



ITEM# UJKA449

## A NORIKATSU KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, SHINSHINTÔ PERIOD (KEIÔ ERA: FEBRUARY 1866)

<b>Swordsmith:</b>	<i>Tôbu Koishikawa-kan ni oite Suifu-jû Katsumura Norikatsu (shodai)</i>
<b>Measurements:</b>	<b>Length:</b> 71.3cm ( <i>ubu</i> ) <b>Curvature:</b> 1.6cm <b>Moto-haba:</b> 3.04cm <b>Weight:</b> 915g
<b>Jihada:</b>	<i>Outstanding masame-hada with ji-nie and chikei</i>
<b>Hamon:</b>	<i>Bright suguha with sunagashi, ko-ashi, kinsuji, uchinoke and hakikake-bôshi</i>
<b>Certificate #1:</b>	<b>NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon</b> ( <i>Especially Worthy of Preservation</i> )
<b>Certificate #2-4:</b>	<b>NTHK-NPO Kanteishô</b> ( <i>koshirae, fk and tsuba certified as Authentic</i> )
<b>Fujishiro rank:</b>	<b>Jô-saku</b> ( <i>ranked as a superior swordsmith</i> )
<b>Authentication:</b>	<b>Sayagaki by Nozomi-san</b> ( <i>shodô artist</i> )
<b>Included:</b>	<i>Shirasaya, Edo-koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description</i>

# SOLD

This splendid samurai sword was crafted in February 1866 by *Katsumura Norikatsu*, one of the most accomplished smiths of the *shinshintô* period, when he was working at the *Koishikawa* residence of the *Mito* domain. The workmanship on this weighty, powerful katana is sublime, with a beaming *suguha hamon* over glorious straight grain *masame-hada* and *sunagashi* that is truly impressive. This is *Yamato-den* quality to cherish at the very highest level. An excellent set of Edo period *koshirae* captures the beauty of a crisp autumn day with fallen sun-drenched pine needles and bell crickets happily foraging in a garden. The wonderful set of *menuki* depicts a predatory hawk stalking a bear cub. This is a first-class sword crafted exclusively for the prominent *Mito daimyô* family in the final years of the formidable *Tokugawa shogunate*. It's history in your hands.



Saki-kasane: 5.6mm

Moto-kasane: 7.6mm

Kissaki: 3.76cm

Saki-haba: 2.16cm

Nagasa: 71.3cm

Nakago: 23.0cm

Sori: 1.67cm

Omosa: 915g

Moto-haba: 3.04cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



This formidable katana was crafted by one of the great smiths to collect from the *shinshintô* period. Norikatsu, born as *Katsumura Hikoroku* in *Mito* in 1809, began his sword-making journey by apprenticing under local smith *Kannai Norimune* in 1838. During his early career, he signed his works as *Norikazu* and eventually secured employment with the Mito domain, working in their *Hakamatsuka* and *Shirahatayama* arsenals.

In 1858, he sought to enhance his skills under two masters: first studying with *Unju Korekazu* in July, then with *Hosokawa Masayoshi* in November. Following his adoption by *Hosokawa Masayoshi*, he began signing his works as *Hosokawa Masanori*. Near the end of the *Bun-kyû* era (1861-1864), *Norikatsu* relocated with his entire school to the Mito domain's Edo residence in the *Koishikawa* district. He continued his craft there until his death in *Hakamatsuka*, Mito, on February 29, 1872 during the Meiji period, at age 64.

Norikatsu's work evolved significantly over his career. His early pieces reflected *Kannai Norimune*'s style, featuring *ko-chôji-midare* and *gunome-chôji*. Later, he shifted toward the *Yamato* tradition, creating a first-class *masame-hada* combined with *sunagashi-laden suguha*. Due to the Sino-Japanese reading of the character for Nori, he is also known as *Tokkatsu*.

This splendid samurai sword was crafted by *Norikatsu* when he was working at the *Koishikawa* residence of the Mito domain and has been dated to February 1866. The workmanship is sublime, with a beaming *suguha hamon* over glorious straight grain *masame-hada* that is truly impressive. This is *Yamato-den* quality at the very highest level, vying to replicate the master works of the *Hôshô* school from the Kamakura period.

The first-class set of *koshirae* that comes with the sword has been dated to the Edo period, thus the *saya* is likely original to the sword. The *tsuba* and *fuchikashira* capture the beauty of a crisp autumn day with sun-drenched pine needles and bell crickets happily foraging. While the wonderful set of *menuki* depicts a hawk sizing up a bear cub illustrating the predatory spirit of nature that the samurai deeply admired.

This is a sword crafted for a ruling *daimyô* family in the final years of the last samurai. It's history in your hands.





Location: *Mito province*

Family name: *Katsumura*

Swordsmith: *Norikatsu* (first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)

*sujikai-yasurime* (diagonal file marks)

於 (oite)

東 (Tô)

武 (bu)

小 (Ko)

石 (ishi)

川 (kawa)

館 (kan)

水 (Sui)

府 (fu)

住 (jû)

勝 (Katsu)

村 (mura)

徳 (Nori)

勝 (katsu)

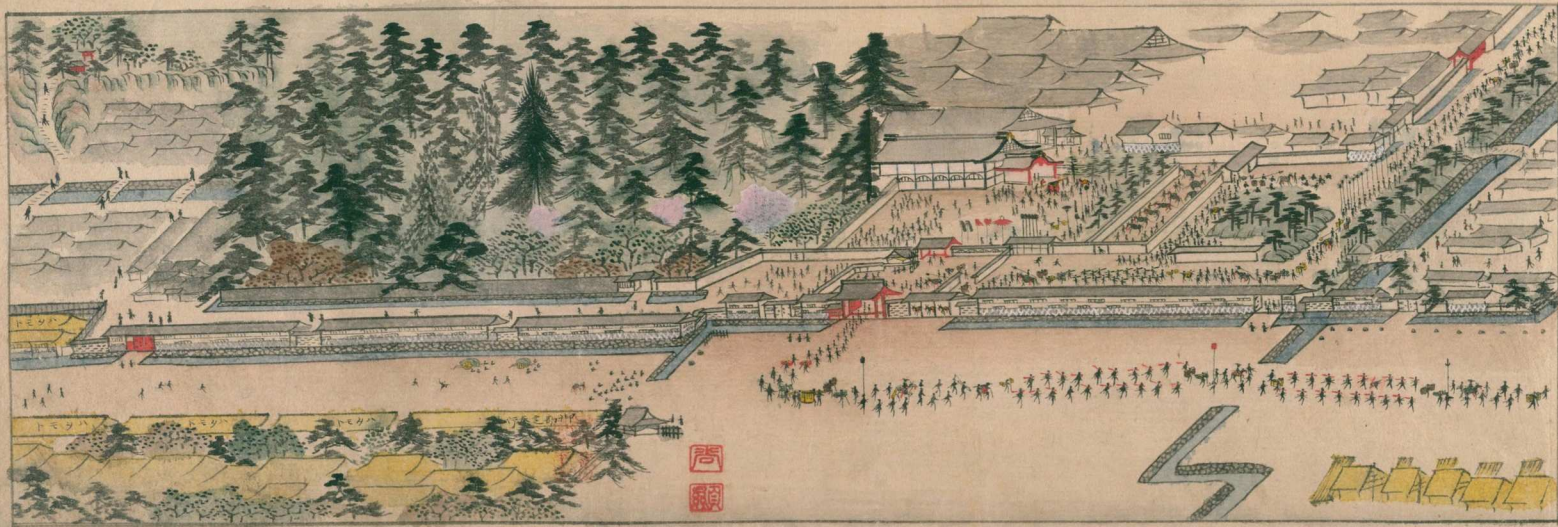
作 (tsukuru)

之 (kore, o)

*Tôbu Koishikawa-kan ni oite Suifu-jû Katsumura Norikatsu kore o tsukuru*

Crafted by Katsumura Norikatsu in the sword workshop residence of the Mito Domain in the Koishikawa district of Edo province.

## About the Koishikawa Residence



Leaving party at the Koishikawa residence for *Tokugawa Yoshiatsu* in 1863

This katana was crafted by *Katsumura Norikatsu* in the sword workshop residence of the *Mito* domain in the *Koishikawa* district of *Edo* province. The Koishikawa residential area is now a sizeable park where Tokyo Dome is located.

Koishikawa-park was founded in 1629 by *Tokugawa Yorifusa*, the first leader of Mito domain. And it was completed during the leadership of *Tokugawa Mitsukuni*, a.k.a. *Mito Kômon*, the second leader.

In 1866, when *Norikatsu* crafted the sword, the tenth leader of the Mito domain was *Tokugawa Yoshiatsu*, successor of *Tokugawa Nariaki* and brother of *Tokugawa Yoshinobu*, the final *shogun* of Japan's Edo period.

Not afraid of getting his hands dirty, *Yoshiatsu* crafted swords just like *Nariaki* (whose smith name of *Rekko*), and Norikatsu was Yoshiatsu's *sensei* (teacher)!

Unfortunately Yoshiatsu died of a severe disease in 1868 at the age of 37. Due to his short life, there are no photos or paintings of Yoshiatsu. Above is a painting of the *Koishikawa* residence, the park, and of a leaving party for *Yoshiatsu* in 1863, making his way to *Kyôto*.



*Tokugawa Nariaki*  
1800-1860



*Tokugawa Yoshinobu*  
1837-1913



*Tokyo Dome*

*Keiô ni Hinoe-Toradoshi Nigatsu-hi*

Dated on a day in the second month in the second year of *Keiô* era in the Year of the Tiger (February 1866)

(Kei) 慶

(ô) 應

(ni) 二

(Hinoe) 丙

(Tora) 寅

(doshi) 年

(Ni) 二

(gatsu) 月

(hi) 日



特 選  
01201912

№ 1012655



鑑定書

一刃 銘

於東武小石川館水府住勝村徳勝作之  
慶應三丙寅年二月日

長二尺三寸五分半

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

令和二年二月十九日

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 37134 号  
昭和27年7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 2nd year of Reiwa (2020), February 19th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

*Tobu Koishikawa-kan ni oite Suifu-ju Katsumura Norikatsu kore o tsukuru  
Kei-ô-ni Hinoe-Toradoshi Nigatsu-hi*

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 3-sun 5-bu han (71.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)



於東武小石川館水府住勝村德勝作之  
*Tôbu Koishikawa-kan ni oite Suifu jû Katsumura Norikatsu  
kore o tsukuru*  
Crafted by Katsumura Norikatsu in the sword workshop  
residence of the Mito Domain (daimyô) in the Koishikawa  
district of Edo province

慶應二丙寅年二月日  
*Keiô ni hinoe-toradoshi nigatsu hi*  
Dated on a day in the second month in the second year of Keiô era  
Year of the Tiger (February 1866)

刃長貳尺參寸五分半有之  
*Hachô 2-shaku 3-sun 5-bu han kore ari*  
Blade length 71.3 cm

令和六甲辰年葉月吉日誌之  
*Reiwa roku kinoe-tatsudoshi Hazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*  
Written on a lucky day in the eighth month in the sixth year of  
Reiwa era during the Year of the Dragon (August 2024)







A brilliant *hakikake* (sweeping) *bôshi* in the *kissaki* (tip) that gently turns back (*kaeri*).



A close-up photograph of a sword blade, showing the intricate patterns of the metal. The blade is curved and has a dark, metallic finish. A red arrow points to a specific area on the blade, labeled 'sunagashi (sweeping sands)'. Another red arrow points to a different area, labeled 'masame-hada (straight grain)'. The background is dark, making the blade stand out.

*sunagashi* (sweeping sands)

The impressiveness of *masame-hada* cannot be overemphasized. As a sword smith, it takes remarkable skill (and frankly) guts to do it. Unless the blade is forged perfectly, the blade can easily separate at one of the hundreds of tiny parallel layers, thus forming *hada-ware*.


Masame elegance. Cherish it.

*masame-hada* (straight grain)

*masame-hada*  
go with the flow

A beaming *suguha hamon* lights  
the way forward.

Take charge.



*ashi* (legs)



Symmetry is excellence.

Small crescent moons that appear above the *hamon* are called *uchinoke*.

*Uchinoke* is a rare *hataraki* (activity) that is generally found on swords from the Ko-Naminohira school, *Rai family*, *Yamashiro Sanjo* and *Yamato Tegai* schools.

It's a wonderful achievement to replicate this during the shinshinto period.

*uchinoke*





*Shirasaya*  
(protective scabbard)

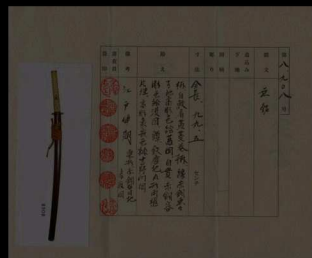
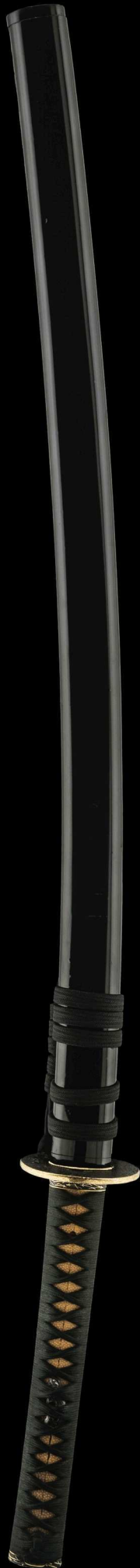


A silver-wrapped *habaki* with vertical file marks that echoes the straight-grain of the sword.

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

*Uchigatana-koshirae  
lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the  
Late Edo period  
(1866~1868)



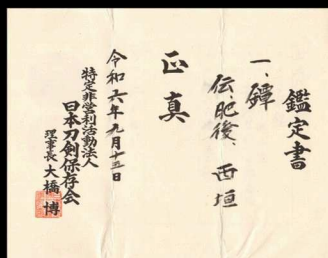
*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho  
Certificate of Authenticity*



bell cricket

This lovely *tsuba* depicts an autumn scene with foraging bell crickets in a leafy garden scene. The bell cricket (*suzumushi*) holds a special place in Japanese culture, where it has historically been kept as a cherished pet. These insects were housed in ornate cages that their owners would carry with them. The *suzumushi* is particularly renowned for its melodious chirping.

The *tsuba* has been attributed to *Kôgo Yoshitoshi* circa the *Taishô* period (1912~1926).





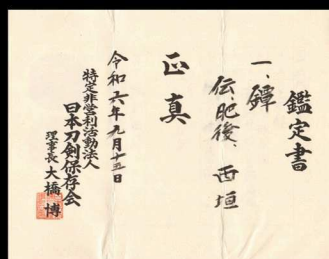
This stunning *fuchi-kashira* captures the subtle beauty of fallen, sun-drenched pine needles. It is likely that this design was selected due to the many pine trees in nearby *Koishikawa* park where this sword was crafted.





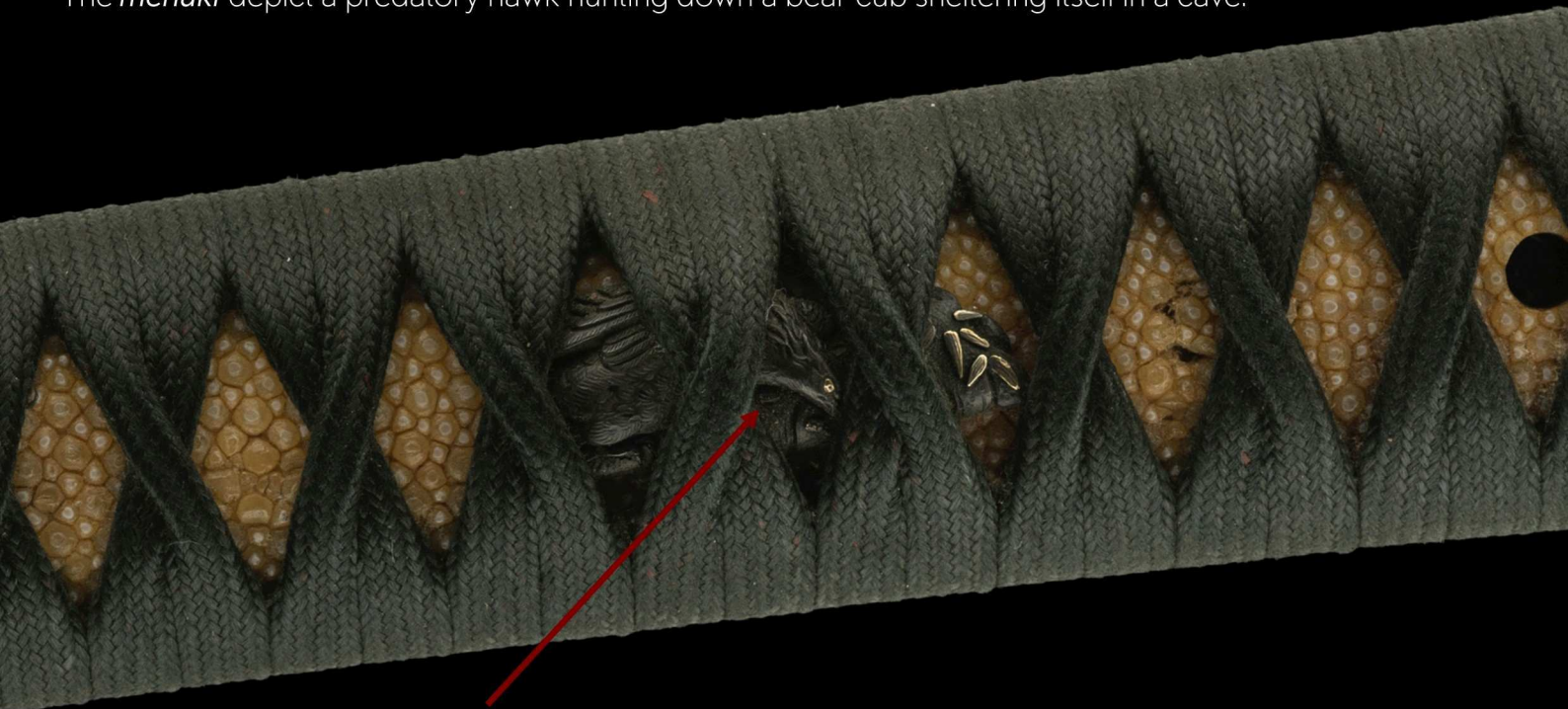
*Kashira*  
(depicting fallen pine needles)

Attributed to *Kusakari Kiyosada* from *Mutsu* province



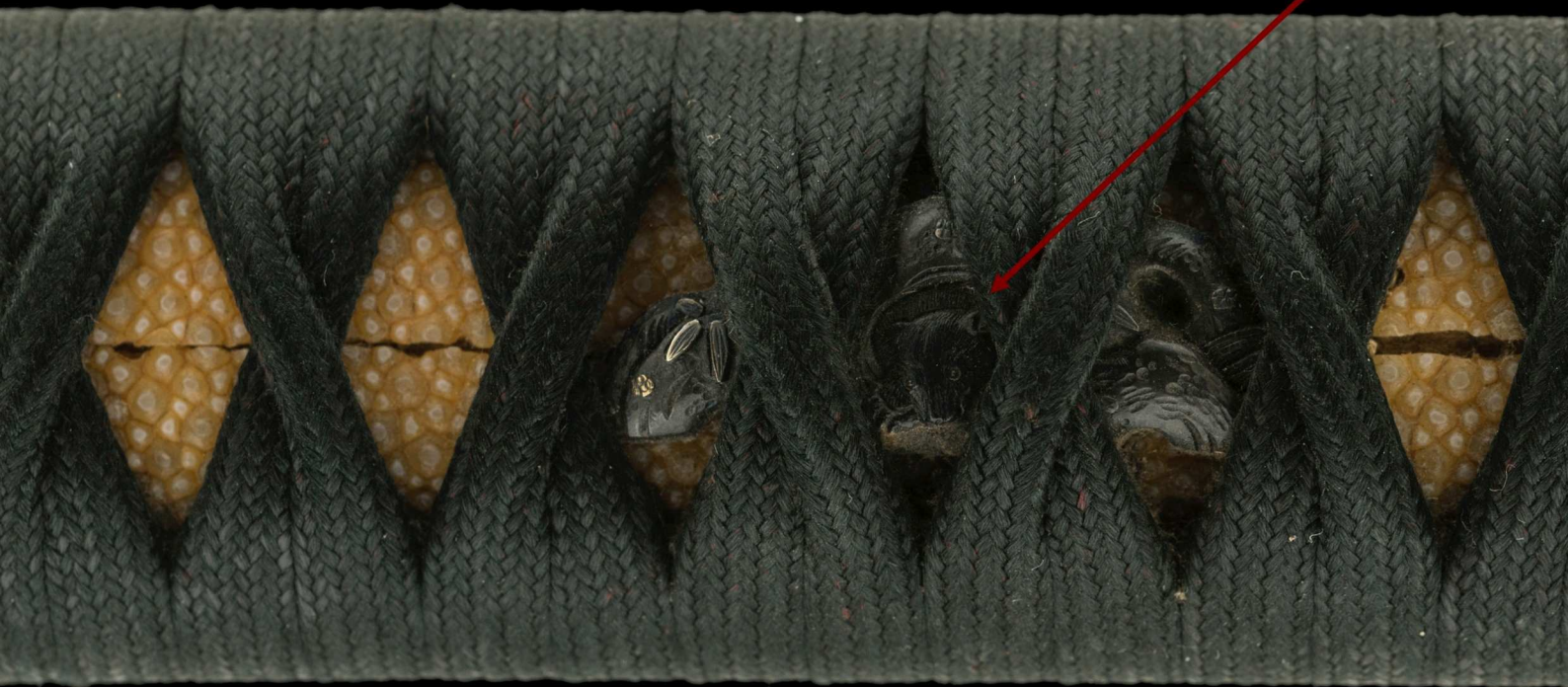


The *menuki* depict a predatory hawk hunting down a bear cub sheltering itself in a cave.



hawk

bear cub

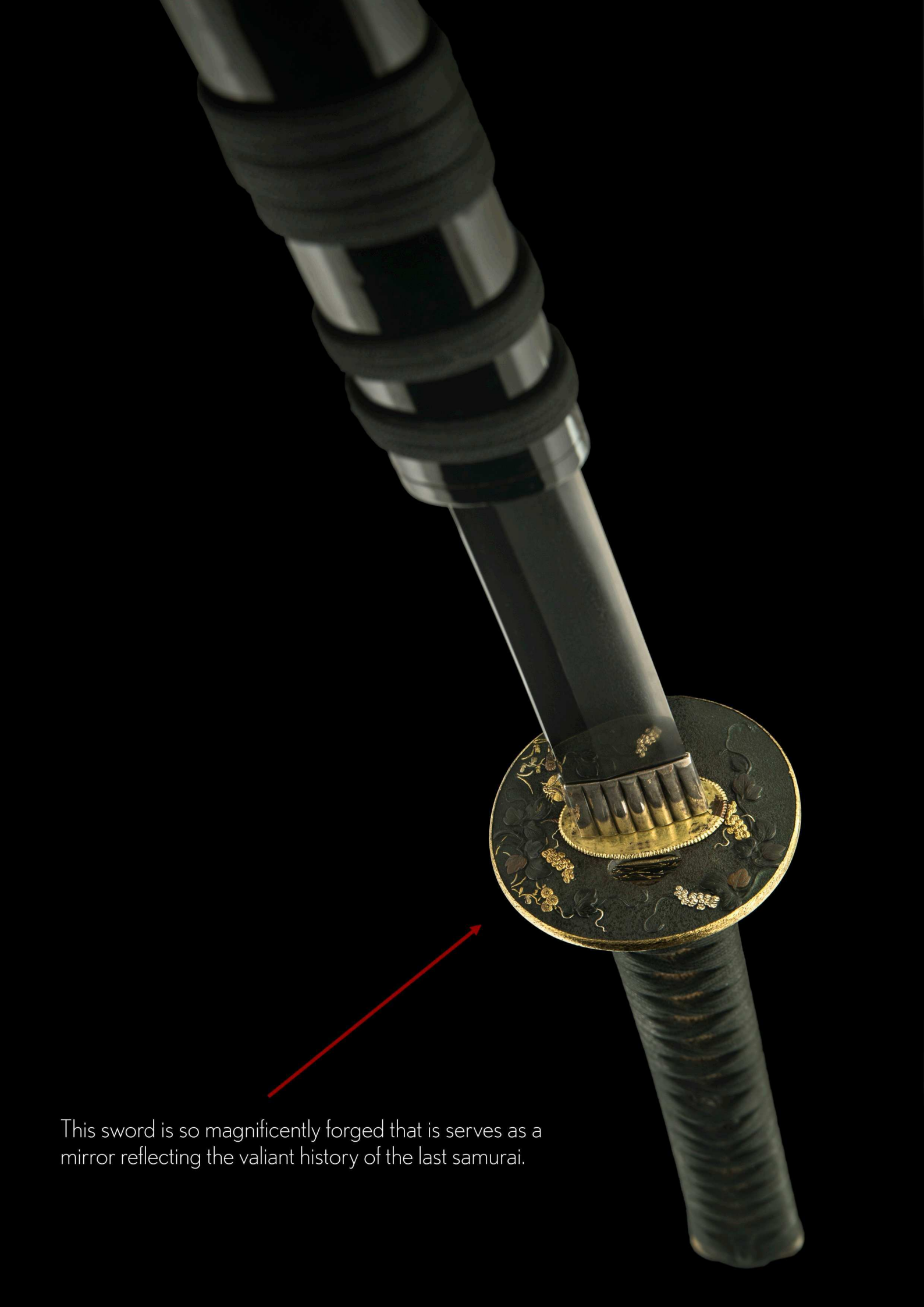




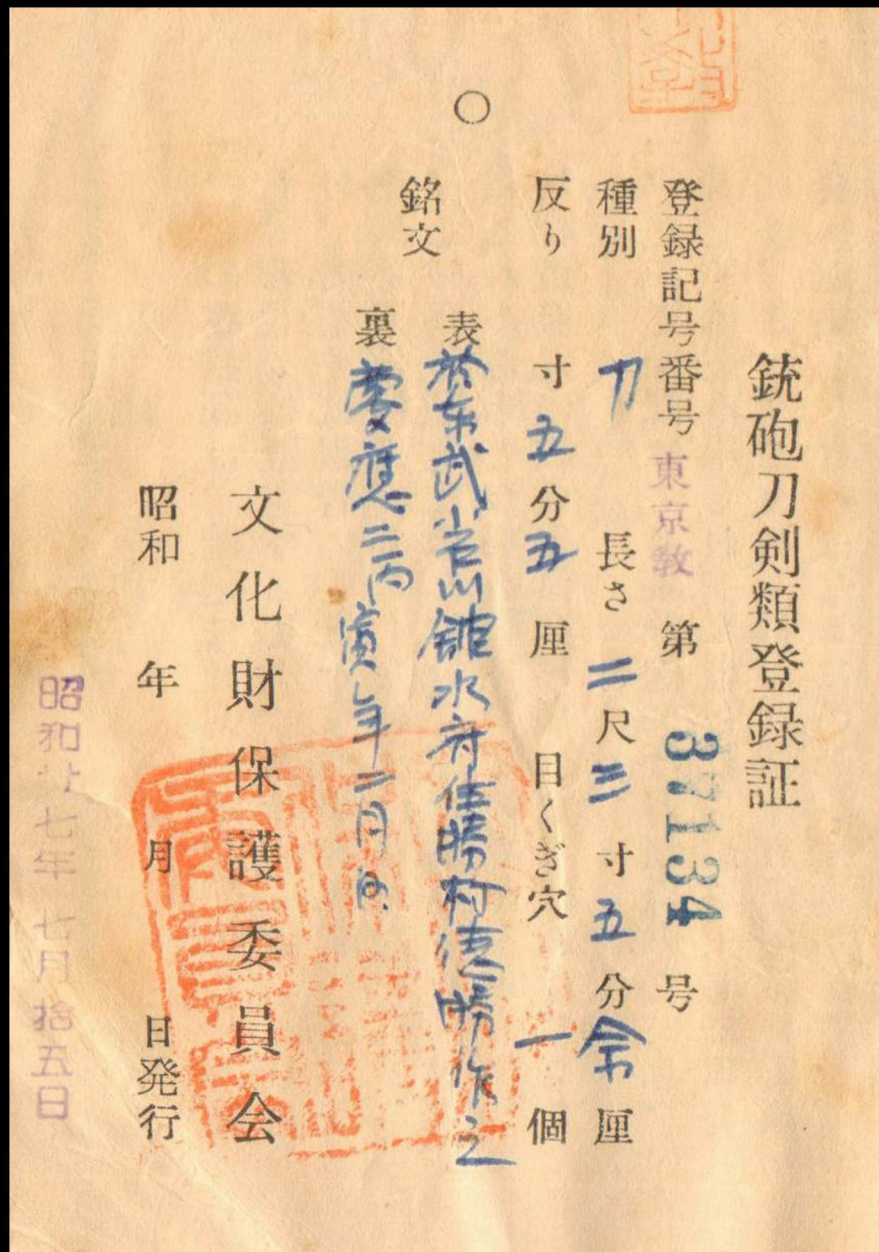
Well-aged *samekawa* (ray skin) is wrapped over with a classic *hishimaki* braid.

And the hawk looks on...





This sword is so magnificently forged that it serves as a mirror reflecting the valiant history of the last samurai.



This is the original *torokusho* (registration card) for the *Norikatsu katana*. The card was registered in the 27th year of Showa (1952).

1952 was the second year that swords were formally registered in Japan. Many former *daimyō* (great) families were invited to submit their collections and we know by the *nakago* that this sword was once the property of the *Mito* domain of the *Tokugawa* family.

The serial number is 37134 and was registered in *Tokyo* where the sword was originally crafted.



Koshirae bag



Recently Completed Custom Koshirae

ujwa173

A Hankei Wakizashi

Shintô Saijô-saku (grandmaster)

NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon

NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku

Antique fittings from the Mino school



91997010



鑑定書  
一秋堂同録  
古江流傳正字堂流傳特別保存刀装具  
鑑定し之を証す。  
平成九年十月八日  
日本刀剣保存会