



ITEM# UJKA415

A RAI KUNIZANE KATANA

UNSIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (CIRCA 1312~1317)

Swordsmith:	<i>Rai Kunizane (mumei)</i>		
Measurements:	Length: 69.4cm (<i>o-suriage</i>)	Curvature: 1.3cm	Moto-haba: 2.89cm
Jihada:	<i>Mokume-hada with Rai-hada, channels of chikei and kinsuji</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Clusters of ko-chôji-midare mixed with suguha-chôji in nie-deki</i>		
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (a sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)		
Certificate #2:	NBTHK Hozon (a tsuba that is Worthy of Preservation)		
Certificate #3-4:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (handachi fittings and menuki certified as Authentic)		
Fujishiro rank:	Jô-saku (ranked as a superior swordsmith)		
Included:	Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, description		

SOLD

This lovely katana from the golden Kamakura period has been attributed to celebrated swordsmith *Rai Kunizane* of the famed *Rai* school that is said to have roots from Korea. Kunizane's given name was *Tôgorô* and was the son/student of grandmaster *Rai Kunitoshi*, with national treasure swordsmith *Rai Kunimitsu* being his older brother and *Rai Tomokuni* his younger sibling. Kunizane flourished circa the *Shôwa* era (1312~1317) and into the *Nambokuchô* period. The curvy blade features a *torii-zori* shape with a full-length grooves and a substantial *kissaki* giving the sword an elegant appearance. The *jihada* has classic *Rai-hada* and an eclectic mix of *itame* and *ko-mokume-hada* and a *hamon* that is a bright *ko-chôji midare*. An outstanding handachi koshirae was recently completed by UJ for the sword featuring a gorgeous tachi tsuba with NBTHK Hozon certification.



Saki-kasane: 4.8mm

Moto-kasane: 5.9mm

Omosa: 630g

Kissaki: 3.72cm

Saki-haba: 1.90cm

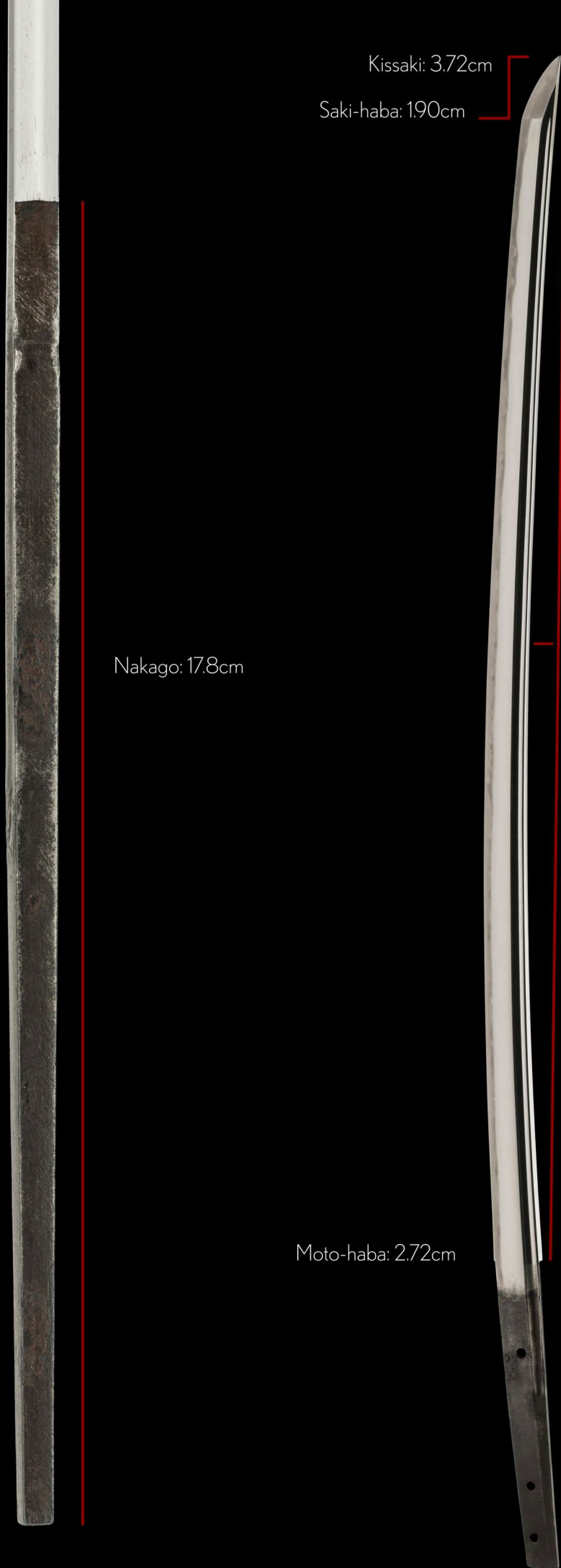
Nakago: 17.8cm

Moto-haba: 2.72cm

Nagasa: 69.4cm

Sori: 1.3cm

Mekugi-ana: 3



Born with given name *Tôgorô*, *Rai Kunizane* was either the son or student of grandmaster *Rai Kunitoshi*, with national treasure swordsmith *Rai Kunimitsu* being his older brother and *Rai Tomokuni* his younger brother.

The character 来 'Rai' means 'to come' with the founding smith *Kuniyoshi* thought to have come from Korea. However, none of his works are extant so his son *Kuniyuki* is now credited with being the founder.

Kunizane flourished during the end of the *Kamakura* period, circa the *Shôwa* era (1312~1317) and worked into the *Nambokuchô* period that started in 1333.

The shape of the blade features a *torii-zori* shape, where the curvature is found in the middle section. The *kissaki* is healthy and substantial, which gives the blade a rather statuesque appearance.

The *jihada* features classic *Rai-hada* with an enjoyable mix of both *itame* and *mokume-hada*. The *hamon* is a bright *ko-chôji midare* that uniquely thickens in areas like *sumi-e* (charcoal ink) brush strokes.

Rai Kunizane is deservedly rated *jô-saku* (a superior smith) and hails from the highest echelons of the Rai family. There is much to appreciate in this 700-year-old sword that also has custom *koshirae* potential.





mumei (unsigned)

o-suriage nakago
(greatly shortened)

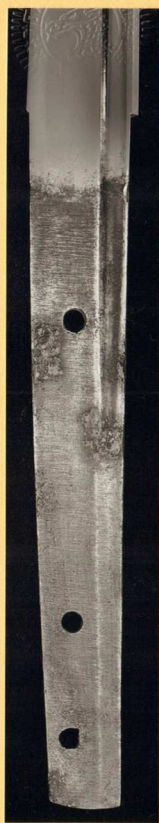
Omote (front side)
groove ends into the
nakago (*kaki-nagashi*)

Ura (reverse)
groove extends through
the nakago (*kaki-tôshi*)

特 保
02202006



No 1013943



鑑 定 書

一刀 無銘 (来国真)

長二尺二寸九分

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

令和二年八月二十八日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



東京都 教育委員会
第 25338 号
昭和26年3月31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 2nd year of Reiwa (2020), August 28th

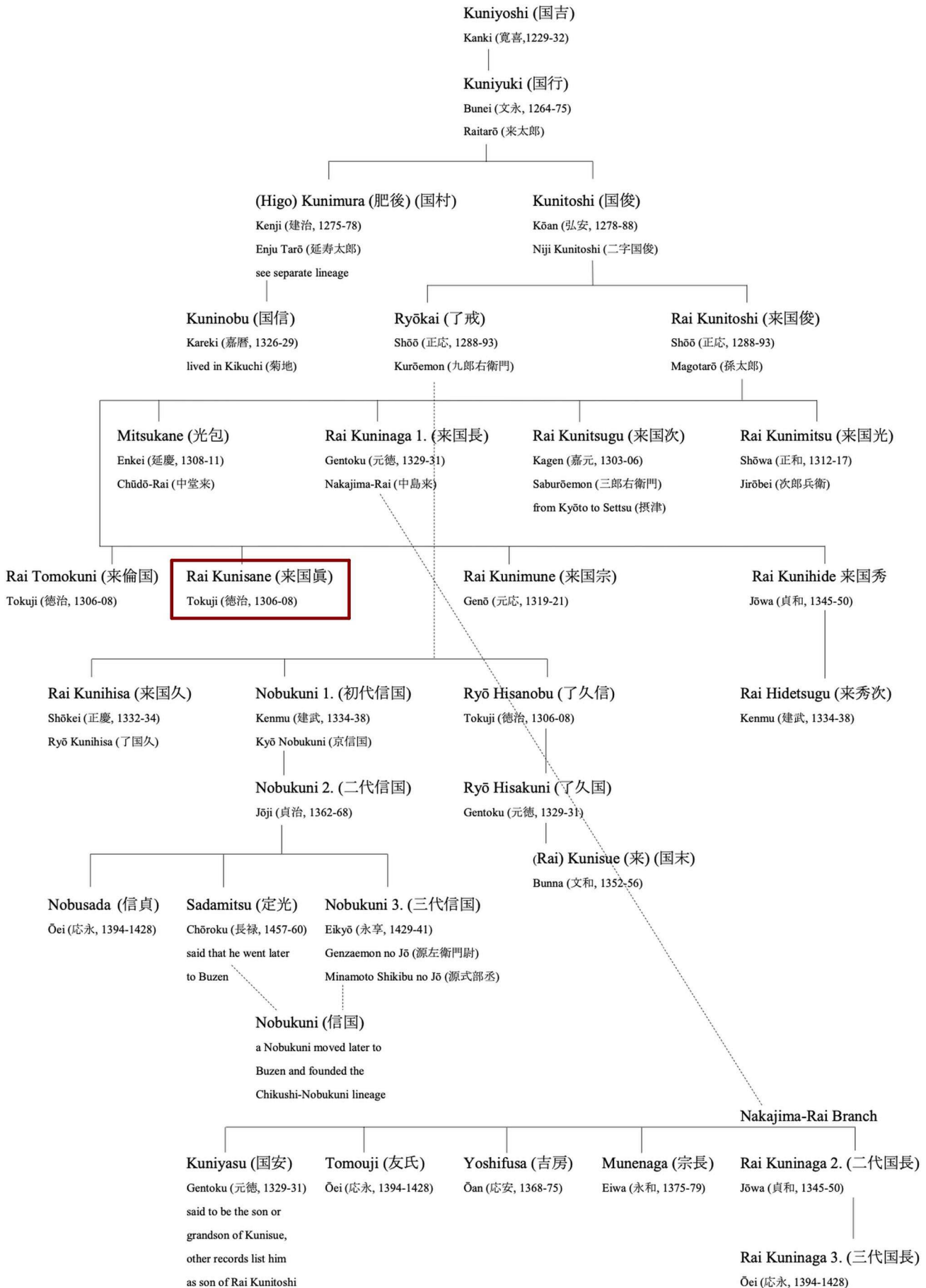
One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Rai Kunizane

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu (69.4cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Rai School (来) Yamashiro

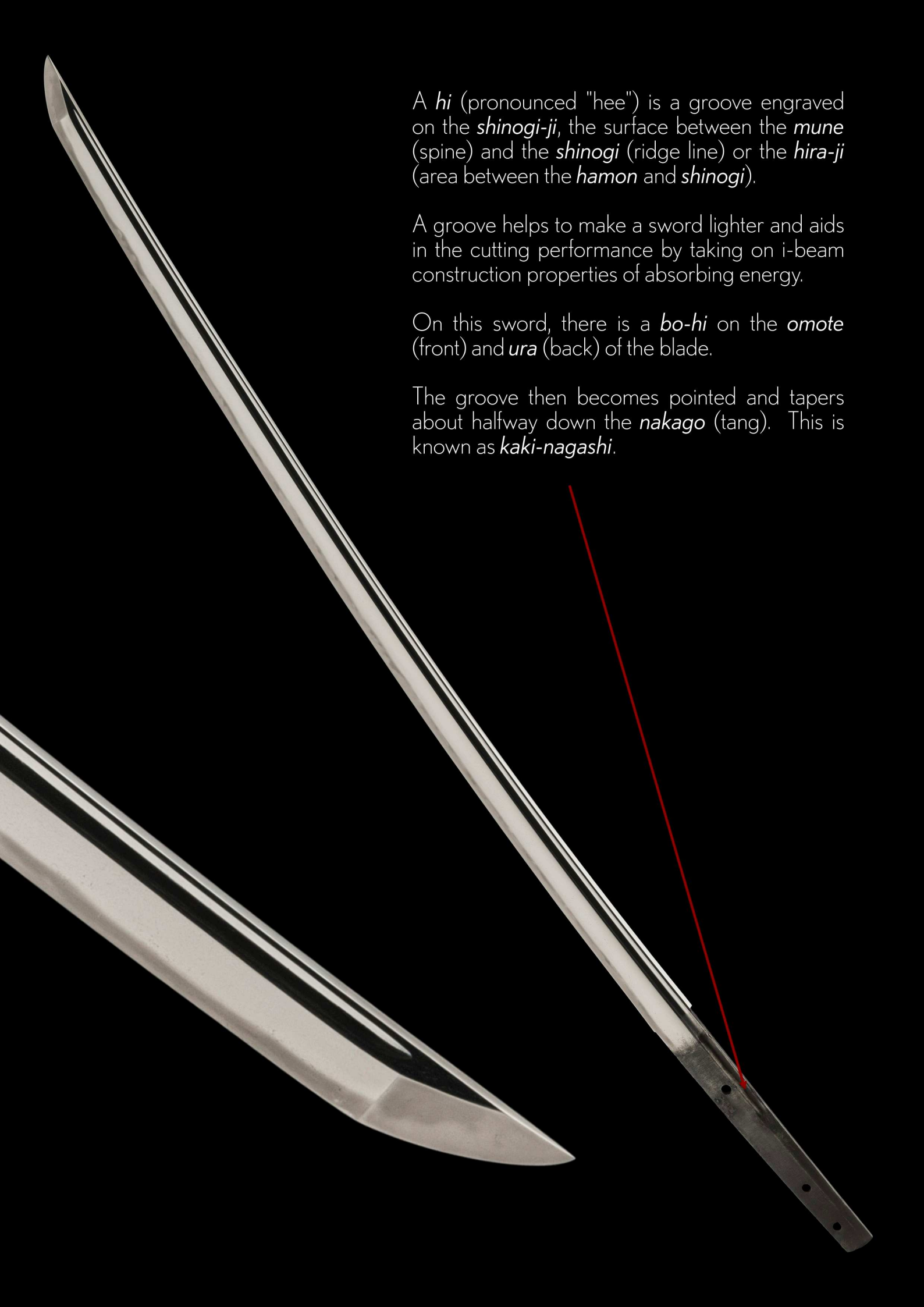


Source:
"Genealogies and Schools of Japanese Swordsmiths" by Markus Sesko

Order here:
<https://www.lulu.com/spotlight/nihontobooks>







A *hi* (pronounced "hee") is a groove engraved on the *shinogi-ji*, the surface between the *mune* (spine) and the *shinogi* (ridge line) or the *hira-ji* (area between the *hamon* and *shinogi*).

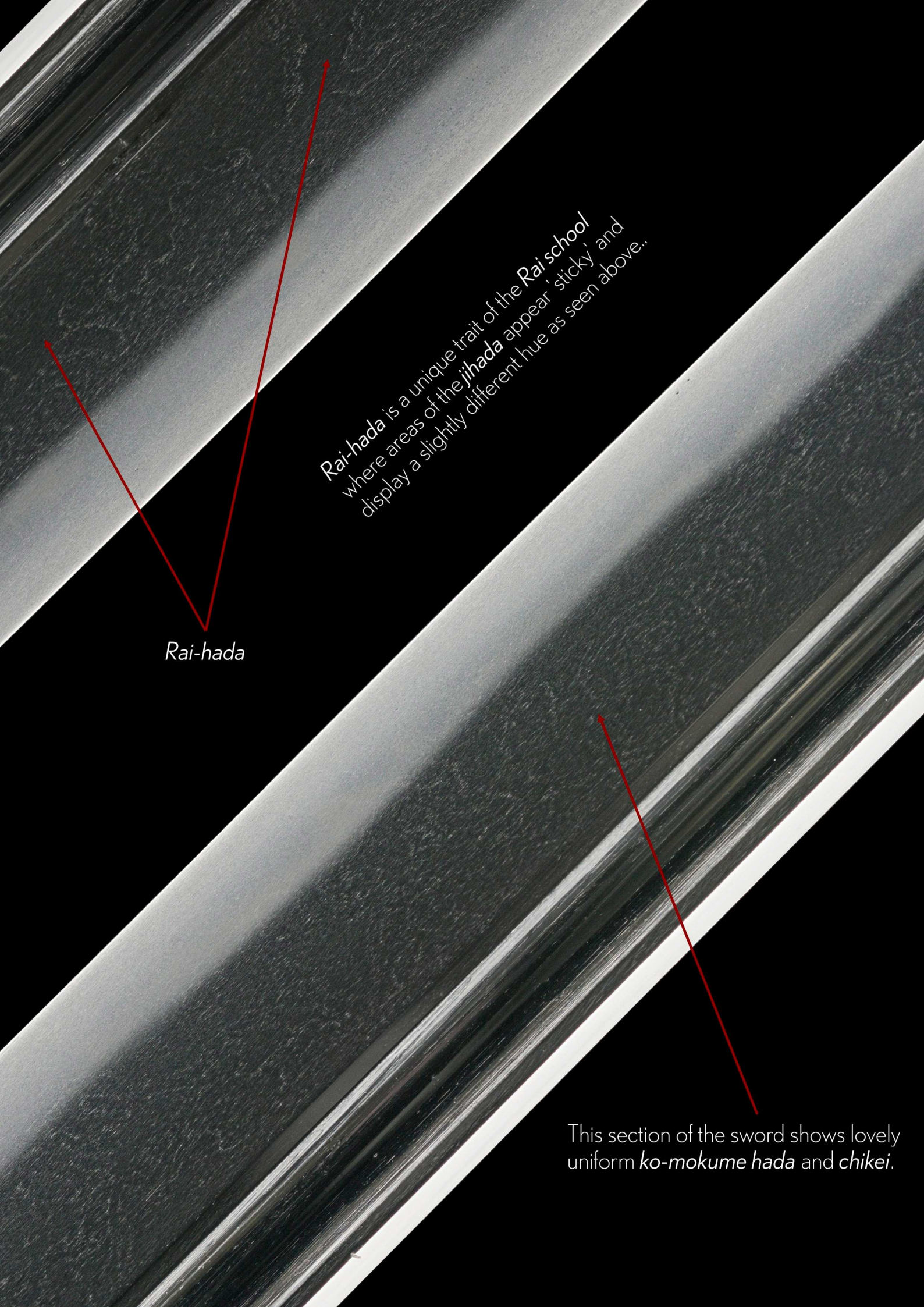
A groove helps to make a sword lighter and aids in the cutting performance by taking on i-beam construction properties of absorbing energy.

On this sword, there is a *bo-hi* on the *omote* (front) and *ura* (back) of the blade.

The groove then becomes pointed and tapers about halfway down the *nakago* (tang). This is known as *kaki-nagashi*.

Sharp, healthy extended *chû-kissaki*



A close-up photograph of a sword blade, showing the intricate patterns of the metal. The blade is oriented diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right. The background is black, which makes the metallic textures stand out. There are two main sections of the blade highlighted with red arrows. The upper section shows a dark, textured area with some lighter streaks, and the lower section shows a smoother, more uniform area with fine, parallel lines. The text is overlaid on the blade, providing context for the patterns shown.

Rai-hada is a unique trait of the *Rai school* where areas of the *jihada* appear 'sticky' and display a slightly different hue as seen above..

Rai-hada


This section of the sword shows lovely uniform *ko-mokume hada* and *chikei*.

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the intricate patterns of the blade's surface. The blade is dark and metallic, with a prominent line of light-colored, jagged patterns (kinsuji) running diagonally across it. Below this line, there are smaller, more delicate patterns (ko-chôji). The background is dark, making the blade stand out. Two red arrows point from the text labels to the specific patterns on the blade.

kinsuji

Ko-chôji (tiny clove blossom buds) burgeons in the *monouchi* (hitting zone) portion of the blade.

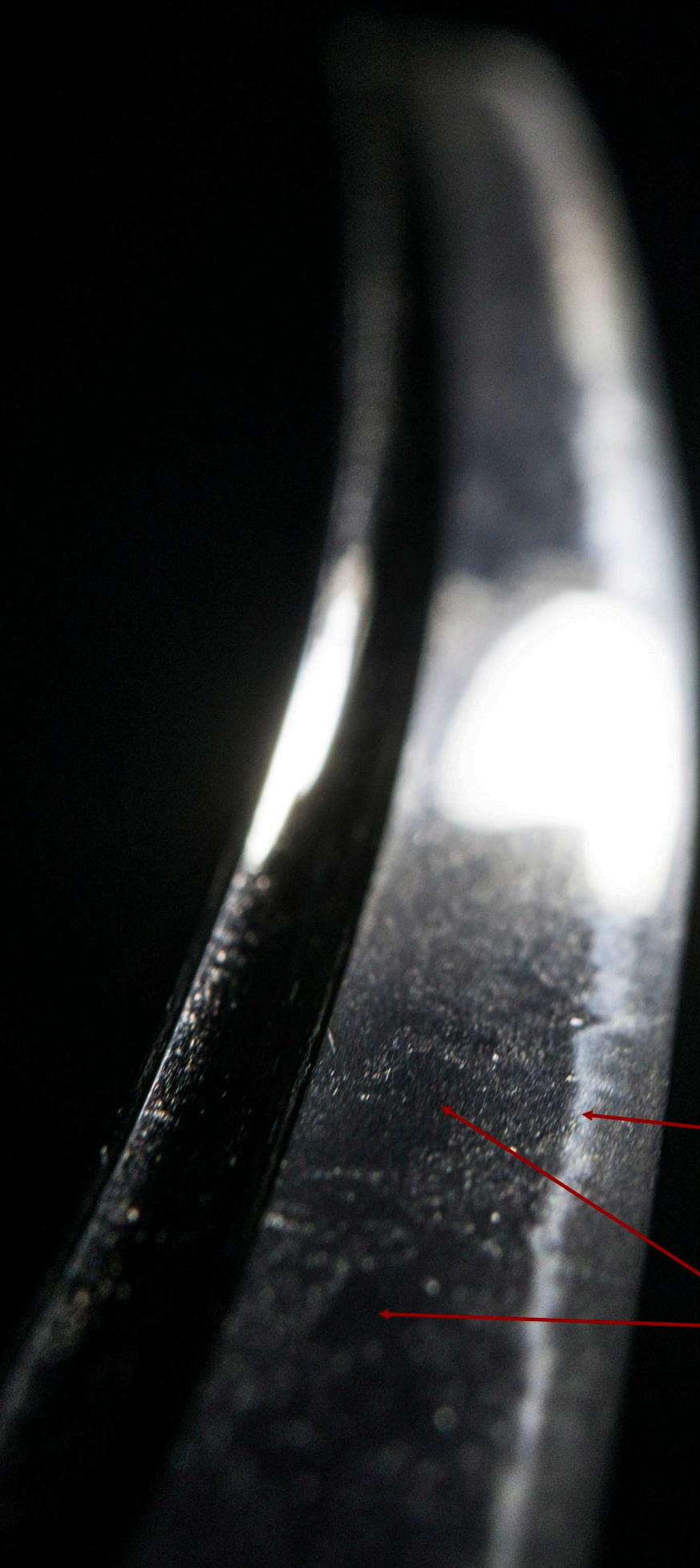
A line of *kinsuji* slashes its way below.

A close-up, low-angle photograph of a sword blade against a black background. The blade is illuminated from the bottom right, creating a bright highlight along its edge and revealing the intricate patterns of the hamon. The patterns consist of dark, rich areas (jigane) and bright, brush-like strokes (ko-chôji midare). A red arrow points from the text below to a specific bright stroke on the blade.

Bright bunches of *ko-chôji midare* appear like brush strokes against the dark, rich *jigane*.



This section of the blade displays a *chû-suguha* as islands of *Rai-hada* reveal themselves under the light.



chû-suguha

Rai-hada

A close-up photograph of a metal blade, likely a sword or dagger, showing a bright reflection on its edge. A red arrow points to a specific area on the blade's surface, which is labeled as 'nie crystals sparkle'. The blade is set against a dark background.

nie crystals sparkle

ko-midare in *nie-deki*



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard, newly created)



gold *habaki* with
horizontal file marks

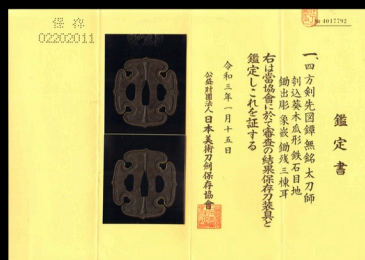


*Handachi Koshirae
completed in 2023-24
by master craftsman in Japan.*

Produced by Unique Japan.



An iron tsuba with a stone-surface and a sword tipped motif in the corners was crafted by a tachi smith during the Edo period.



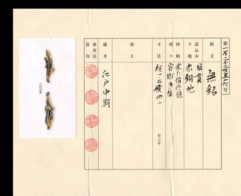
NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Authenticity



Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) carry a bird and rice theme. These menuki have been attributed to *Inagawa Naokatsu* from Edo of the Middle Edo period, and placed on an expertly wrapped *tsuka* (hilt) traditionally balanced for a one-handed grip.

Rice has been an agricultural fixture in Japan for more than 2,000 years. It is a symbol of the country's spiritual connection with nature, the gods and gifts within the community.

Rice has always been valued highly in Japan. In fact, during the Edo period, salaries and daily wages were calculated in rice. Rice is sometimes called *chikara* (a homonym for "strength"), meaning "divine grain."

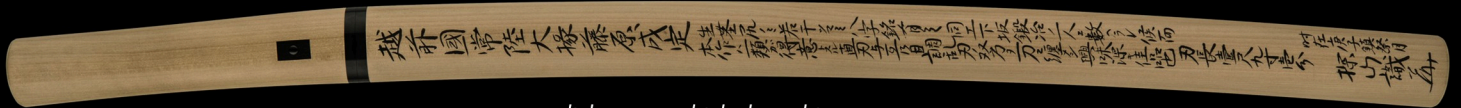


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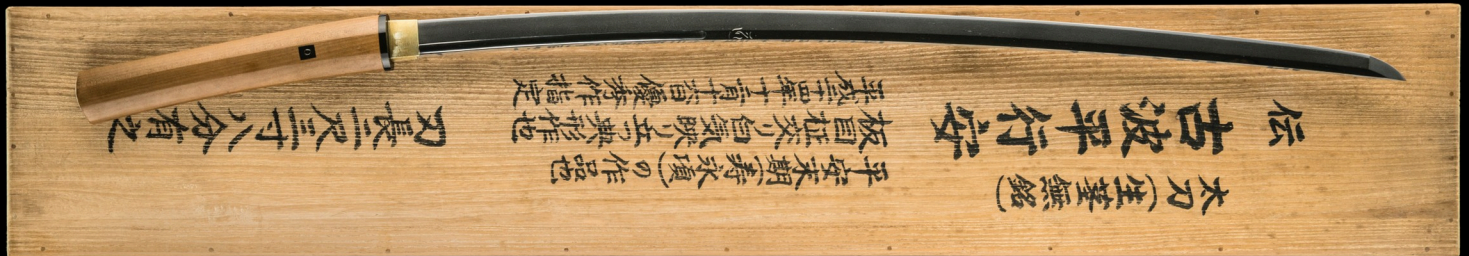
Unique Japan offers a *full-service menu* to assist clients with their Japanese swords and fittings. All services are performed in Japan with top quality craftsmen and women.

Services include (non exhaustive):

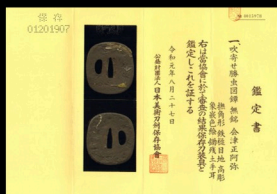
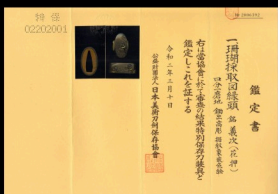
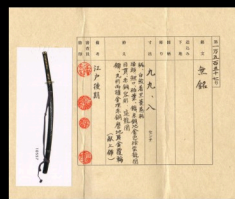
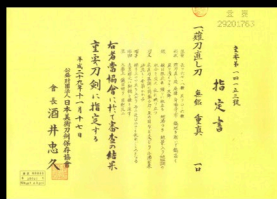
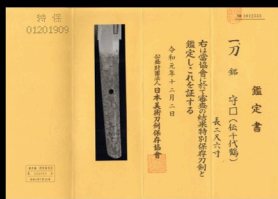
- * NBTHK and NTHK-NPO *shinsa* certification (swords and fittings)
- * polishing for all types of Japanese swords (standard to Jûyô-level quality polish)
- * *shirasaya* making (standard to high quality with horn fittings)
- * *habaki* making (gold, silver, copper in most any design pattern)
- * fix wobbly koshirae, repair cracked scabbards, new lacquer work, etc.
- * *otoshi* presentation boxes for your beautiful *tsuba*, *menuki*, *fuch-kashira*, etc.
- * *tsuka-maki* (re-wrap your hilts in silk or leather in most any colour, weave or braid)
- * *oshigata* (sword/hamon tracing on a scroll with a large choice of background)
- * *sayagaki* services with *Tanobe-sensei* (qualifying conditions apply)
- * sword boxes with *hakogaki* (with humidifying options for dry climates)
- * custom koshirae projects (see separate page)
- * sell your sword(s) on consignment (qualifying conditions apply)



polish, sayagaki, hakogaki



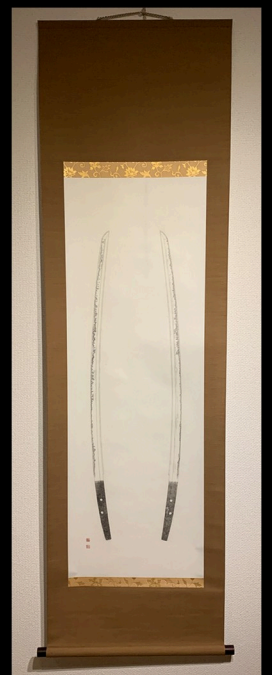
tsuka-maki



habaki creations



otoshi boxes



oshigata scrolls

All NBTHK and NTHK-NPO Shinsa authentication services