



ITEM# UJKA440

## AN ECHIZEN SEKI 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

UNSIGNED, SHINTÔ EDO PERIOD (HOREKI ERA: 1751~1753)

**Swordsmith:** *Echizen Seki school*  
**Measurements:** **Length:** 69.7cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.5cm **Moto-haba:** 2.93cm **Weight:** 705g  
**Jihada:** *Well-forged itame-hada with nagare-hada with darkish steel, chikei*  
**Hamon:** *Gorgeous ô-gunome midare with wide yaki, with yahazuba, ashi in nie-deki*  
**Certificate #1:** **NBTHK Hozon** (*sword Worthy of Preservation*)  
**Certificate #2-4:** **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fk and tsuba certified as Authentic*)  
**Included:** *Shirasaya, dragon koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description*

# SOLD

This remarkable katana has been attributed to the *Echizen Seki school* – its name originating from a group of swordsmiths that migrated to *Echizen* from *Seki* city of *Mino* province. This sword features an incredible *gunome-midare hamon* that swells the width of the body into dramatic dove-tail wave formations known as *yahazu-ba*. This splendid hamon harmonizes beautifully with the dragon and wave fittings that equally fire up the senses. A series of extreme *tameshigiri* tests were performed on this blade that include a test on June 22, 1753 where *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by *severing through two bodies [in one stroke]* and into the earthen mound below. Then, on March 13, 1756, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* prison by *severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits* and into the earthen mound below. *He then proceeded to execute a further 73 prisoners severing their heads one after another.* This is samurai intensity...



Saki-kasane: 4.4mm

Moto-kasane: 7.1mm

Omosa: 705g

Kissaki: 3.85cm

Saki-haba: 1.88cm

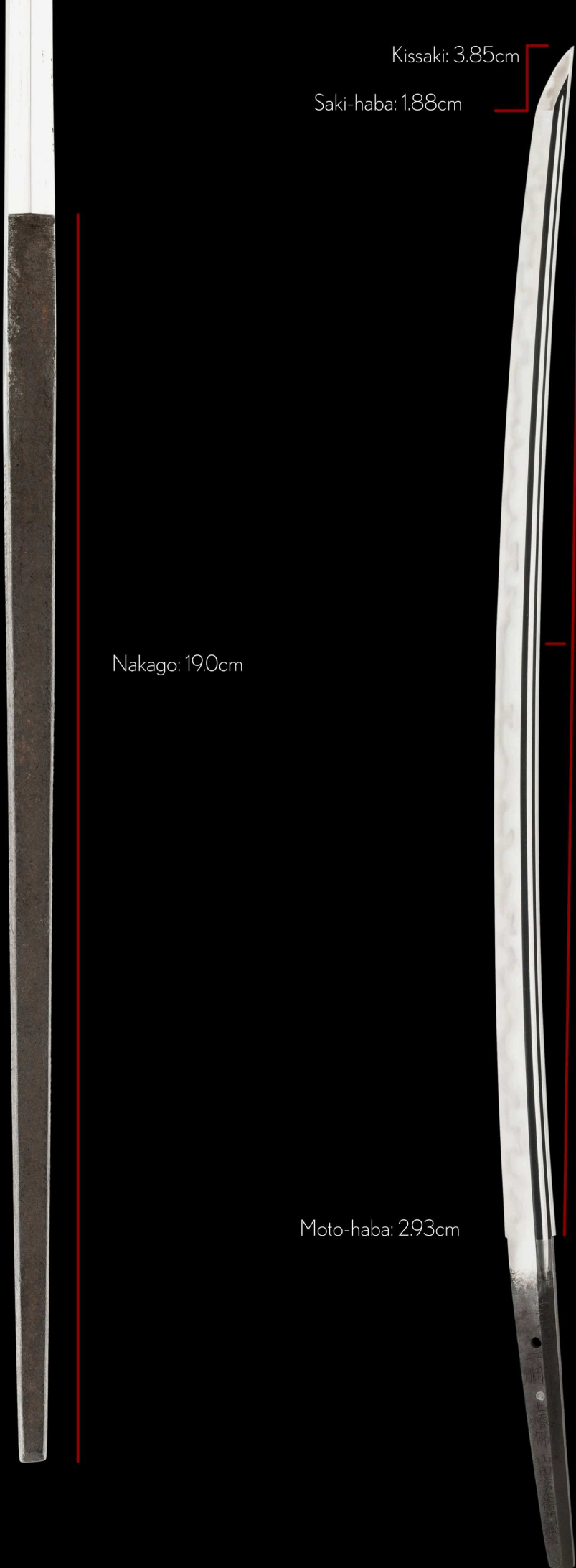
Nakago: 19.0cm

Moto-haba: 2.93cm

Nagasa: 69.7cm

Sori: 1.5cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



In the late 16th century, *Echizen* province was conquered by *Oda Nobunaga* (織田信長), and later *Shibata Katsuie* (柴田勝家) was sent to the region to build a large-scale castle, which resulted in dramatically developing the region.

Swordsmiths from *Ômi*, *Yamashiro*, *Mino*, and other areas subsequently emigrated to *Echizen* province. The group that migrated from *Seki* city of *Mino* province (modern-day *Gifu* prefecture) is formally called *Echizen Seki*, the maker attribution for this remarkable katana.

This is the kind of sword that will quicken the pulse rate of even the most stoic of individuals. Placing the sword under the light reveals an incredible *gunome-midare hamon* that swells the width of the body into dramatic dove-tail wave formations known as *yahazu-ba*. This splendid hamon harmonizes beautifully with the dragon and wave fittings that equally fire up the senses.

But it may be the *tameshigiri* (cutting tests) that truly turns heads (pun intended, you'll see). The first *tameshigiri* test chiseled onto the nakago states that on June 22, 1753, Year of the Rooster, *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by severing through two bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below.

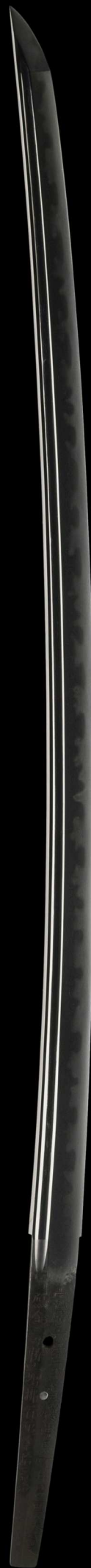
Then, on March 13, 1756, Year of the Rat, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* prison by severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits and into the earthen mound below. He then proceeded to execute a further 73 prisoners severing their heads one after another...

Markus Sesko, author of *TAMESHIGIRI*, provided this feedback after he translated the test for us:

*"this is the first time that I have seen a cutting test performed on so many heads!... he probably must have swept out the entire [Denmachô] jail that day..."*

Although this sword is rated NBTHK Hozon (as it is unsigned), make no mistake that in terms of condition of the sword, this is a Tokubetsu Hozon level of quality.

What an intense samurai collectible sword this is.



Location: *Echizen province*

School name: *Echizen Seki school*

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)

*katte-sagari yasurime* (slanting file marks)

(Futatsu) 二

(dô) 洞

(do) 土

(dan) 壇

(barai) 拂

(Yama) 山

(da) 田

(Gen) 玄

(za) 左

(e) 衛

(mon) 門

(tamesu) 試

(kore) 之

宝 (Hô)

曆 (reki)

三 (san)

酉 (tori)

六 (roku)

月 (gatsu)

廿 (nijû)

二 (ni)

日 (nichi)

於 (oite)

浅 (Asa)

草 (kusa)

*Hôreki san tori rokugatsu nijûninichi Asakusa ni oite, futatsu-dô dodan-barai Yamada Genzaemon kore o tamesu*

On the 22nd day of the sixth month in the third year of *Hôreki* era (June 22, 1753), Year of the Rooster, *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by severing through two bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below.

*Hôreki roku ne sangatsu jûsannichi Denma-chô ni oite  
Ijima Jûdayû kore o tamesu, karigane mitsuba-giri  
dodan-barai kubi oioi nanajûsan otosu*

On March 13, 1756, Year of the Rat, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* by severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits and into the earthen mound below.

He then proceeded to execute a further *73 prisoners* severing their heads one after another...

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| (Kari) 鴈  | 宝 (Hô)     |
| (gane) 金  | 曆 (reki)   |
| (mitsu) 三 | 六 (roku)   |
| (ba) 刃    | 子 (ne)     |
| (giri) 斬  | 三 (san)    |
| (do) 土    | 月 (gatsu)  |
| (dan) 壇   | 十 (jû)     |
| (barai) 拂 | 三 (san)    |
| (kubi) 首  | 日 (nichi)  |
| (oi) 追    | 於 (oite)   |
| (oi) 々    | 傳 (Den)    |
| (nana) 七  | 馬 (ma)     |
| (jû) 拾    | 町 (chô)    |
| (san) 三   | 井 (I)      |
| (otosu) 落 | 島 (jima)   |
|           | 重 (Jû)     |
|           | 太 (da)     |
|           | 夫 (yû)     |
|           | 試 (tamesu) |
|           | 之 (kore)   |



Seventy-three times



Kozukahara Execution Site

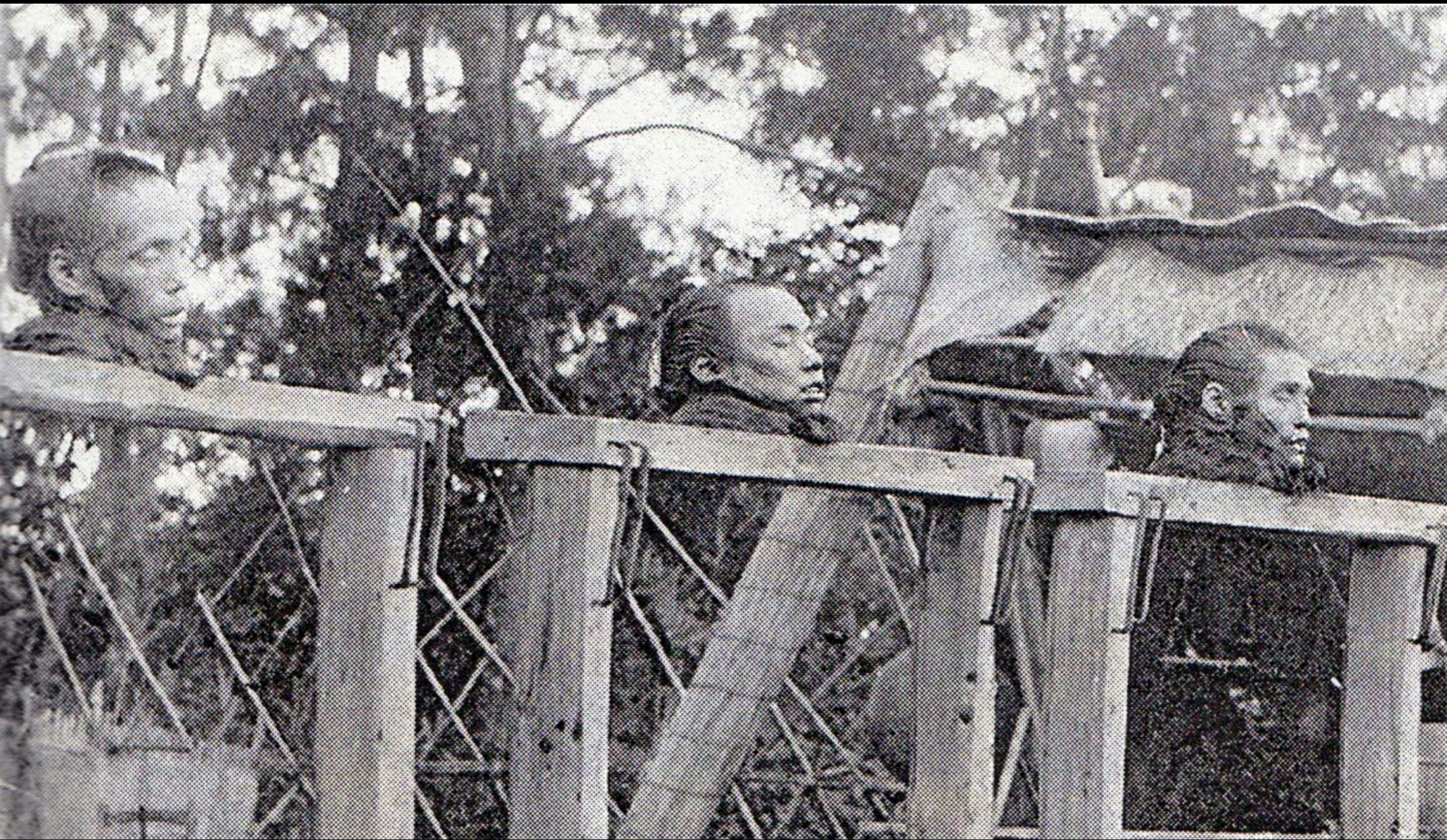


The 8th Yamada Asaemon



In *Asakusa*, there was an execution site called *Kozukahara Penitentiary*, where about **200,000** executions were carried out from its foundation in 1651 until its abolition in 1873.

Cutting tests were performed by the *Yamada Asaemon* family, but when the volume of executions became too large, apprentices performed the work. *Yamada Genzaemon* was associated with the Yamada Asaemon family.



Three decapitated heads on display at *Kurayamamisaka* execution grounds in *Yokohama*.

Photo taken by *Felice Beato* in 1869 - an Italian-British war photographer and one of the first to take photographs in East Asia. Scanned from page 113 of *Markus Sesko's* book 'TAMESHIGIRI' - History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing

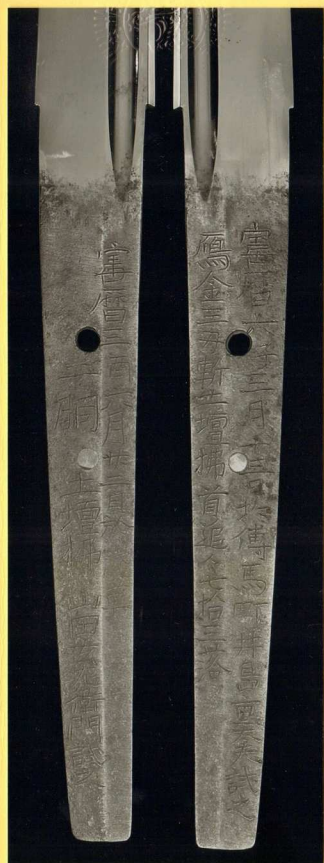


*Denma-cho Rōyashiki* was a large prison and execution site that was in operation from circa 1600 to 1875. The execution platform had a dedicated space for cutting test, called "*otameshi-ba*."

*Ijima Jūdayū* was one of the executioners.

05202303

No 3031476



山梨県 教育委員会  
第 5467 号  
昭和35年5月24日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協会



令和五年五月三十一日

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀剣と  
鑑定しこれを証する

長 二尺三寸

一、刀

(切付銘)

無銘(越前関)  
宝曆三西六月廿二日於淺草  
二胴土壇拂山田玄左衛門試之  
宝曆六子三月十三日於伝馬町井島重太夫試之  
雁金三刃斬土壇拂首追々七拾三落

無銘(越前関)

鑑定書

## NBTHK Hozon Certificate of Designation

A sword designated as *Worthy of Conservation*  
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), March 31st

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)

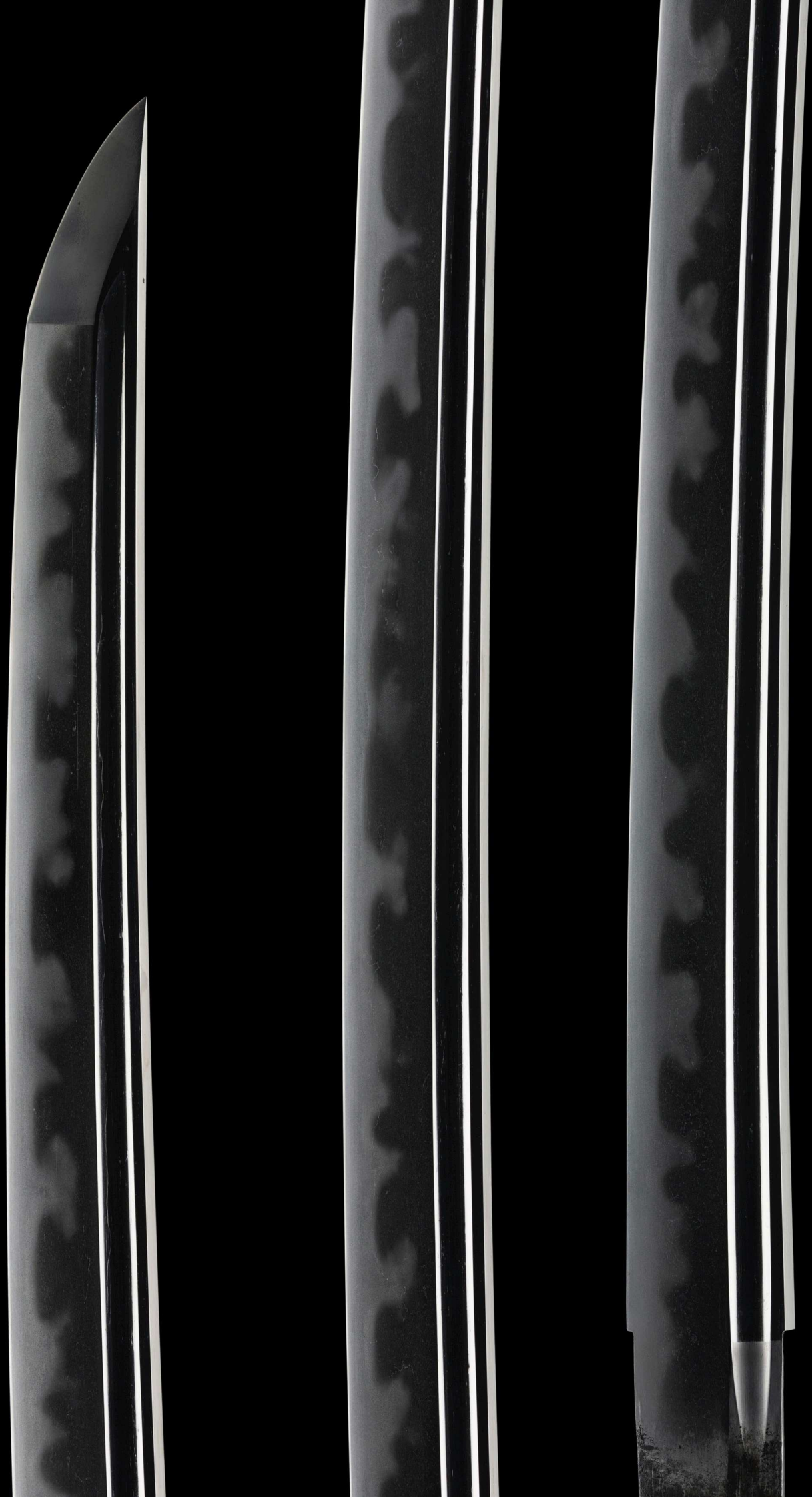
*Echizen Seki*

(*Kiritsuke-mei*) *Hôreki san tori rokugatsu nijûninichi Asakusa ni oite  
futatsu-dô dodan-barai Yamada Genzaemon kore o tamesu  
Hôreki roku ne sangatsu jûsannichi Denma-chô ni oite Ijima Jûdayû kore o tamesu  
karigane mitsuba-giri dodan-barai kubi oioi nanajûsan otosu*

*Nagasa* (length)  
2-shaku 3-sun (69.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)

\*\*As a rule of the NBTHK, any sword made from the Muromachi period onwards (1400~) that is *unsigned*, the highest level of certification will be NBTHK Hozon. In terms of quality, had this sword been signed it would surely have been granted NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon.





Full-length *bo-hi* (groove) that helps with the sword's cutting ability.



Peak performance.



Deep, courageous swells form the *gunome-midare hamon*.



yahazu-ba

Splendid dove-tail shaped *midare* elements that resemble *yahazu* (arrow notches).

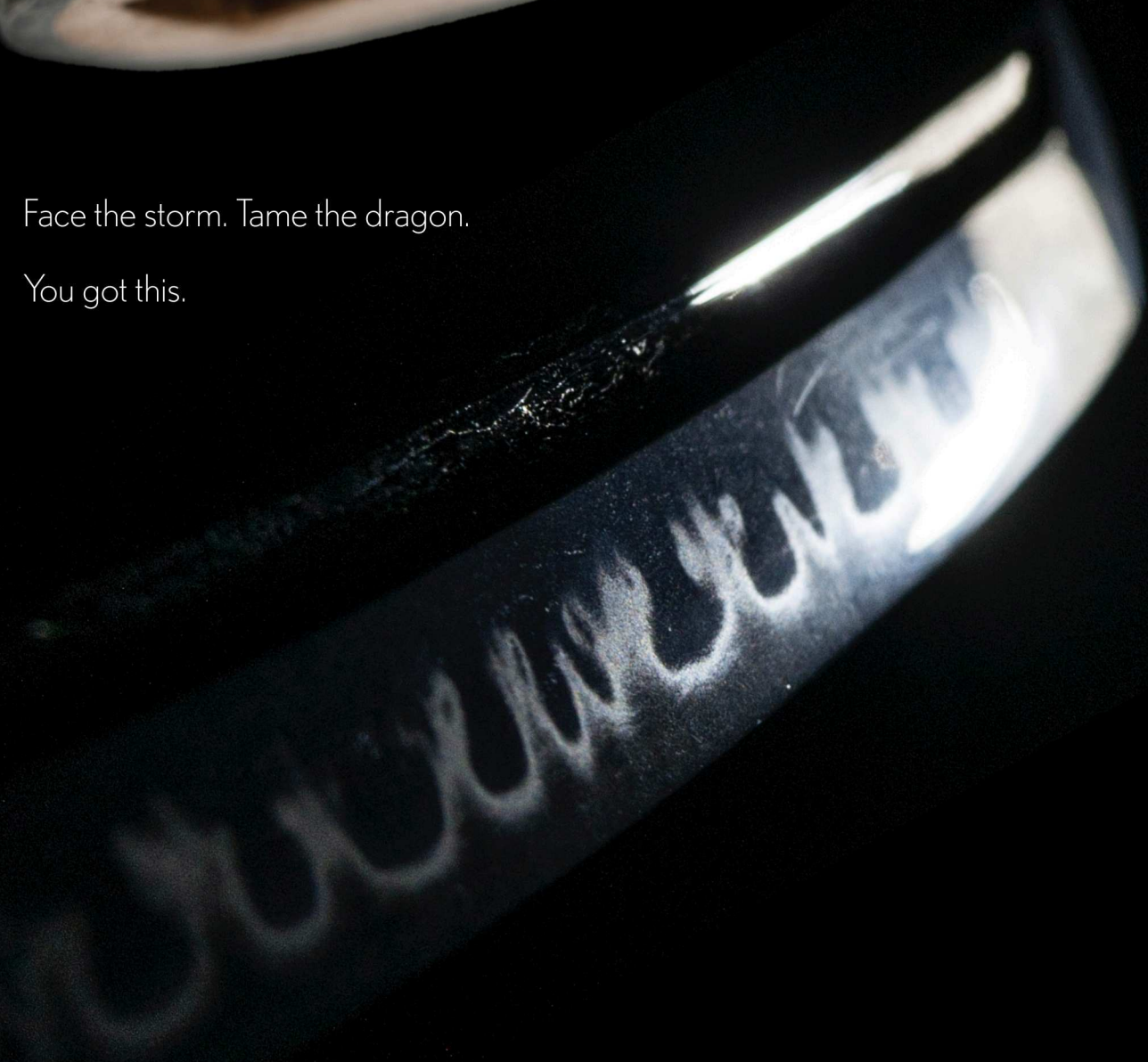


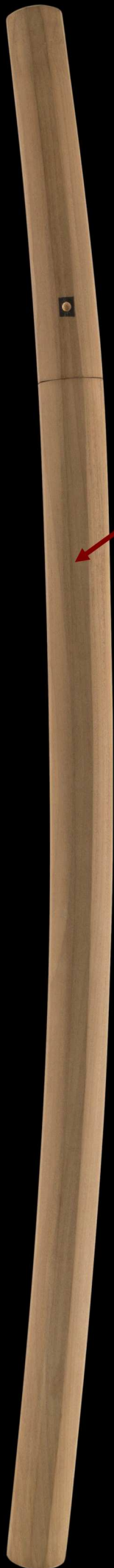
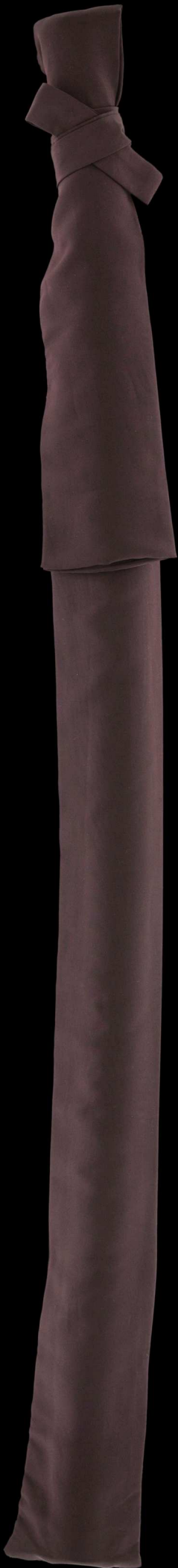
See the light. Feel the energy.



Face the storm. Tame the dragon.

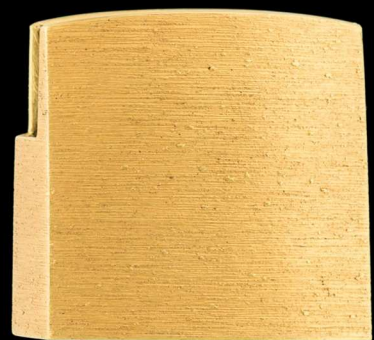
You got this.





*sayagaki* potential

*Shirasaya*  
(protective scabbard)



gold *habaki* with  
horizontal file marks

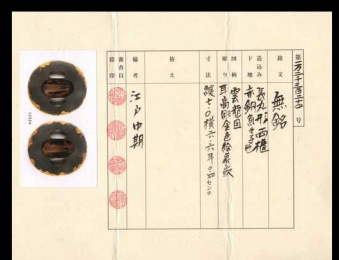
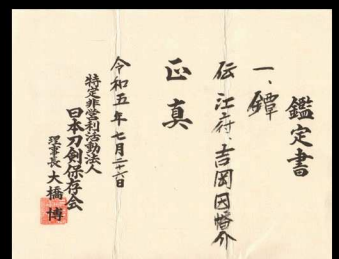




This striking *tsuba* carries cloud dragon theme with gold color accents on the rim.

The *Yoshioka Inaba no Suke* family, along with the *Gotô* family, was a prestigious family that served as the official craftsmen of the Tokugawa shogunate. Items delivered to the shogunate were mostly unsigned.

This type of work with relief and color accents on *shakudô* with *nanako* ground is the traditional technique of the family, and the more formal style found in the Edo period.





(reverse)



*Fuchi-kashira*  
attributed to  
*Yanagawa Naotsune*  
(Middle Edo period 1700~1780)

Depicting cloud dragons.

The *Yanagawa* school was founded by *Naomasa Yanagawa* (柳川直政), who was an outstanding student of *Yokoya Sômin* (横谷宗珉).

Based in *Kanda, Edo*, they specialized in works in relief with color accents on *shakudô* ground. This *fuchi-kashira* exemplifies their work.



Gold crawling dragon *menuki* guard the koshirae.

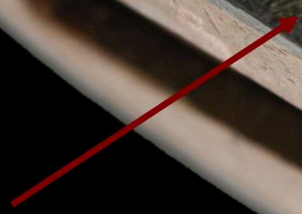
The *tsuka* (hilt) is braided in black silk with aged white *samekawa* (ray skin).



*mimi (tsuba rim)*

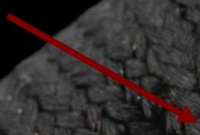


*fuchi (collar)*



Dragons at scale.

*menuki*





銃砲刀剣類登録証

登録記号番号 山梨 第 5467 号

種別 刀 長さ 六九・七 センチメートル

反り 一・五 センチメートル 目くぎ穴 壹個

銘文

表 寶歴三酉六月廿二日於浅草丁二丁目土壇場山田玄左衛門藏之  
裏 寶歴六子三月丁三日於馬所并島重太夫藏之  
裏 鷹金三及新土壇場考追々七十三ノ洛

山梨縣教育委員会

昭和卅五年五月廿四日交付



This is the original *torokusho* (handwritten registration card) for the *Echizen Seki katana*. The card was registered in May of the 35th year of *Showa era* (1960) in *Yamanashi prefecture* and one of the earliest recorded swords given a serial number of just 5467.



Koshirae bag

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