



ITEM# UJKA472

## A TOMOTSUGU KATANA

UNSIGNED, KOTÔ MUROMACHI PERIOD (ÔEI ERA: 1394~1428)

**Swordsmith:** *Uda Tomotsugu* (宇多友次)  
**Measurements:** **Length:** 81.6cm (!) **Sori:** 1.7cm **Moto-haba:** 2.88cm **Weight:** 740g  
**Jihada:** *Fabulous pools of itame and mokume-hada, flowing masame and dark chikei*  
**Hamon:** *Bright suguha with kinsuji, uchinoke, sunagashi and kuichigaiba*  
**Certificate #1-2:** **NBTHK Hozon** (sword and tsuba Worthy of Preservation)  
**Certificate #3-4:** **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (koshirae and fk certified as Authentic)  
**Included:** Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

**SOLD**

*Uda Tomotsugu* was a prominent early smith of the *Uda* school, which relocated from *Yamato* province to *Etchû* in the late *Kamakura* to *Nanbokuchô* period. The school combines the disciplined craftsmanship of the *Yamato* tradition with elements of the *Sôshû* tradition. This exceptionally long katana at over 81cm is a rare reference piece that embodies the transition point from a *Kamakura* period *tachi* to that of a *Muromachi* period katana. The *jigane* is a lovely mix of *itame* and *mokume-hada* mixed with classic *Yamato-den masame*. The *hamon* is a bright *suguha* with impactful *hataraki*, such as *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and crescent-moon *uchinoke*. The accompanying Edo-period *koshirae* is set in a glossy black *saya* with gold-accented details, featuring a stunning *Muromachi* period *Ko-Kinkô* wave-motif *tsuba*, crab-themed *fuchi-kashira*, and terrific lobster *menuki*. This katana is such a wonderful find and will become an adored addition for any Japanese sword collector.



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Moto-kasane: 6.6mm

Kissaki: 2.75cm  
Saki-haba: 1.73cm

Nagasa: 81.6cm

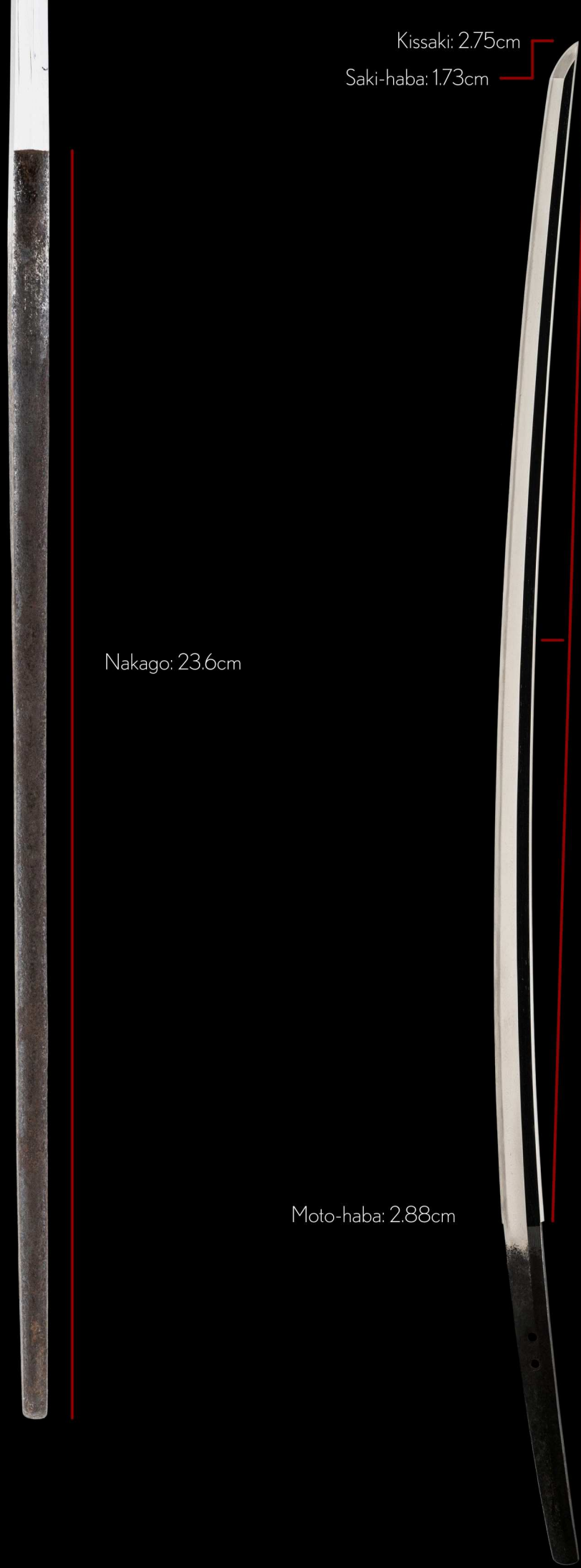
Nakago: 23.6cm

Sori: 1.7cm

Omosa: 740g

Moto-haba: 2.88cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



*Uda Tomotsugu* (宇多友次) was a prominent early smith of the *Uda* school, which relocated from *Yamato* province to *Etchû* in the late *Kamakura* to *Nanbokuchô* period. The school's founder, *Ko-Nyûdô Kunimitsu* (古入道国光), is said to have moved to *Etchû* in the *Bunpô* era (1317~1319), establishing a lineage of smiths – such as *Kunifusa* (国房), *Kunimune* (国宗), and *Kunitsugu* (国次) – known for combining the disciplined craftsmanship of the *Yamato* tradition with elements of the *Sôshû* tradition, likely through exposure to *Norishige* (則重) and his circle.

*Tomotsugu*, a direct disciple or close successor of *Kunimitsu*, was active from the late 14th century with blades attributed between the *Eitoku* and early *Ôei* eras (1381~1428) especially valued.

This exceptionally long katana at over 81cm is a fascinating piece as it is a *tachi* in length, however, the curvature is slightly more shallow than *tachi* found in the 1200s to 1300s. We therefore asked a judge at the NBTHK (in person) two important questions:

- When did he think Tomotsugu crafted the sword?
- Whether he thought the sword was *ubu-nakago*?

The response was so interesting. Age wise, the sword can be dated to the first era of the *Muromachi* period *Ôei* (1394~1428). And to the question of *ubu-nakago* the answer was 'yes', with possibly a slight *machi-okuri*.

*Piecing this information together, what we have here is a rare reference piece that demonstrates the transition point from a Kamakura period tachi to that of a Muromachi period katana.* The katana truly came into being further in the *Muromachi* period, by the early 1400s where swords were drawn from a standing position rather than on horseback like the *tachi* was.

The *jigane* is a well-forged *itame* and *mokume-hada* mixed with flowing *masame*, showing clear *Yamato* influence. The *hamon* is a tight *suguha* with subtle undulations and scattered *hotsure*, imparting beauty and refinement. The accompanying *koshirae* is unified by a water theme. Set in a glossy black *saya* with gold-accented details, it features a wave-motif *tsuba*, crab-themed *fuchi-kashira*, and terrific lobster *menuki*.

This katana is such a wonderful find and will become a super addition for any Japanese sword collector.





Location: *Etchû province*

Swordsmith: *Tomotsugu* (1st or 2nd generation)

Period: *Ôei era* (1394~1428)

*ubu-nakago* (unaltered, possible slight *machi-okuri*)

*katte-sagari-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

It is a rare opportunity to claim a sword that is over 600 years old and essentially in its original shape. The vast majority of swords from this time period or older are *ô-suriage* (greatly shortened).

With a *nakago* of 23.6cm and cutting edge of 81.6cm, the bare blade measures a whopping 105.2cm (41.5 inches).

The *nakago* ends in a *kuri-jiri* shape, rounded like a chestnut – with a slight upward angle at the base (*ha-agari kuri-jiri*). This distinctive form, where the tang slopes upward toward the cutting edge, is a trait often seen in early *Uda* workmanship.

Among *Uda*-attributed blades, the *ha-agari kuri-jiri* style is particularly noted in pieces bearing strong associations with *Tomotsugu*.

*ha-agari kurijiri* →

(*ura*, reverse)



保 存  
05202309

No 3033232

鑑 定 書

一、刀無銘（宇多友次）

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

令和五年十二月十五日

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 326452 号  
令和5年6月17日

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), December 15th

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)  
*Uda Tomotsugu*

*Nagasa* (length)  
2-shaku 6-sun 9-bu (81.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)





A long, impressive line of *chikei*.



Fabulous pools *mokume* and *itame hada* are on full display to enjoy.

*mokume-hada*

*itame-hada*





A bright hamon based on *suguha*, features a tight wave pattern. Dark channels of *chikei* abound.



A close-up, low-angle shot of a sword blade against a black background. The blade is illuminated from the side, creating a bright, glowing edge. The surface of the blade shows a complex pattern of light and dark areas, characteristic of traditional Japanese swordsmithing. A red arrow points from the text on the left towards the lower part of the blade.

An eye-catching brushing of *sunagashi* kicks off the hamon in a glorious manner.

This pattern is made possible by the sword's straight-grain masame-hada towards the edge of the blade.

A close-up photograph of a sword's hamon (temper line) against a dark background. The hamon is a bright, wavy line. Two red arrows point to specific features: one points to a gap in the hamon, and the other points to a crescent-shaped mark above the hamon.

*kuichigaiba*  
(overlap in the hamon creating a gap.)

*uchinoke*  
(crescent moon)

Crescent moons that appear above the *hamon* are called *uchinoke*. Uchinoke is a rare *hataraki* that is generally found on swords from the *Rai* family, *Yamashiro Sanjō* and *Yamato-den* schools.

Kuichigaiba is primarily a trait seen on Yamato influenced swords, which is consistent with the attribution of Uda Tomotsugu.



A brushed *kissaki* that takes one back to the early 1400s.  
Time travel, Japanese style.

## The Ôei Era (1394-1428): Fragile Peace After Civil War

The Ôei era began in July 1394, just two years after the Southern and Northern Courts finally reunified in 1392, ending 56 years of bitter *Nambokuchô* period civil war. *Ashikaga Yoshimitsu*, the third *shogun*, had persuaded the weakened Southern Court emperor *Go-Kameyama* to surrender the Imperial regalia - the sacred artifacts that confirmed legitimacy. The promise was that the two imperial lines would alternate succession. Within 20 years, the Northern line broke that promise without consequence. The reunification was real, but the peace was fragile.

This wasn't the stable Japan of the later *Tokugawa* era. The *Ashikaga shogunate* was weak compared to what came before and what would come after. Yoshimitsu ruled from *Kyoto* and controlled the central provinces, but his power depended heavily on the loyalty of regional military governors called *shugo daimyô*. These men were growing stronger, wealthier, more independent. Within five years of the era's start, in November 1399, one of the most powerful - *Ôuchi Yoshihiro* - raised an army against the shogun in what became known as the *Ôei Rebellion*. Yoshimitsu crushed it, but the message was clear: the *daimyô* were a constant threat. In 1419, Korean forces invaded *Tsushima* to suppress Japanese pirates in the *Ôei Invasion*. The shogunate's reach barely extended to *Kyûshû*. Authority was contested everywhere.

## A Sword Forged in Transition

This katana from *Uda Tomotsugu* was forged during this unsettled time. At 81.6cm, it's long - very long - but it doesn't have the pronounced *tachi* curvature of the Kamakura period. That's the point. The Ôei era marked the shift from mounted *tachi* worn edge-down to katana drawn from a standing position. Warriors were adapting. The civil wars of the Nanbokuchô period were officially over, but conflict simmered. Regional lords feuded. Pirates raided Korea. Rebellions erupted every few years. Swordsmiths were responding to what warriors actually needed - longer reach for infantry combat, less curvature for faster draws, blades that could handle the messy reality of ongoing violence despite the supposed peace. This wasn't a sword forged in total war like the Nanbokuchô pieces, but it was hardly made for display either. The Ôei era was the eye of the storm - 34 years between one period of chaos and another. Within 40 years of this era's end, the *Ônin War* would erupt in 1467, plunging Japan into a century of the Warring States *Sengoku-Jidai* period. This sword came from that brief window when smiths were perfecting new forms for the conflicts they knew were coming.



The Forces of Ashikaga Yorimitsu Returning Home  
*Ashikaga Yoshimitsu kijin no zu*  
Utagawa Yoshitora (1862)



*Shirasaya*  
(protective scabbard, *sayagaki* on the way)



Two *habaki* are included.



gold *habaki* with  
copper ground



*shakudô ganseki-habaki*  
(rock texture)

*Kuro-cha ishime-ji  
mokume-nuri saya  
uchigatana-koshirae*  
(黒茶石目地杳目塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae  
lacquered in dark brown with  
stone-surface texture in  
wood-grain pattern*

Crafted during the  
Late Edo period  
(1780~1868)

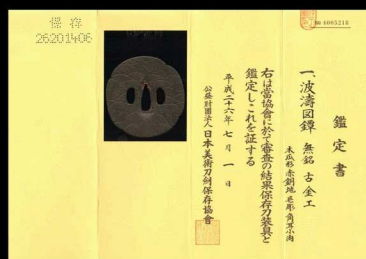


NTHK-NPO Kanteisho  
Certificate of Authenticity



The *tsuba* is a fine example of *Ko-Kinkô* (古金工) workmanship, a tradition predating the *Edo* period that is valued for its hand-carved detailing, rich patination, and classical aesthetic sensibilities. *Ko-Kinkô* fittings often emphasize natural motifs rendered in materials such as *shakudô* or *yamagane* copper.

This handsome *mokkô-gata* (lobed) piece is crafted in dark *shakudô* and features a motif of billowing waves finely carved in *ke-bori* (hairline engraving). The *tsuba* is accompanied with a *NBTHK Hozon certificate*, recognizing its quality and historical significance.





*Katsushika Hokusai's masterpiece comes to mind.*





(reverse)

26201406



No 4005218

鑑定書

一、波濤図鐔 無銘 古金工

木瓜形赤銅地毛彫角耳小肉

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀装具と  
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十六年七月一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



NBTHK Hozon  
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 26th year of Heisei (2014), July 1st

One, Tsuba

*Depicting raging waves*

*Mumei (unsigned)  
Ko-Kinkô*

*Round shape with multiple lobes, shakudô ground,  
hairline carvings, angular rim with a little roundness*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)



The *fuchi-kashira* is attributed to *Tôyama Naoyuki* (遠山直随), also known as *Hamano Naoyuki* (浜野直随) – an accomplished metalworker active in the late *Edo* period and affiliated with the *Hamano* school. *Naoyuki* was known for his wonderful interpretations of natural subjects, executed with technical precision and a sense of playful elegance. The *Hamano* lineage itself descends from *Nara* (奈良) school traditions and was especially influential in *Edo*, producing fittings for samurai of distinguished rank.

This set is superbly crafted in *shakudô* with gold accents and features several hard-working crabs. Carved with powerful waves, this set harmonizes well with the *Ko-Kinkô* tsuba and the pair of lobster menuki. This koshirae will appeal to those with a fondness of the open seas.



The *tsuka* (hilt) has been expertly braided in traditional *hishi-maki* style using a deep-yellow silk wrapped over black-lacquered *samekawa* (ray skin).



The unique pair of *menuki* are that of lobsters. In Japanese tradition, lobsters (*ise-ebi*) are considered highly auspicious: their long whiskers and curved backs symbolize longevity and their repeated moulting represents personal advancement and transformation. Plus their armour-like form represents an enduring strength of character.





*Koshirae bag with a phoenix design pattern signifying rebirth.*

