



ITEM# UJKA406

A KATSUKUNI KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: OCTOBER 1670)

Swordsmith:	<i>Iyo Daijô Tachibana Katsukuni saku (shodai, first generation)</i>		
Measurements:	Length: 69.7cm (<i>ubu</i>)	Curvature: 1.3cm	Moto-haba: 2.93cm
Jihada:	<i>Itame with with masame hada with swirling chikei</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Kanemoto-like sambonsugi with sunagashi and kinsuji</i>		
Certificate #1-2:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon & Kichô (<i>Especially Worthy of Preservation</i>)		
Certificate #3-5:	NTHK-NPO Kanteisho (<i>for the tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae</i>)		
Fujishiro rank:	Jô-saku (<i>ranked as a superior swordsmith</i>)		
Cutting ability:	ô-Wazamono (<i>maker of extremely sharp swords</i>)		
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, storage box, fabric bags, stand, kit, description		

SOLD

Katsukuni literally means '*victorious country/province*' – a name bestowed upon by the powerful *Maeda daimyo* family of the Edo period. First generation *Katsukuni* of the *shintô Darani* school excelled in a *sanbonsugi-hamon* modelled upon the *Seki-Kanemoto* school and forged his blades with a distinctive mix of *itame* and straight grain *masame-hada*. *Katsukuni* blades were also famous for their superior sharpness (he is ranked *ô-wazamono*) and the line existed for seven generations until the *Meiji* era. This highly collectible katana has been dated to October 1670, during the *Kanbun* era at the end of *Katsukuni*'s celebrated career. The sword is listed in the prestigious *shintô-jiten* reference book by *Fujishiro* and comes with its own set of striking Edo period *koshirae*, a vintage storage box with *hakogaki* and *sayagaki* by *Kanzan sensei*. It has been cared for by generations of families and is now looking for the next caretaker to carry the torch.



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Kissaki: 3.28cm

Saki-haba: 2.03cm

Moto-kasane: 5.9mm

Nagasa: 69.7cm

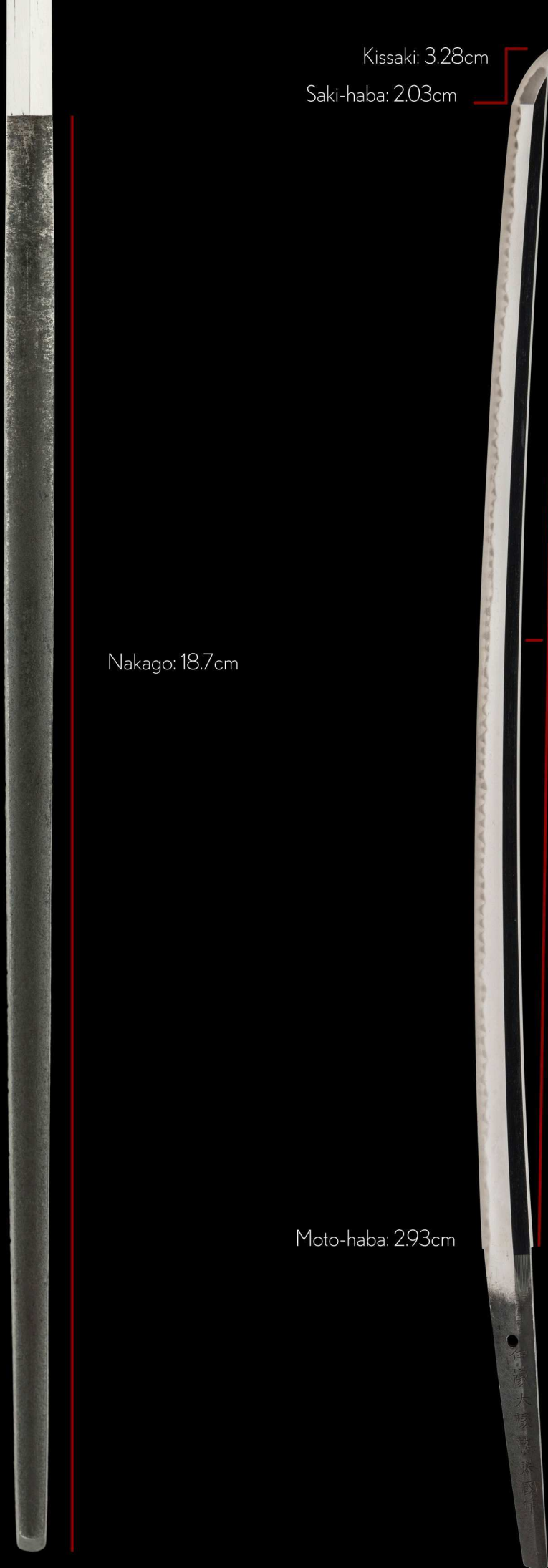
Nakago: 18.7cm

Sori: 1.30cm

Omosa: 630g

Moto-haba: 2.93cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



The history leading up to first generation *Katsukuni* is a rather interesting one. Below is a summary of events.

The ancestor of the *Darani* school was swordsmith *Katsuie*, active around the *Ōei* era (1394~1428). According to transmission he was the son or a student of *Kunitsugu*, who in turn came from the *Echizen Chiyozuru* school and moved to the neighbouring *Kaga* province around the *Ōan* era (1368~1375). The first to use the school name '*Darani*' was the 5th generation *Katsuie* during the *Tenshō*-era (1573~1592).

The third son of the fourth generation *Katsuie* was the first generation *leshige* who was considered as the actual ancestor of the shintō-era *Darani* school. His second son received the honorary title *Iyo no Daijō* from chancellor *Yotsuji Yoshiie* through the recommendation of his employer, the powerful *Maeda daimyō* family. Furthermore, the clan name of *Fujiwara* was changed to *Tachibana* and the smith's name became *shodai* (first generation) *Katsukuni*.

The *Katsukuni* name has an auspicious connotation as it literally means '*victorious country/province*'. *Katsukuni* counted himself, on whatever basis, as the 17th generation *Rai Kuniyoshi*, the legendary founder of the *Rai* school.

Katsukuni excelled in a *sanbonsugi-hamon* modelled upon the *Seki-Kanemoto* school with a key difference being that the *Kaga* smiths applied *nie* in the valleys of the *sanbonsugi* elements. *Katsukuni* blades were also famous for their superior sharpness (he is ranked *ō-wazamono*) and the line existed for altogether seven generations up to the Meiji era.

This highly collectible katana is listed in the prestigious *shintō-jiten* reference book by *Fujishiro* and comes with its own vintage storage box with *hakogaki* and *sayagaki* by *Kanzan sensei*. It has been clearly cared for by generations of families and now it's looking for the next caretaker to carry the torch.

Historical research source: *Nihon-shintō-shi* by Markus Sesko



Location: *Kanazawa* (resident of Ishikawa)

Title: *Iyo Daijō* (Lord of Iyo province)

Clan name: *Tachibana*

Swordsmith: *Katsukuni* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

伊
豫
大
掾
橘
勝
國
作

伊 (I)

豫 (yo)

大 (Dai)

掾 (jō)

橘 (Tachibana)

勝 (Katsu)

國 (kuni)

作 (saku)

Kanazawa jû - Kanbun jûnen hachigatsu kichijitsu

This katana was dated to a *lucky day* in the eighth month of the tenth year of *Kanbun* era (August 1670) while Katsukuni was living in Kanazawa.

(Kan) 寛
(bun) 文
(jû) 十
(nen) 年
(hachi) 八
(gatsu) 月
(kichi) 吉
(jitsu) 日

寛文十年八月吉日
金澤住

金 (Kana)
澤 (zawa)
住 (jû)



The shape of the *nakago-jiri* (butt-end of the tang) is called *iriyama-gata*. *Iri* means 'enter' and *yama* is 'mountain', suggesting at the '*base of a mountain*'.

This style of *nakago-jiri* is typically seen on swords from *Kashû* (Kaga) province, thus referred to as *Kashû nakago-jiri*.



Fujishiro Nihon Shintô Jiten



Bannen mei (signature of his latter years)

This katana is listed on page 34 in the prestigious *Fujishiro Nihon Shintô Jiten* reference book. The two volume set contains detailed *oshigata* and information of the most important smiths from the Kotô and Shintô periods.

Owning a katana listed by Fujishiro is naturally very special, adding to the authenticity and collectibility of the sword.

04202203

No. 1017865



二刀 銘

鑑定書

伊予大掾橋勝国作
寛文十年八月吉日
金沢住

長二尺三寸強

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

令和四年六月三日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



兵庫県 教育委員会
第 46110 号

昭和40年12月8日

(再)平成19年11月15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 4th year of Reiwa (2022), June 3rd

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Iyo Daijō Tachibana Katsukuni saku
Kanbun jūnen hachigatsu kichijitsu
Kanazawa jū

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 3-sun kyō (69.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



認定書

伊豫大掾橋勝國作
寛文十年八月吉日金澤子住
水三尺三寸

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別貴重

刀劍として認定す

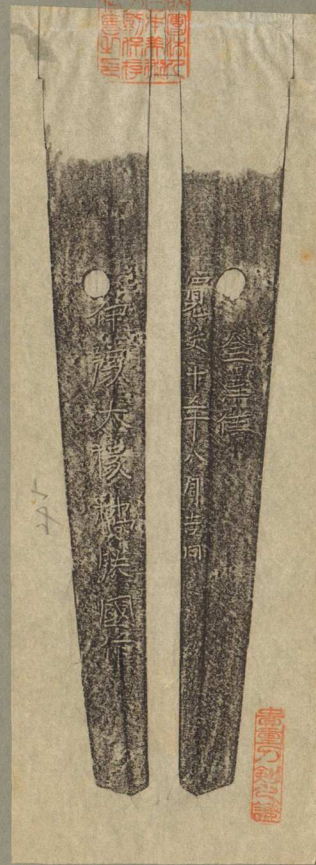
昭和四十一年十月二十三日

日本美術刀剣保存協會

會長 細川護立



殿



NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Especially Precious*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 41st year of Showa (1966), October 23rd

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Iyo Daijô Tachibana Katsukuni saku
Kanbun jûichinen hachigatsu kichijitsu
Kanazawa jû

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 3-sun (69.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



金澤住伊勢大掾橘勝國作

Kanazawa-jû Ise Daijô Tachibana Katsukuni saku

Crafted by Ise Daijô Tachibana Katsukuni, resident of Kanazawa.

寛文十年八月吉日紀有之

Kanbun jûnen hachigatsu kichijitsu no ki kore ari

Dated to a lucky day in the eighth month of the tenth year of Kanbun era (August 1670).

蓋同作中之典型且良資料也

Kedashi dôsaku-chû no tenkei katsu yoi shiryô nari

This blade's workmanship is typical for the smith and is also an important reference piece.

刃長貳尺參寸有之

Hachô ni-shaku san-sun kore ari

Blade length ~ 69.7 cm

藤代刀工辞典所載

Fujishiro Tôkô Jiten shosai

Published in Fujishiro's Tôkô Jiten.

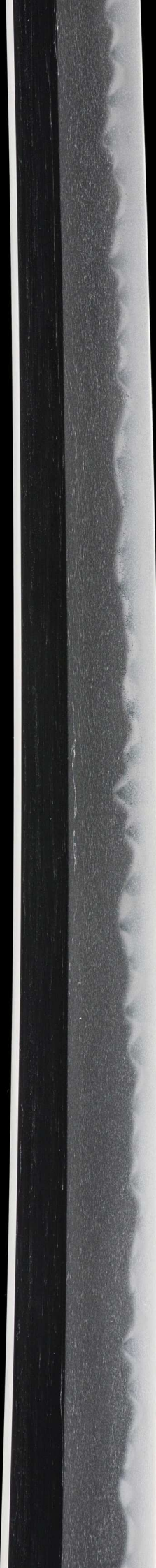
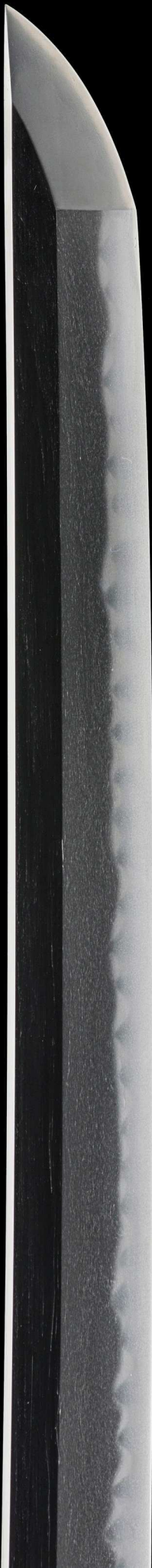
昭和壬子年〇月日寒山誌「花押」

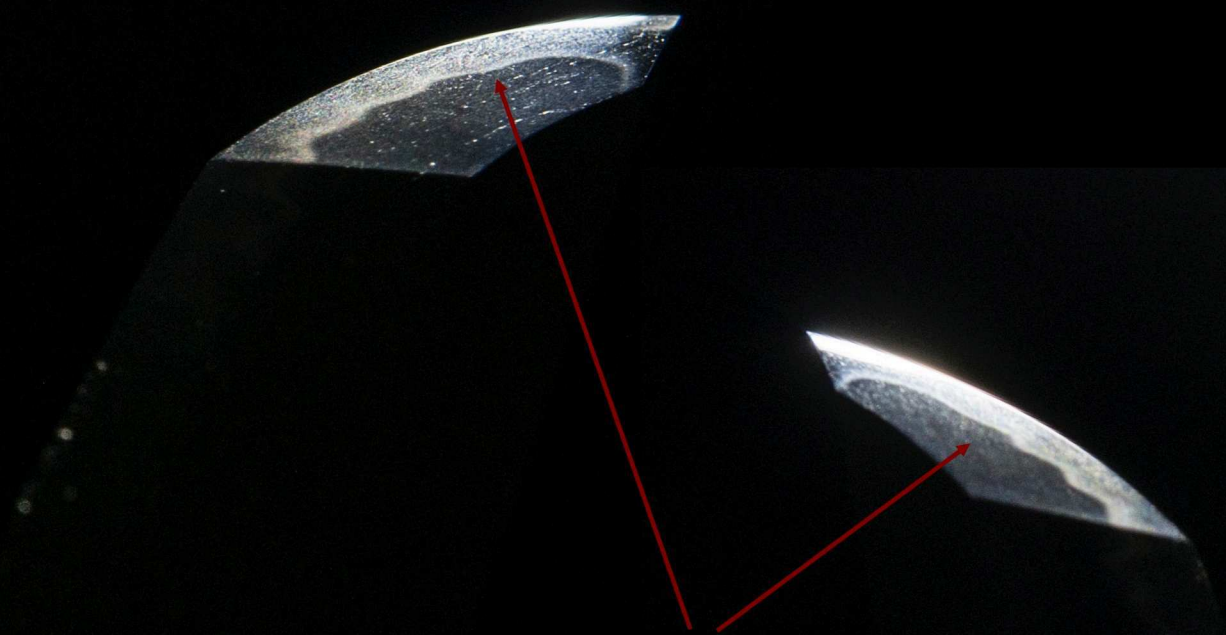
Shôwa mizunoe-nezumidoshi ?-getsu hi

Kanzan shirusu + kaô

Appraised by Dr. Kanzan Satô on a day of the [unclear] month in the Year of the Rat during the Shôwa era (1972) plus his monogram.







Boshi pattern resembles the profile of *Jizo*.

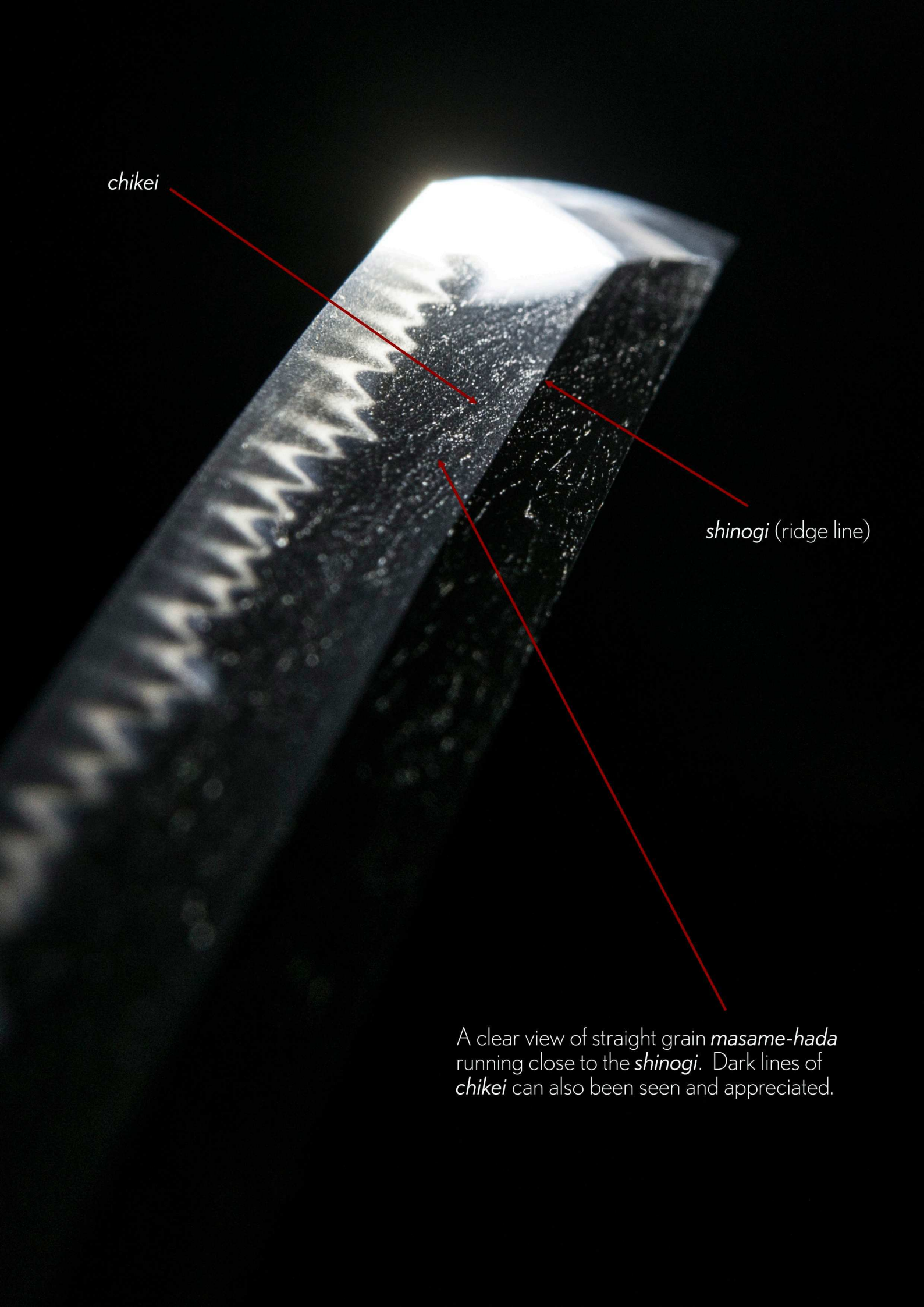


statues of *Jizo*

The *hamon* of the *kissaki* (tip) is called the *boshi*, which literally means "hat". The quenching of the *boshi* requires great skill and timing.

The shape of this *boshi* is a combination of two patterns, *midare komi* (irregular wavy pattern) to the *rounded head of Jizo* at the very tip, or *saki*. These words are combined to become "*saki-Jizo*".


Jizo derives itself from *Jizo Bosatsu* - an important *deity* seen as a saviour for both pregnant women and children.



chikei

shinogi (ridge line)

A clear view of straight grain *masame-hada* running close to the *shinogi*. Dark lines of *chikei* can also be seen and appreciated.



The unique *sanbonsugi hamon* (lit. three cedars) derives its name from resembling a line of cedar trees. Notice how the pointed *togari* peaks at about every third 'tree'.

This hamon was originated by second generation *Magoroku Kanemoto* circa 1530 and loyally replicated by subsequent generations in the Mino tradition.



cedar tree inspiration



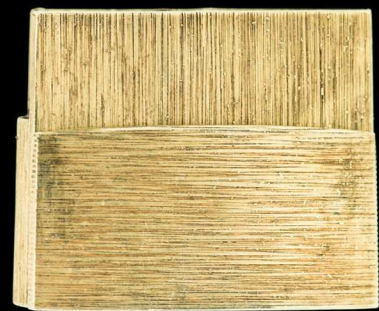
Here are clusters of *nie* crystals in the valley of the *sambonsugi hamon* - a trait that distinguishes *Darani* from the *Seki-Kanemoto* school.

A close-up, low-angle shot of a bright, glowing steel rod or pipe. The rod is positioned diagonally, extending from the bottom left towards the top right. The surface of the rod is highly reflective, showing a bright, circular highlight in the center. The edge of the rod is jagged and sawtooth-like, with a series of sharp, repeating peaks and valleys. The background is dark and out of focus, emphasizing the metallic texture and bright light of the rod.

A rolling river of steel...



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold *niju habaki* with
crisp file marks



(Ichi) 一

(Katsu) 勝

(kuni) 国

(kaô) 花押

昭
和
六
十
一
年
一
勝
國
花
押

昭 (Shô)

和 (wa)

六 (roku)

十 (jû)

一 (ichi)

年 (nen)

研 (togu)



Shôwa rokujûichi nen togu - Ichi, Katsukuni + kaô

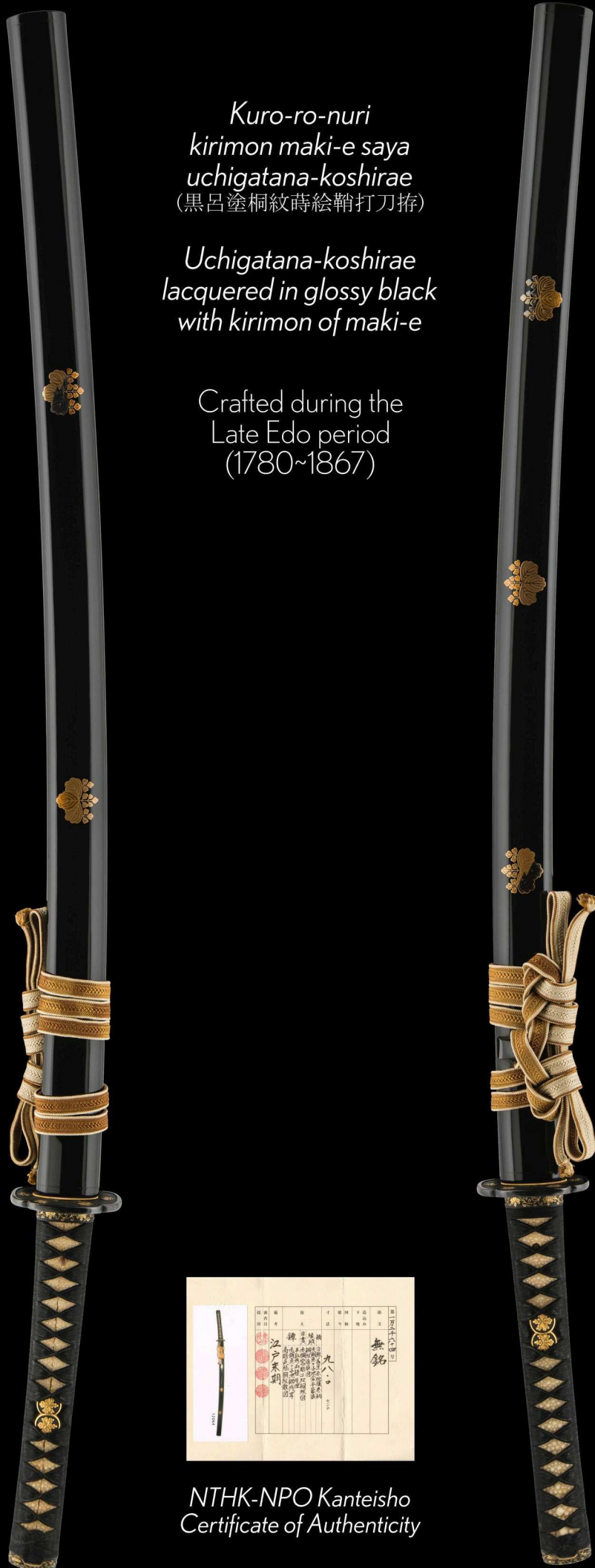
[This sword was] polished in the 61st year of Showa era (1986)

One, Katsukuni + monogram

*Kuro-ro-nuri
kirimon maki-e saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂塗桐紋蒔絵鞘打刀拵)

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

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



Absolutely gorgeous *maki-e* lacquerwork of *kiri-mon* crests





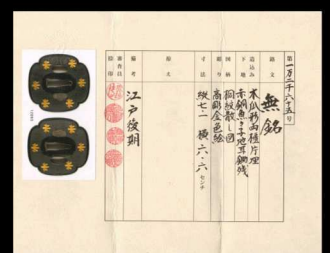
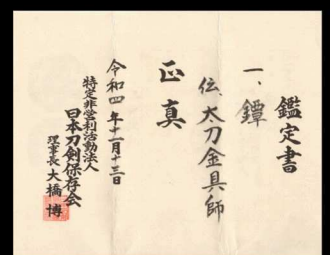
fill 'er up!



This handsome multi-lobed *tsuba* made of pure *shakudô* (a desired bullion of gold and copper) and features a raised shakudô rim, plenty of *nanako* (hand-punched dotted pattern) and several gold *kiri-mon* (paulownia crests).

The work has been attributed to craftsmen that specialized in producing fittings for *tachi koshirae*. Notice how the hole that would normally have a *kôgai* slip through has been filled in - samurai with extra disposable income would fill these holes - it's a notable point of interest.

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





Fuchi-kashira
 attributed to
Inaba no Suke Yoshioka
 (middle-Edo 1700s)

Kiri-mon (paulownia design)
 with ivy signifying longevity



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certification



A skilfully braided *jabara-maki* forms crisp diamond shapes in the silk securing a pair of *kiri-mon menuki* on either side of the *tsuka* (hilt).



御

御 (one)

刀

刀 (katana)



壹

壹 (hito)

振

振 (furi)



Preserved and cared for many years, this katana comes in its own box with *hakogaki* (writing).

The inside cover reads:

賀州金沢住伊豫大掾陀羅尼橘勝國作之
*Gashū Kanazawa jū Iyō Daijō Darani Tachibana
Katsukuni kore o tsukuru*

Crafted by Iyō Daijō Tachibana Katsukuni from
Darani school, a resident of Kanazawa of *Gashū*
province

寛文十年八月吉日

Kanbun jūnen hachigatsu kichijitsu

Dated on a lucky day in the eighth month of the
tenth year of *Kanbun* era (August 1670)

刃長貳尺參寸在之

Hachō 2-shaku 3-sun kore ari

Blade length ~ 69.7cm

A complimentary sword maintenance kit with *mekugi-nuki* and a bottle of *Fujishiro* sword oil (trusted by the Japanese sword museum) is included with all sword purchases.



safe, extra large cloth for adding oil to the blade