



ITEM# UJKA468

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

A MORIHIRO 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

UNSIGNED, KOTÔ LATE NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (1390~1394)

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Swordsmith: | <i>Chiyôzuru Morihiko</i> (千代鶴守弘) |
| Measurements: | Length: 69.2cm Sori: 1.4cm Moto-haba: 3.08cm Weight: 820g |
| Jihada: | <i>Beautifully forged itame-hada and mokume-hada, dark jigane with ample chikei</i> |
| Hamon: | <i>Bright ko-gunome based on suguha, kinsuji, kaen-bôshi, sunagashi, ashi & nijuba</i> |
| Certificate #1: | NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (<i>Especially Worthy of Preservation</i>) |
| Certificates #2-4: | NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (<i>koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic</i>) |
| Fujishiro rank: | Jô-saku (<i>ranked as a superior swordsmith</i>) |
| Authentication: | Sayagaki by Tanzan-sensei (<i>Tanobe Michihiro</i>) |
| Included: | Shirasaya, koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description |

\$25,000

This powerful and extra sharp katana has been attributed to *Chiyozuru Morihiko*, a talented swordsmith who worked in *Echizen* during the late *Nambokuchô* period and into the *Oei* era of the *Muromachi* period. The blade displays a fine *koshi-zori* curvature and rich, dark *jigane* with abundant *chikei* and flows with *itame* and *mokume-hada*. Its bright *hamon* is based on *suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, abundant *ashi*, *sunagashi*, *kinsuji*, and areas of *nijuba*. *Kinzogan-mei* on the *nakago* confirms this blade severed a human body through the armpit region during a *tameshigiri* cutting test. *Kotô* period swords with cutting tests are exceptionally rare to collect. The handsome *koshirae* features a striped *senden-nuri saya* and a *tsuba* depicting the heroic *Minamoto Yorimasa*, plus splendid *fuchi-kashira* of the open sea - both crafted by *Munetoshi* of the famed *Nara* school.

^
Saki-kasane: 5.4mm

Moto-kasane: 7.4mm

Kissaki: 3.15cm
Saki-haba: 2.04cm

Nagasa: 69.2cm

Nakago: 20.0cm

Sori: 1.4cm

Omosa: 820g

great weight

Moto-haba: 3.08cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



The *Chiyozuru* school began with *Rai Kuniyasu* (来国安) of *Yamashiro* (*Kyôto*), a disciple of the renowned *Rai Kunitoshi* (来国俊). Around 1337, Kuniyasu travelled to *Echizen* searching for the ideal spring water to forge his swords. He found it in *Takefu* and established his forge there permanently. Upon settling in *Echizen*, *Kuniyasu* adopted the name *Chiyozuru* (lit. a 'thousand cranes') founding what became known as *Echizen Rai* (越前来).

This weighty, powerful and extra sharp katana has been attributed to *Chiyozuru Morihiro* (千代鶴守弘), a talented swordsmith who worked in *Echizen* during the late *Nanbokuchô* period and into the *Ôei* era (1394~1428) of the early *Muromachi* period. Morihiro is regarded as either the son or a disciple of *Rai Kuniyasu*. The name *Morihiro* was carried by several generations of smiths that contributed to sword development in *Echizen* during the *Muromachi* era.

The fine *koshi-zori* curvature dates this katana to the very late *Nanbokuchô* period (~1390). The NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate confirms this - as the NBTHK only awards *mumei* (unsigned) swords this level of certification when they can be dated prior to the *Muromachi* period.

The rich and dark *jihada* shows plenty of *chikei* and flows with *itame-hada* and *mokume*. The bright *hamon* is based on *suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, plenty of saw-tooth *ashi* (legs), *sunagashi*, *kinsuji*, areas of *nijuba* and a fabulous *kaen-bôshi* that sits confidently like a lit candle.

What gives this sword extra presence is the *hiragana* and *kanji kinzôgan* (gold inlay inscription) on the *nakago* that reads *karigane-otoshi* - recording that this katana severed a human body in one stroke through the armpit region during *tameshigiri* (test cutting). It is a rare opportunity to acquire a *kotô* period sword that has undergone a cutting test. The test itself was likely performed during the *shintô* period, circa mid-1600s.

The handsome *koshirae* features a black lacquered *saya* with a striped *senden-nuri* and a wonderful *tsuba* depicting the heroic *Minamoto Yoritomo* and a splendid *fuchikashira* of the open sea that were both crafted by *Munetoshi* of the highly respected *Nara* school. There is tremendous energy to be found in this katana, well-balanced in both sword and story.





WATCH PABLO'S YOUTUBE PRESENTATION OF
UJKA468 - A MORIHIRO 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

[UNIQUEJAPAN.COM/UJKA468-VIDEO](https://uniquejapan.com/ujka468-video)





Location: *Echizen province*

School name: *Chiyozuru*

Swordsmith: *Morihiro*

ô-suriage-nakago (altered tang)

kiri-yasurime (horizontal file marks)

At the time of *ô-suriage*, the *nakago-jiri* was finished in a horizontal *kiri-jiri* form. This style is characteristic of blades shortened during the *Keichô* era (1596~1615), the period following the death of *Toyotomi Hideyoshi* when *Tokugawa Iyasu* achieved the unification of the realm.

The shortening was tastefully executed, clean, well-balanced shape.

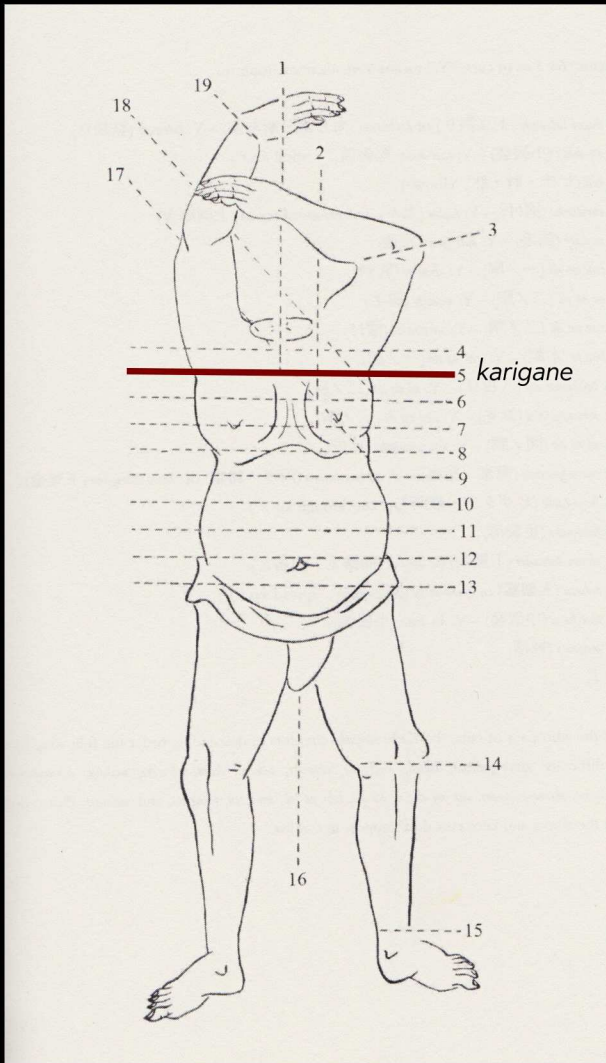
nakago-jiri



As seen in gold inlay, this katana has severed a human body in one stroke, attesting to the sharpness of the blade.

The *tameshigiri* term *karigane* refers to a cut through the armpit region - literally "the area where armpit hair grows."

While we don't know when the test was performed, it would likely have been during the *shintô* period, circa mid-1600s.



Cutting test on a dead prisoner's body



か (Ka)
り (ri)
が (ga)
ね (ne)
落 (otoshi)

(*ura*, reverse)

A close-up, vertical view of a dark, textured metal blade, likely a katana, against a black background. Two circular holes are visible on the blade's surface. To the right of the holes, the Japanese characters 'かりかき' (karikaki) are inscribed in a cursive, gold-inlaid style. The characters are arranged vertically: 'か' (ka) is at the top, followed by 'り' (ri), then 'か' (ka), and 'き' (ki) at the bottom.

かりかき

Kotô period swords, especially katana, with *tameshigiri* cutting tests are exceptionally rare. The cursive gold-inlay of *hiragana* and *kanji* characters has been beautifully inscribed.

特 保
01201906

No 1012109



鑑定書

一 刀 無銘 (千代鶴守弘)
(金象嵌) かりがね落

長二尺二寸八分強

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

令和元年八月二十六日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



福岡県 教育委員会
第 99147 号
平成14年3月20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 1st year of Reiwa (2019), August 26th

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Chiyozuru Morihiro
(Kinzôgan) karigane-otoshi

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 8-bu kyô (69.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)







Thick *nie* that forms *kaen* (candle flame) *bôshi*.




kaen bôshi



The *jihada* comprises of *mokume* (burl grain) mixed with *itame-hada*, plank grain.

textbook example of *kinsuji*



A dark, rather mysterious *jigane* (steel) that reflects the *Hokurikudô* region where this sword was made in *Echizen*.

ashi


The *hamon* is based on *suguha* with a tight *ko-midare* and brilliant saw-tooth *ashi* that extend to the cutting edge.



A bright hamon ripples along the blade like sunlight on the sea.



Rich *chikei* flows handsomely through the curved sword.

A close-up photograph of a katana blade, showing the hamon (temper line) on both sides. The blade is dark, and the hamon is highlighted by a bright light source. Two red arrows point to the hamon on the upper and lower edges of the blade. The hamon on both sides is split and runs somewhat parallel to each other.

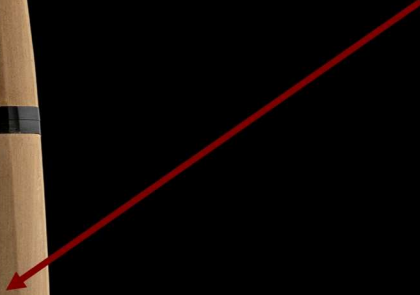
This katana displays *nijûbu-ba* on both sides of the sword - a unique trait where the hamon splits and runs somewhat parallel.



Claim your piece of samurai history.



Tanobe-sensei sayagaki potential



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

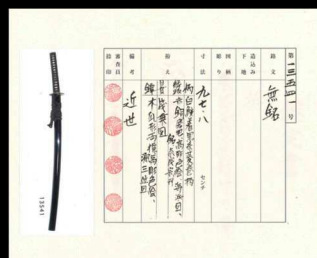
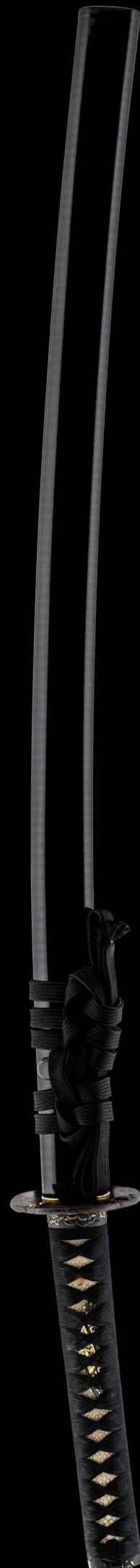
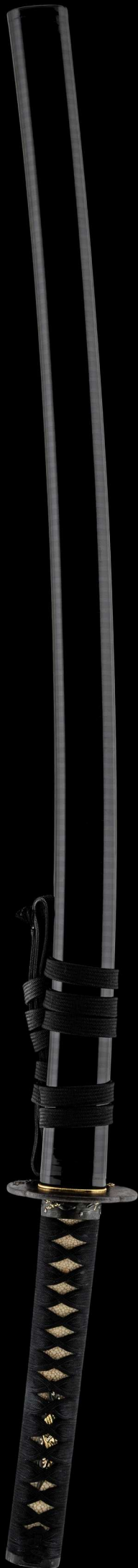


silver *habaki* with
rainfall carvings

*Kuro-ro sendan-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂千段塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black
with stripes*

Crafted during the
Modern era



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



The *saya* is beautifully finished in *sendan-nuri*, a striped lacquer pattern.

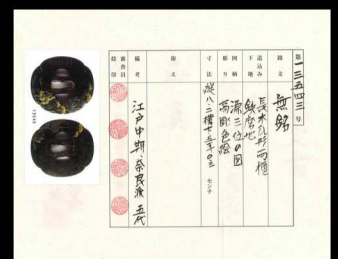
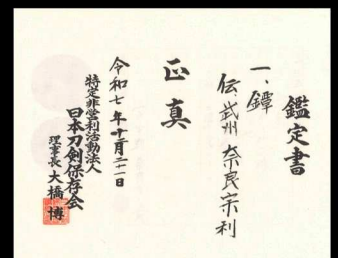


Minamoto Yorimasa

This striking *tsuba* has been attributed to *Munetoshi*, fifth-generation master of the *Nara* school, working in the mid-Edo period. The figure on horseback playing a flute is *Minamoto Yorimasa* - a *samurai* whose failed rebellion changed the course of Japanese history.

In the late *Heian* period, resentment toward the powerful *Taira* clan was building within the imperial court. *Yorimasa* joined forces with Prince *Mochihito* to challenge their dominance, but their uprising was crushed. *Yorimasa's* defiance didn't die with him - it inspired *Minamoto Yoritomo* to take up the cause, sparking the *Genpei War* (1180-1185). The *Taira* fell, the *Kamakura* shogunate rose, and the *samurai* age truly began.

Even defeat can shape destiny.





Ino Hayata



Yorimasa and Hayata



Nue monster

The figure on the reverse, carrying a *tachi*, is thought to represent *Ino Hayata* (猪早太), who served *Yorimasa*. The two are famous for slaying the *Nue* (鵺), a legendary monster that terrorized the imperial court.

The motif captures something essential - two warriors who faced down a demon together, then dared to challenge an empire. Loyalty. Courage against impossible odds. The resolve to stand for what's right, even when defeat is certain.



The white *samekawa* (ray skin) beneath the wrap gives the *tsuka* a formal, refined presence. The *tsuka-ito* appears to be standard black - until you look closer. The cord is finer than usual, a subtle detail that rewards careful observation.



The *menuki* show a figure on a raft, navigating rough waves, and harnessing its power. The wrap deliberately obscures the design - a glimpse of hidden strength.





(Na) 奈
(ra) 良
(Mune) 宗
(toshi) 利



Fuchi-kashira
depicting a home by the seashore

This marvellously detailed *fuchi-kashira* is also by *Munetoshi* of the *Nara* school - a signed piece that brings further harmony to the *koshirae*. The artwork shows a residence beyond pine trees along the seashore - as if we are viewing the scene from a distance.



mei (signature)

come sail away...



koshirae bag with iconic Japanese patterns

ARIGATO!

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