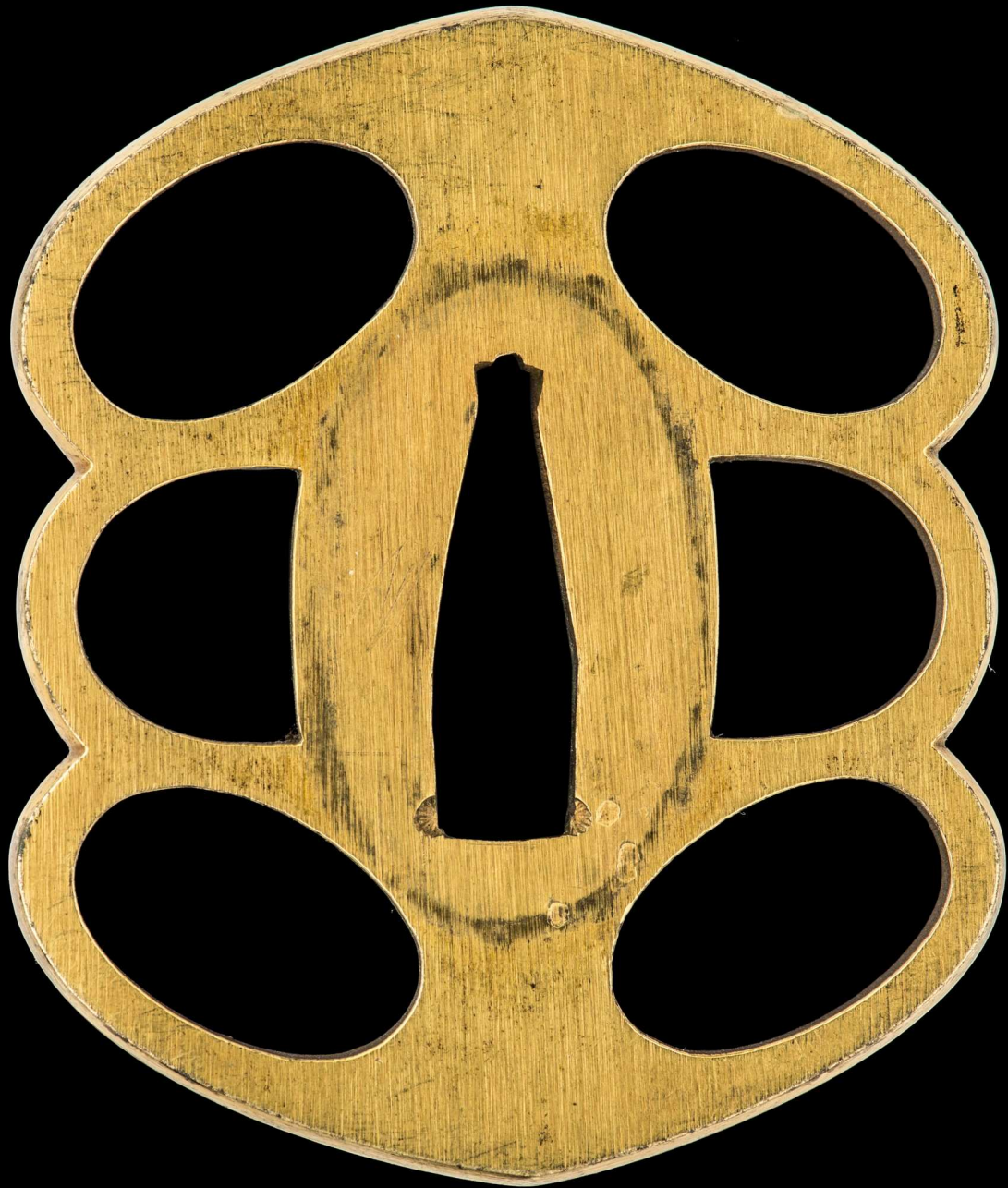
The top looks to be a combination of *karakan*, a handle of a chest and ivy. The bottom crest is based on *karahana*, Chinese flowers. *Kara* means Chinese, therefore both are related to Chinese culture, notably Buddhism that originated in China.



Fusenryô ni karahana mon



Karakan mon



Kawari-gata (a uniquely shaped tsuba)
brass, openwork design



Fabulous depictions of sea life.
A theme that is united with the wave-designed *habaki*.



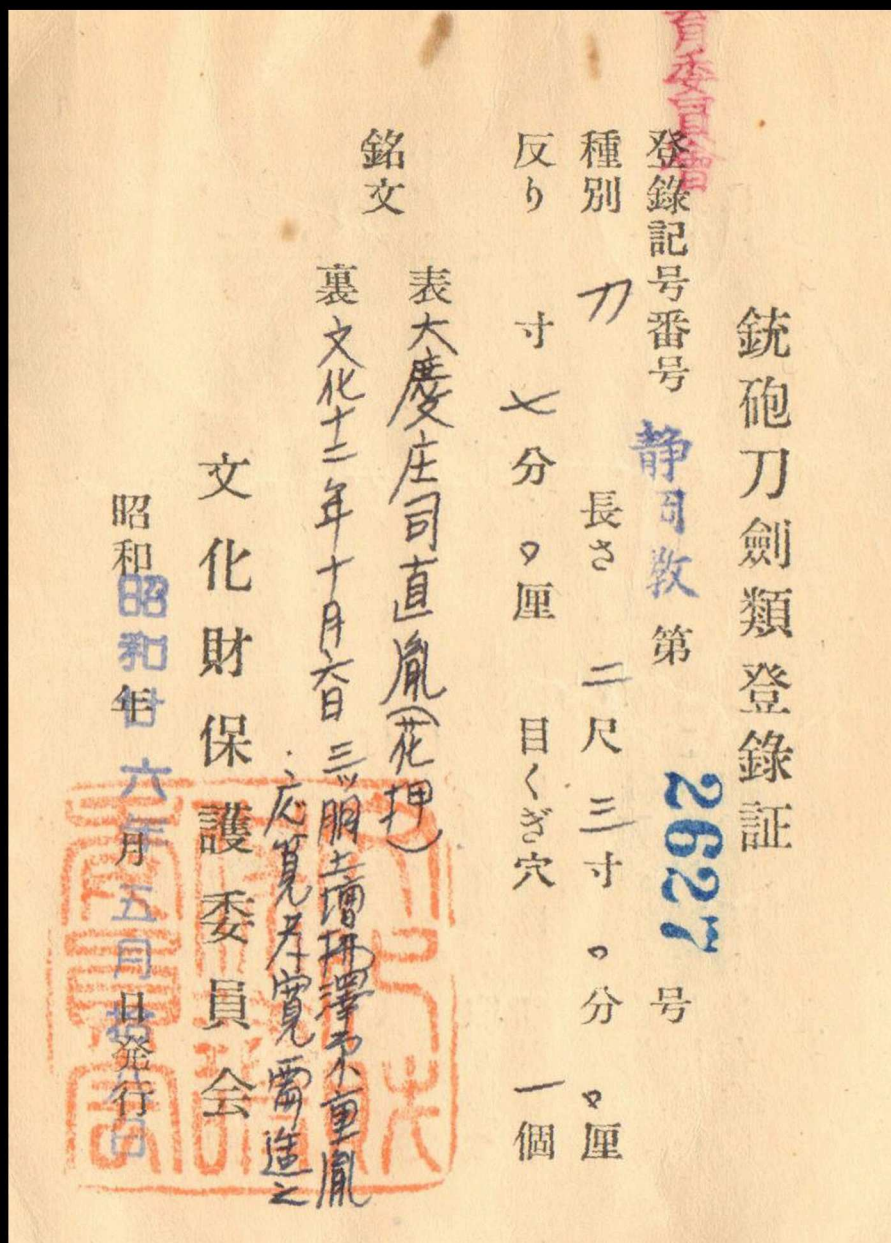
Fuchi-kashira
polished *shibuichi*
bas-relief
Colour accents of gold, silver, copper

Depicting an ocean beach



Beautifully detailed golden *hata* (pigeons) depicted as *menuki*. Pigeons are spiritual messengers, bringing luck, companionship and prosperity.





This is the original *torokushô* (registration card) for the *Naotane katana*.
 The card was registered in the 26th year of Showa (1951).

This is significant as 1951 was the very first year that swords were formally registered in Japan. Many former Daimyô families were invited to submit their collections suggesting this blade was clearly held by a prominent family.

The serial number is just 2627, one of the very first swords registered in Japan.



Koshirae bag