

ITEM# UJKA413

A NAOE-SHIZU KATANA

UNSIGNED, NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (CIRCA 1338~1367)

- Swordsmith:** *The Naoe Shizu School (attribution, ô-suriage nakago)*
- Measurements:** **Length:** 69.6cm **Curvature:** 1.55cm **Motohaba:** 2.83cm
- Jihada:** *Vivid itame-nagare that tends to masame and features chikei and plenty of ji-nie*
- Hamon:** *Ko-nie-laden notare, wide nioiguchi, mixed with gunome, togari-gunome, ashi, some small roundish tobiyaki, kinsuji, and fine sunagashi*
- Certificate:** **53rd NBTHK Jûyô Tôken Shômeisho** (*designated as Profound and Important*)
- Certificate #2-5:** **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (*koshirae, tsuba, fitting, kogai designated as Authentic*)
- Fujishiro:** **Jô-saku** (*superior swordsmith quality*)
- Included:** *Shirasaya, kamon koshirae, stand, kit, booklet, printed description*

SOLD

Imposing. Impressive. Important. This magnificent *Naoe Shizu* katana captures the raw warring emotions of the *Nambokuchô* period. It is a 650-year old shortened *ôdachi* (long tachi) that would have originally had a cutting edge of about 80cm, potentially longer. One's eyes are drawn immediately to the blade's *o-kissaki* (long extended tip) that measures whopping 11.5cm in length. The *jihada* is a fantastic mixture of *itame*, *mokume* and *nagare-hada*, lots of *chikei* and *ji-nie* to gaze over. The *hamon* pumps along like a heartbeat, churning out Mino tradition *togari* with copious amounts of *tobiyaki*, *yô*, *sunagashi* and *kinsuji*. A terrific set of *koshirae* with countless family *kamon* decorates the piece with eye-catching class. Not all *Naoe-Shizu* swords are created equal, this one is a keeper. Read on for its history and details.



Saki-kasane: 2.2mm

Moto-kasane: 2.5mm

Kissaki: 11.62cm

Saki-haba: 2.47cm

Nagasa: 69.6cm

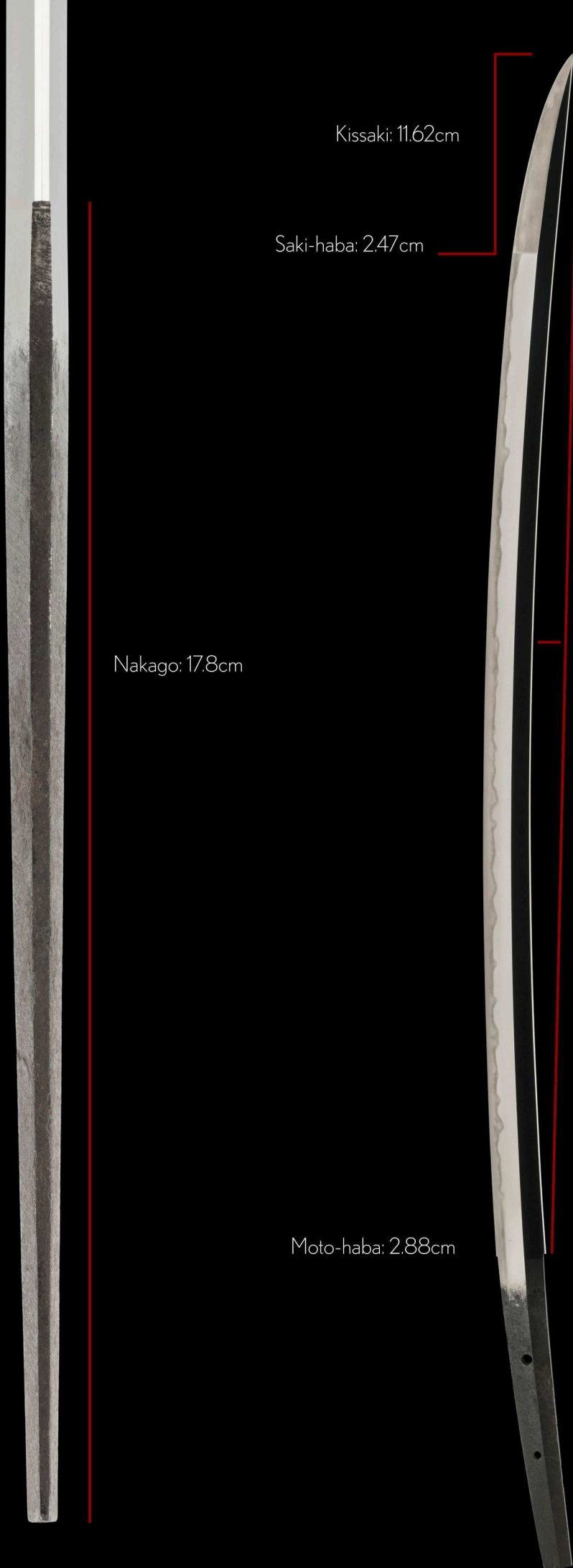
Nakago: 17.8cm

Sori: 1.55cm

Omosa: 735g

Moto-haba: 2.88cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



According to historical records swordsmiths populated Mino province in the *Hôgen* era (1156-1159) during the *Heian* period. However, it is only towards the very late Kamakura period (early 1300s) appeared that works by *Shizu Saburo Kaneuji* and *Kinju* have been confirmed.

To give a sense of context, Kaneuji is said to have moved from *Yamato* (Nara) to study under the great *Masamune* to become one of his ten finest pupils (*Masamune Jutetsu*).

Kaneuji eventually moved to Shizu district in Mino province and is largely considered the founder of the Mino tradition. Incidentally, shizu means 'still or 'calm in Japanese.

As one would have expected, Kaneuji's works carry a strong mixture of *Yamato Tegai school* qualities (a jihada of mokume hada with straight grain masame hada) and the *Soshu* tradition with a hamon displaying *nie-deki* with plenty of hataraki such as *sunagashi* (streaks of sand), *kinsuji* (stripes of gold) and *inazuma* (crooked lightning bolts).

A noteworthy difference is that the hamon carries some *togari* (tapered peaks) in the hamon. As a basic rule of thumb, all Mino tradition swords have togari in the hamon.


Unsigned swords attributed to Kaneuji are known as Yamato Shizu (Shizu meaning 'Kaneuji). In the beginning, students of the ô-Shizu school (founded by Kaneuji) and of the Naoe Shizu School moved to Naoe district also in Mino province to differentiate themselves.

Notable students include *Kaneyuki* (son of *Kaneshige*), Tametsugu (a disciple of either one of the greats *Gô Yoshiro* or *Norishige*), *Kanetoshi*, *Kanenaga* (which the NTHK-NPO attributed this sword to in their *Yushusaku* certificate), *Kanetsugu*, *Kanenobu* and later generations of *Kaneuji*.

What makes the Naoe Shizu School different from that of ô-Shizu is that the *sugata* (shape) is superior; key traits being that of a *wide mihaba* and *ô-kissaki*. Both of which, according to Nagayama Kokan of the *Connoisseurs Book of Japanese Swords*, "*lend to a grand appearance*".

Of equal importance to note is that the jihada has swirling pools of *itame* mixed with *mokume*. The folding pattern in the steel has a direct influence on the hamon displaying *sunagashi* (streaks of sand).





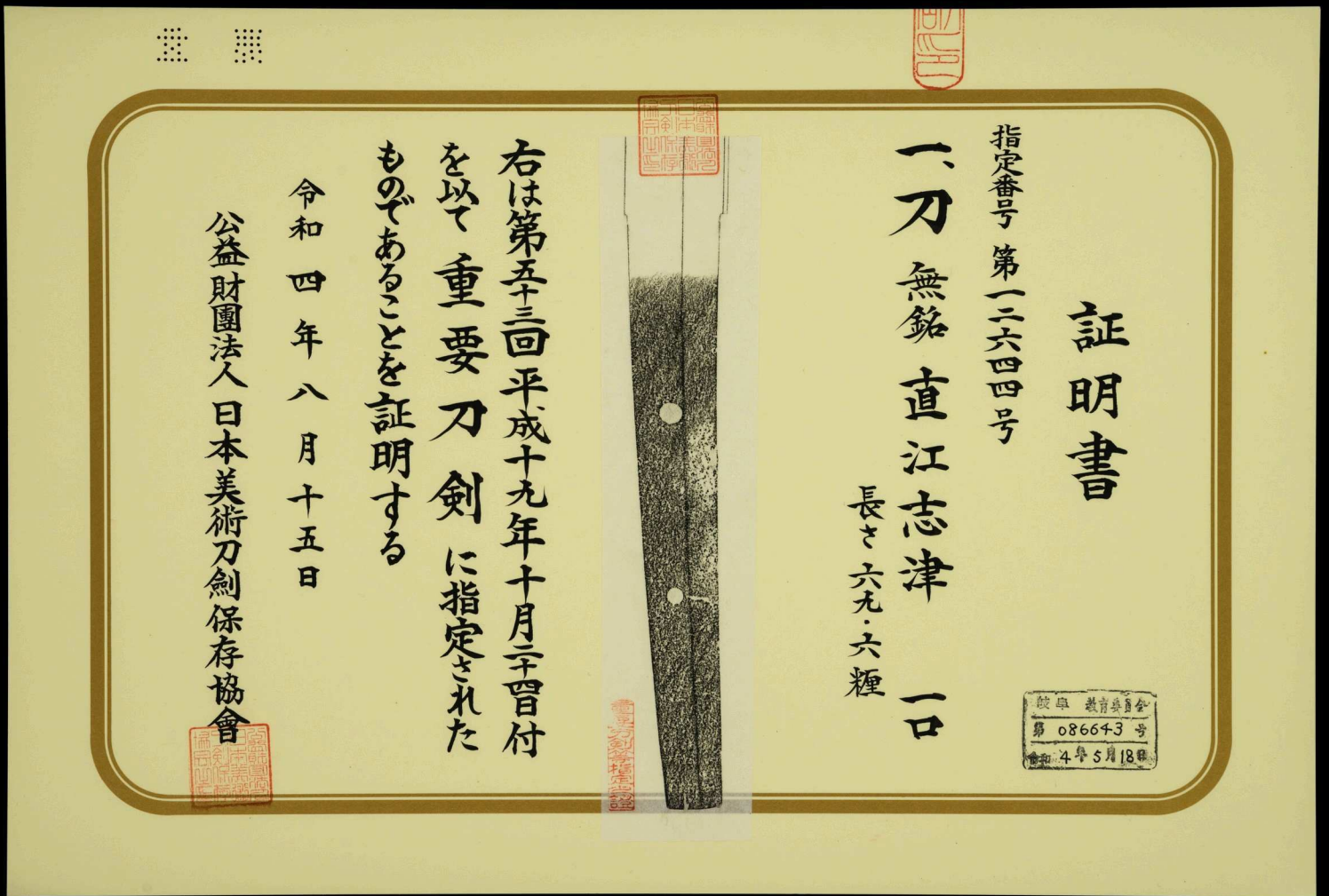
This sword was a formidable *ôdachi* during the *Nambokuchô* period.

It may have lost its signature 500 or so years ago when it was greatly shortened to its *ô-suriage nakago* but the blade still retains its bold posture.

There is a chisel mark at the *nakago-jiri*, butt end. It appears to the remnants of the initial signature.



Old chisel stroke.
A trace of history.



Jûyô Certificate No. 12644
Shômeisho (証明書) Certificate
Katana, mumei: Naoe Shizu (直江志津)

Nagasa: 69.6 cm

The sword was registered on May 18th in 2022 by the Board of Education of Gifu prefecture

This is to certify that above sword had been designated as *Juyô-Tôken* on October 24th, 1997 at the 53rd session

August 15th, 2022
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK

** Note: the original *Jûyô Tôken* certificate was lost. By policy, rather than issuing a new certificate, the NBTHK issues a *shômeisho* (a certificate of acceptance) after they carefully review the sword in person ensuring the authenticity and condition of the item.



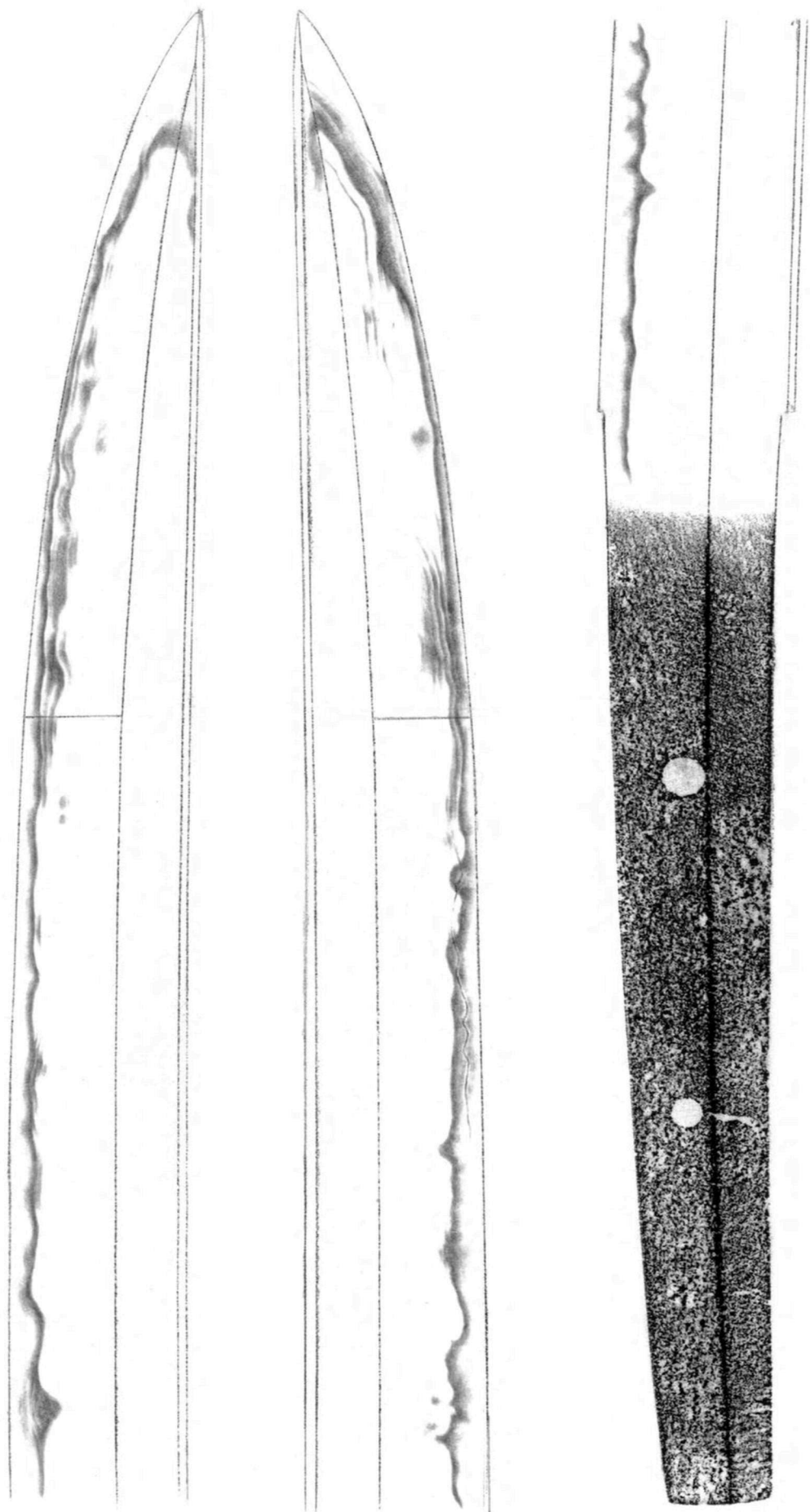
The NBTHK Jûyô summary of this katana reads as follows:

Some time after *Kaneuji*, one of the *Ten Students of Masamune*, had settled in *Shizu* in *Mino* province and had established a thriving school there, some of his students, e.g., *Kanetomo*, *Kanetsugu*, *Kaneshige*, and *Kanenobu*, moved to *Naoe*, also located within Mino. Collectively, these smiths are known as *Naoe-Shizu*.

This katana is *ô-suriage mumei*. It has a relatively slender *mihaba* and an *ô-kissaki* whereupon we can identify it in terms of shape as a shortened *ôdachi* from the *Nanbokuchô* period. The *kitae* is a standing-out *itame-nagare* that tends overall to *masame* and that features *chikei* and plenty of *ji-nie*.

The *hamon* bases on a gently undulating *notare* that is mixed with *gunome*, *ko-gunome*, *togari-gunome*, fine *sunagashi*, and *ara-nie* in places. Due to this interpretation of the *jiba*, which is also very healthy, the blade can be attributed to *Naoe-Shizu*.

刀 無銘 直江志津



The Jûyô Token white paper
(copy)






These droplets of *nie* crystals are collectively called *yubashiri*, which literally means '*running hot water*'. Similar to *tobiyaki*, however, they have a more transparent look, thus the hot water (*yu*) analogy.



yubashiri

A towering *ô-kissaki* of
over 11cm (~4.5inch)



The image shows a close-up, diagonal view of a sword blade. The blade is composed of several distinct sections, each with a different grain pattern. From top-left to bottom-right, the sections are: a dark, fine-grained section (itame-hada), a section with a mottled, wood-grain-like pattern (mokume), and a section with a smooth, flowing grain pattern (nagare-hada). The lighting highlights the texture and sheen of the metal.

A marvellous mix of itame-hada, mokume and nagare-hada.



kinsuji cracking through the hamon.

togari-gunome pulses like a heart beat.

Fabulous look at the running *nagare-hada*.



A close-up photograph of a sword's blade, showing a dark, textured surface with lighter, irregular patches. The blade is oriented diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right. The background is black. Two red arrows point from the text above to specific areas on the blade. Two other red arrows point from the text below to different areas on the blade.

Silver nuggets of *tobiyaki*, tempered spots of *nie crystals* in the *ji* (body) of the sword.

Clusters of *nie* crystals called *yô* (leaves) 'falling off' the hamon. A beautiful sight.

A close-up photograph of a Japanese sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (temper line) pattern. The blade is dark and polished, with a bright light reflecting off the edge. The hamon pattern is characterized by deep, jagged, river-like sections and clear-cut, pointed sections. Two red arrows point to specific features: one points to a deep, jagged section, and the other points to a clear-cut, pointed section.

deep rivers of *chikei*

togari

This is a classic *Naoe-shizu hamon* with a strong *gunome* along with clear-cut *togari* (pointed) sections that speak to the Mino tradition.

What a way to spend some quiet time.

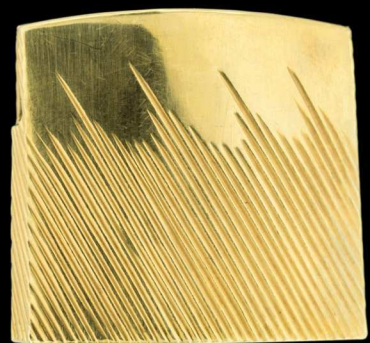
Study the steel.



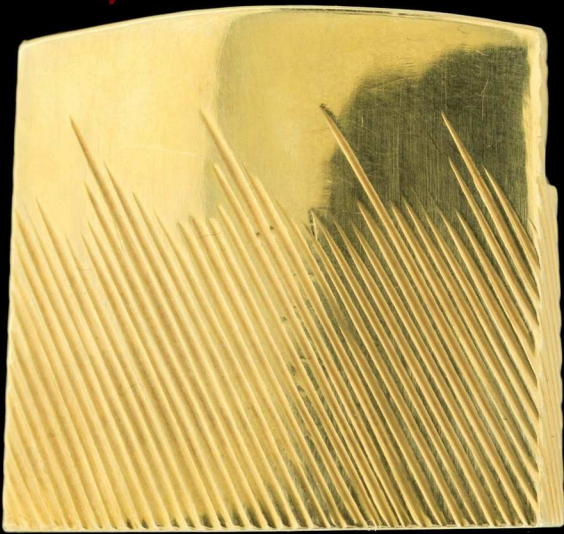


finished off with buffalo horn

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold-wrapped *habaki* with
diagonal file marks



The *habaki* from all angles.



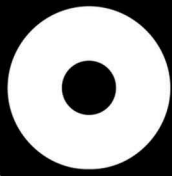
*Kuro-ro-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Modern period



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity*



Ja-no-me mon
(snake eye)



Botan mon
(peony)



Ageha-chô mon
(butterfly)



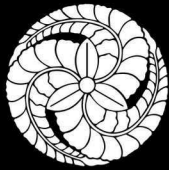
Mukai-zuru mon
(pair of cranes)



Hô mon
(phoenix)

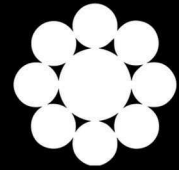


Go san kiri mon
(paulownia)

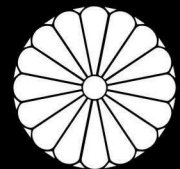


Fuji-maru mon
(circle of wisteria)

Major *kamon* (family crests) are depicted on the *tsuba* in such an impressive manner. Certified to a tachi metalsmith working in the mid-Edo period (1700~1780).



Kuyô mon
(nine planet/stars)



Kiku mon
(chrysanthemum)



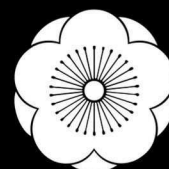
Daki-kashiwa mon
(oak leaves)



Hô mon
(phoenix)



Amaryû mon
rain dragon)

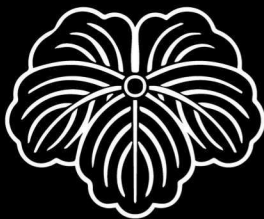


Yae-ume mon
(plum blossom)



A kôgai is a thick blunt needle that was primarily used as a hair arranging tool by the samurai.

It is fastened into a special notch built inside the *saya* (scabbard) and drawn through the 'bumpy' hole in the tsuba.



Kage-tsuta mon
(A crest of ivy leaves)





glorious *fuchi-kashira* depicting *kuyô-mon* and ivy.



weaved to perfection.

Metalsmith *Naoyoshi* + monogram



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



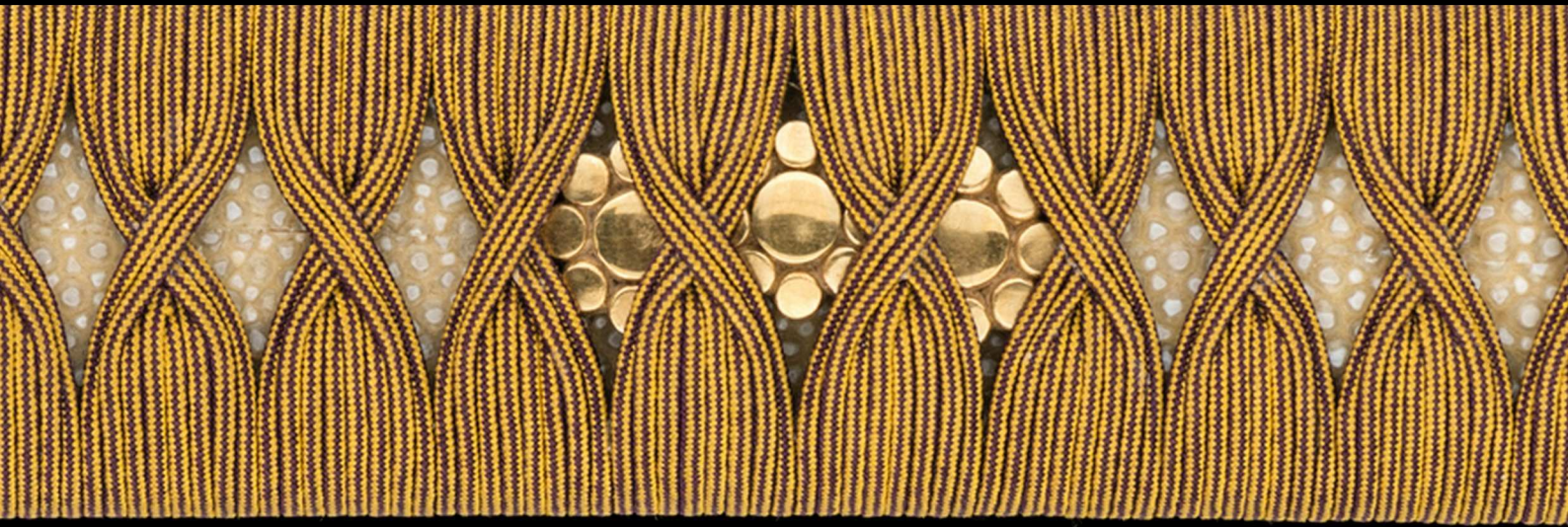
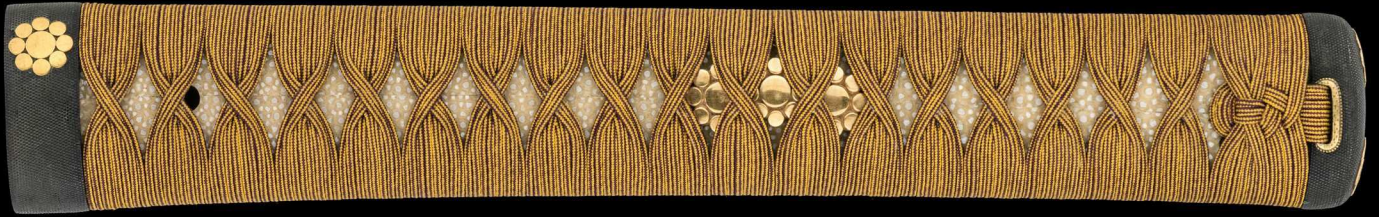
(Nao) 直

(yoshi) 好

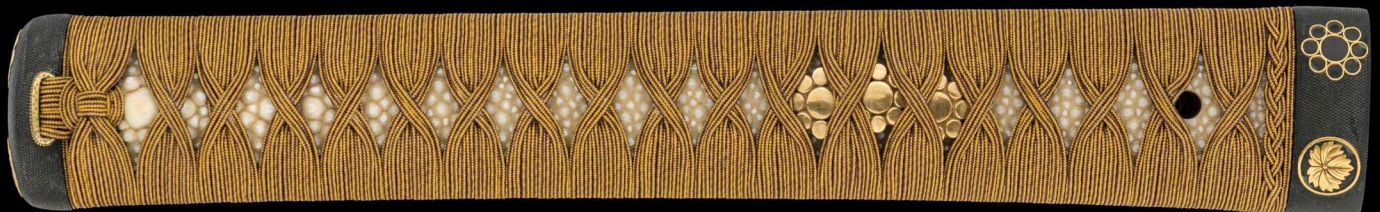
(kaô) 花押



The *kamons* continue on the *kashira* (pommel).



Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) carry *Kuyô-mon*, the nine-planet family crest that was first adopted by the powerful daimyô family leader *Hosokawa Tadaoki* (1563~1646).





Koshirae bag