



ITEM# UJKA424

A KATSUKUNI KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1673)

Swordsmith:	<i>Iyo Daijō Tachibana Katsukuni saku</i> (shodai, first generation)		
Measurements:	Length: 70.2cm (ubu)	Curvature: 1.0cm	Moto-haba: 2.96cm
Jihada:	<i>Itame with with masame hada with swirling chikei</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Kanemoto-like sambonsugi with sunagashi and kinsuji</i>		
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (Especially Worthy of Preservation)		
Certificate #2-4:	NTHK-NPO Kanteisho (for the tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae)		
Fujishiro rank:	Jō-saku (ranked as a superior swordsmith)		
Cutting ability:	ō-Wazamono (maker of extremely sharp swords)		
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, 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 and superior swordsmith *Katsukuni* of the *shintō Darani* school excelled in a *sanbonsugi-hamon* modelled upon the *Seki-Kanemoto* school and forged his blades with a skilful mix of *itame* and straight grain *masame-hada*. *Katsukuni* blades were also famous for their superior sharpness (he is ranked *ō-wazamono*) and the line existed for seven generations until the *Meiji* era. This strong and magnificently sharp katana has a brilliant *sambonsugi* hamon cascading the length of the blade like a pulsing heartbeat. Its elegant Edo period koshirae features imperial chrysanthemums, surging waves and adorable monkeys compliments such an alluring collectible from the heart of the *shintō* era.



Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Kissaki: 3.99cm

Saki-haba: 2.02cm

Moto-kasane: 6.9mm

Nagasa: 70.2cm

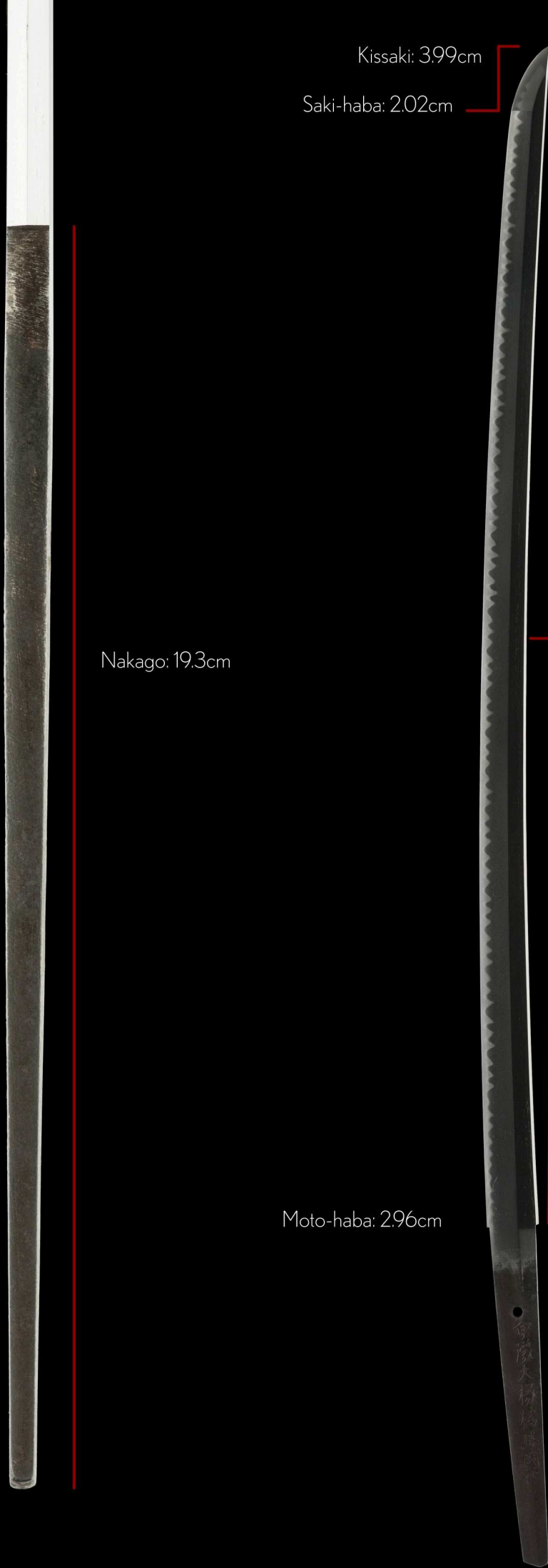
Nakago: 19.3cm

Sori: 1.00cm

Omosa: 755g

Moto-haba: 2.96cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



The history leading up to first generation (*shodai*) *Katsukuni* begins in the *kotô* period. Below is a historical summary of events as they unfolded.

The ancestor of the *Darani* school was swordsmith *Katsuie*, active around the *Ôei* 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 *Ôan* 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 4th 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 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 *ô-wazamono*) and the line existed for altogether seven generations up to the Meiji era.

This strong and delightfully sharp katana is classic *Katsukuni* with a prominent *sambonsugi* hamon cascading the length of the blade. It has a relatively thick *kasane*, substantial *kissaki*, and solid overall weight to the blade. *Katsukuni* is ranked *jō-saku* (superior swordsmith), and this blade is indicative of his respected skill level. An elegant Edo period koshirae with wonderfully designed fittings makes this an alluring collectible from the heart of the *shintō* era.





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

Family name: *Tachibana*

Swordsmith: *Katsukuni* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

kata-sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

伊 (I)

豫 (yo)

大 (Dai)

掾 (jô)

橘 (Tachibana)

勝 (Katsu)

國 (kuni)

作 (saku)



The *ura* (reverse) side of the nakago is unsigned - standard for the majority of swords crafted during the *shinto* period.

特選
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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

令和四年八月二十五日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



鑑定書

一刀銘 伊予大掾橘勝國作

長二尺三寸一分半

石川県教育委員会
第 26921 号
平成22年10月21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), August 25th

One, Katana

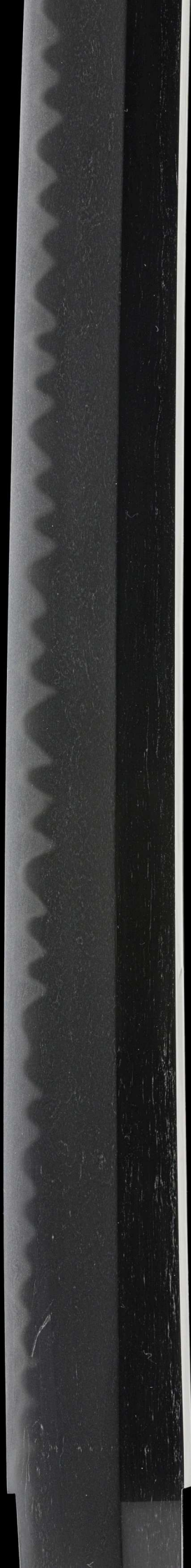
Mei (signature)

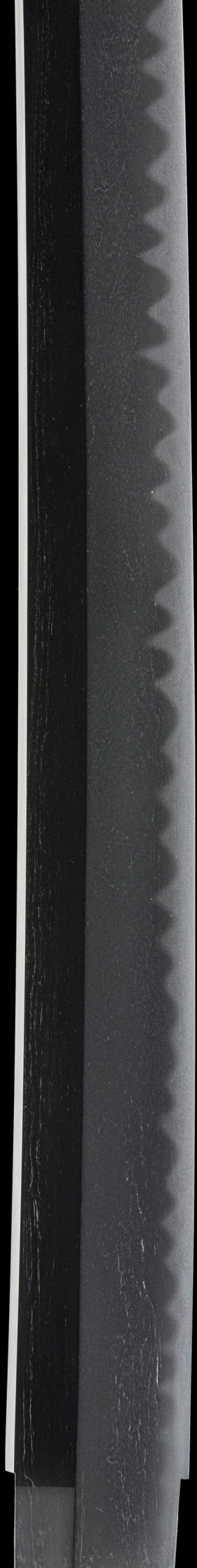
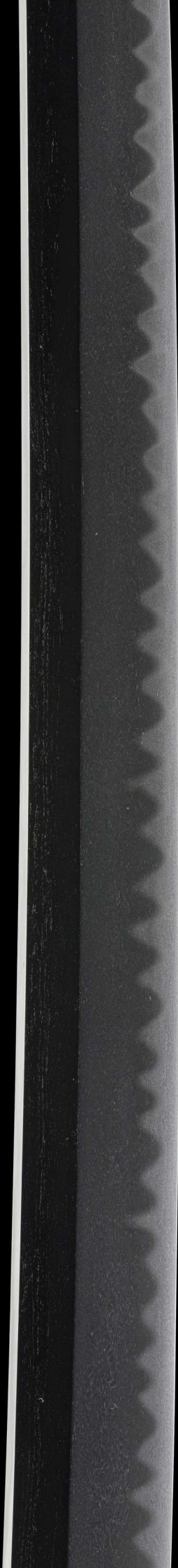
Iyo Daijō Tachibana Katsukuni saku

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu han (70.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





This imperfection at the base of the blade is not a typical *hada-ware* flaw for it does not run lengthwise through the folds of the steel. It is dug in at more of an angle. And in the majority of cases where you see hada-ware of this nature, there are usually other parts of the blade that have it too, but this is an isolated situation.

Did it come from being in contact with another blade during combat? It's hard to say. It's best we'll treat it as a forging flaw to be safe and upfront.



This sizeable *chû-kissaki* of 4cm is a length that would typically be seen during the warring *Nambokuchô* era (1333~1392).

This sword exhibits an inspiration from this time period.



3.99cm

Katsukuni's forging technique shows a mix of *masame-hada* (straight grain) with *itame* (plank grain).

In this cross-section image we clearly see the smooth transition of the two types of *jihada* with *masame* along the hardened *yakiba* along the cutting edge and *itame* running toward the *shinogi* in the *ji*.



masame-hada

itame-hada

shinogi (ridge line)

shinogi-ji (surface between the *shinogi* and the *mune* (spine))

A classic *sanbon-sugi hamon* - temper line that resembles a cluster of three cedar trees. Note how the hamon 'peaks' at about every third wave, like a heart beat.

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

Mino province is a heavily forested region of Japan, so it's clear where the artistic inspiration for the hamon originated from.



sambonsugi hamon



Beautiful *Takayama* in Gifu prefecture (old Mino province)



The jaws of the hamon stand ready to sink its teeth into those that dare cross the line.

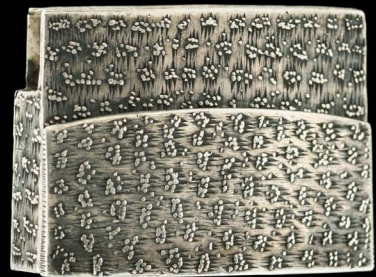


Clear and consistent.

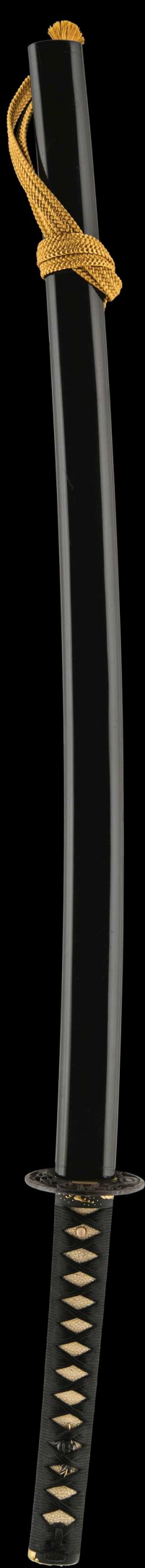
Be courageous.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



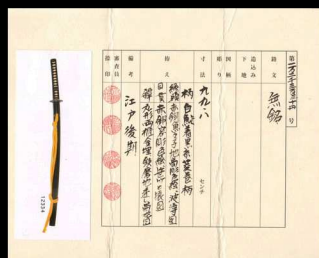
a silver *habaki* with a
unique cluster design



*Kuro-roiro-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂色塗鞘打刀拵え)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



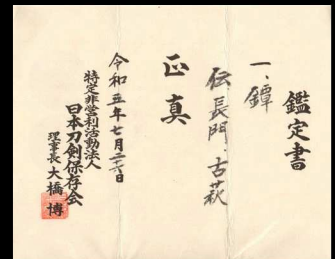
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



The koshirae features a wonderful polished iron tsuba crafted by *Ko-Hagi* school from *Nagato* province. It has been certified to the early Edo period, which is when the sword was crafted.

The intricate *sukashi* (open art work) is that of a *kikka-no-zu* (chrysanthemums), the imperial flower of Japan

Note that the two *hitsu-ana* (holes) that normally slot the *kôgai* and *kozuka* are filled in with gold. Only a samurai with extra financial means could have afforded such a luxury.





(reverse)



Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Ozaki Naomasa
(circa 1763~1782)

Shakudô with *nanako* ground depicting
a gorgeous motif of surging waves.



The founder of the *Ozaki* school was a certain *Ozaki Tôemon Munekore* of whom it is said that he came from *Kyôto* to *Edo* (Tôkyô) on orders of *Tokugawa Ieyasu* at the beginning of the Edo period.

Ozaki Naomasa – first name *Ki'emon* and later *Mago-zaemon* – was born in *Kyôto* in the 17th year of *Kyôhō* (1732) and belonged therefore to the *Kyôto* branch of the *Ozaki* family. But he went later to *Edo* as he was hired by the *bakufu* for a salary of 200 *koku* with the opportunity to work in the atelier of *Gotô Genjô*, the 6th gen. of the *Genbei* line. This took place in the 14th year of *Hôreki* (1763).

Ozaki Naomasa was a very skilful metalsmith and old documents that were published in the years after his death on March 20, 1782 state that his works were on par with that of the renowned *Gotô* family.



The *menuki* depict monkeys carrying bamboo upon their shoulders. An amusing facial expression is captured on the monkey as it gazes up above.





Koshirae bag

To the heavens.

