



ITEM# UJKA473

SOLD

A JÔSHÛ KUNISHIGE KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (KEIAN ERA: AUGUST 1658)

- Swordsmith:** *Jôshû jû Fujiwara Kunishige* (城州住藤原国重)
Measurements: **Length:** 70.0cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 2.9cm **Weight:** 680g
Jihada: *Impressive pools of mokume-hada mixed with masame and plentiful chukei*
Hamon: *Eye-catching gunome-midare, with notare, sunagashi, kinsuji, togari, Mishina-bôshi*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Certificates #2-4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic*)
Provenance: **Dr. Katsumi Toriumi** surrendered the sword to US Allied Forces in 1945
Authentication: **Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist*)
Included: Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description

This rare and dated katana by *Mishina* smith *Jôshû Kunishige*, was forged during the tense months between total pacification and a simmering rebellion during which Japan was a nation locked down, isolated, and completely reorganized under iron rule by *Tokugawa Iemitsu*. The blade shines with a clear *Shizu* influence with a dynamic *gunome-midare hamon, kinsuji, togari*. The *koshirae* is late Edo *handachi* (half tachi) style that exudes class. The exquisite *nagashi-nuri saya* lacquer echoes the blade's wood grain pattern and flowing textures while the fittings unite around sacred motifs - *Sannô* deities, dragons, arabesque designs. This very sword was once the property of *Dr. Katsumi Toriumi*, but was confiscated by U.S. Forces in November 1945. Now it's incredible journey continues. This is a dignified katana that will sit proudly in a lucky person's *nihontô* collection.



Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 6.4mm

Omosa: 680g

Kissaki: 3.09cm
Saki-haba: 1.87cm

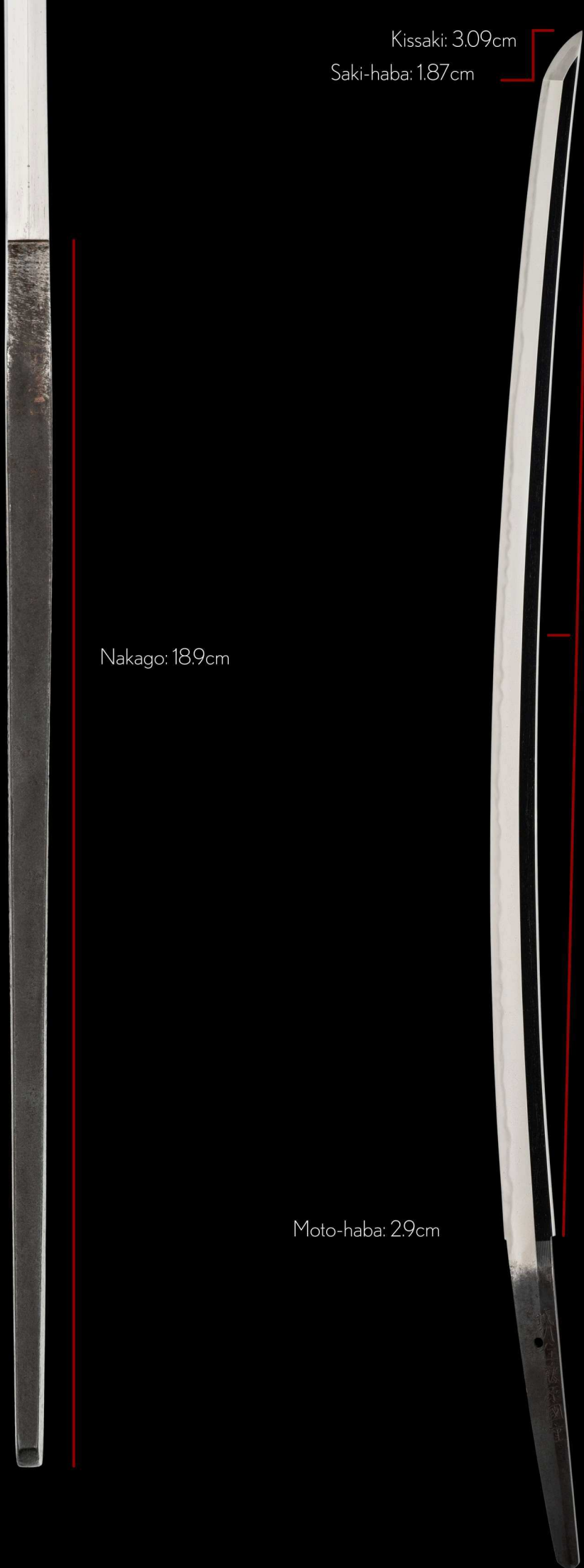
Nakago: 18.9cm

Moto-haba: 2.9cm

Nagasa: 70.0cm

Sori: 1.8cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



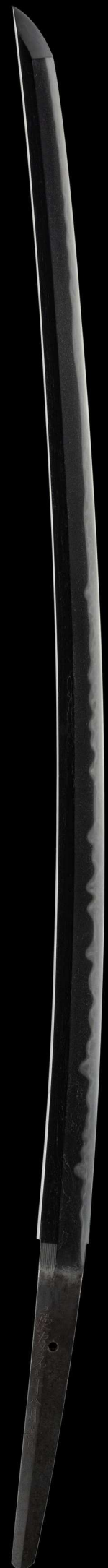
Jôshû Kunishige (城州国重) may not appear in the standard reference books, but this blade from the prized *Mishina* school certainly tells its own unique story. Around the *Keian* era (1648-1652) in *Yamashiro* province, swordsmiths showing pronounced *Mishina* traits while using "kuni (国)" in their signatures were extremely rare. Only one smith fits - *Dewa Daijô Kunimichi* (出羽大掾国路), top student of *Horikawa Kunihiro* (堀川国広). This katana resembles Kunimichi's work closely. The *nakago-jiri* shaping, the carved "kuni" character, the *Fujiwara* surname - all point to *Kunishige* as his disciple.

The dated inscription of August 1648, was just months into the newly declared *Keian* era. Japan was under peak *Tokugawa* control. *Iemitsu* had sealed the borders nine years earlier. The last Jesuit was dead or converted by 1644. The *sankin-kôtai* system was forcing *daimyô* into financial exhaustion. This was a nation locked down, isolated, completely reorganized under iron rule. Within three years, disgruntled *rônin* would attempt the failed *Keian Uprising*, a desperate plot born from the very control policies that defined this era. This sword was forged in those tense months between total pacification and simmering rebellion - a Japan that had turned completely inward and would stay that way for two centuries.

The blade aims squarely at the *Shizu*-inspired style *Kunimichi* mastered, and succeeds. Strong *motohaba* tapering to a slightly extended *chû-kissaki*. The *jigane* shows *itame* mixed with *mokume* in flowing texture, thick *ji-nie*, abundant *chikei*. The *shinogi-ji* displays strong *masame* too. The *hamon* is bright *gunome* with well-applied *ko-nie*, incorporating pointed elements and gentle *notare*. Numerous *ko-ashi*, active *kinsuji* and *sunagashi* also abound. The *bôshi* enters in *notare*, finishes with slight *hakikake*, turns back toward the *mune* - the characteristic *Mishina-bôshi*. Naturally this is an NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certified katana.

This very sword appears in '*Token Zuihitsu*' (Token's Essay) by *Dr. Katsumi Toriumi*. According to text written in November 1945, this sword was confiscated by U.S. Forces after the war. Think about what that means - a documented surrender sword that survived confiscation (and seemingly the *koshirae* too), has made its way back to Japan - it's an amazing story.

The *koshirae* is late Edo *handachi* (half tachi) style that exudes class. The exquisite *nagashi-nuri* saya lacquer echoes the blade's wood grain pattern and flowing textures while the fittings unite around sacred motifs - *Sannô* deities, dragons, arabesque designs. This very rare and dignified katana will sit proudly in a lucky person's *nihontô* collection.





WATCH PABLO'S YOUTUBE PRESENTATION OF
UJKA473 - A JÔSHÛ KUNISHIGE KATANA

[UNIQUEJAPAN.COM/UJKA473-VIDEO](https://uniquejapan.com/ujka473-video)





Location: *Yamashiro Province*

Family name: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Kunishige* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

城 (Jô)

州 (shû)

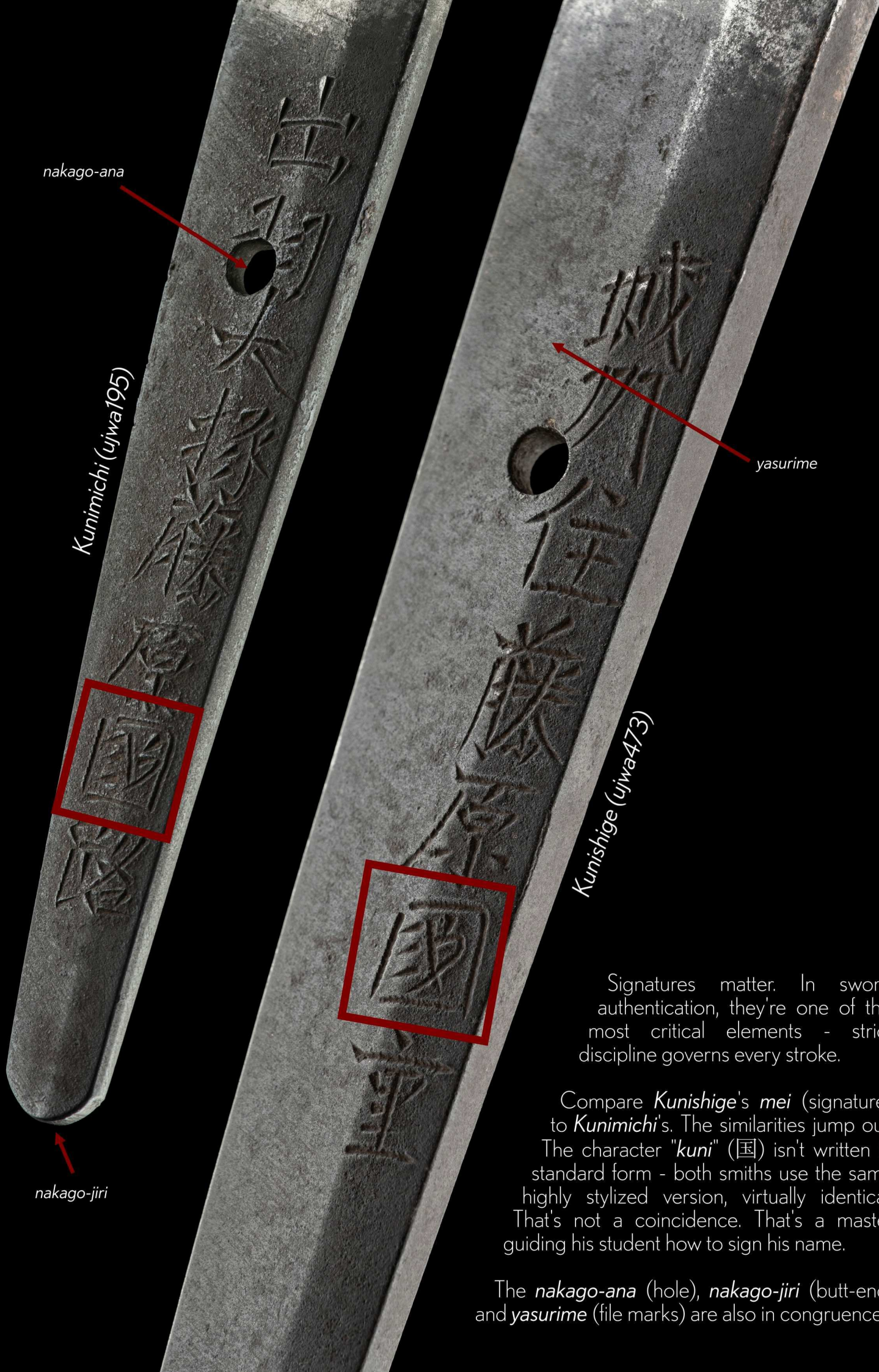
住 (jû)

藤 (Fuji)

原 (wara)

國 (Kuni)

重 (shige)



nakago-ana

Kunimichi (ujwa195)

yasurime

Kunishige (ujwa473)

nakago-jiri

Signatures matter. In sword authentication, they're one of the most critical elements - strict discipline governs every stroke.

Compare *Kunishige's mei* (signature) to *Kunimichi's*. The similarities jump out. The character "kuni" (國) isn't written in standard form - both smiths use the same highly stylized version, virtually identical. That's not a coincidence. That's a master guiding his student how to sign his name.

The *nakago-ana* (hole), *nakago-jiri* (butt-end) and *yasurime* (file marks) are also in congruence.

Keian gannen hachigatsu kichijitsu

Dated on a lucky day in the eighth month in the first year of *Keian* era (August 1648)

(Kei) 慶

(an) 安

(gan) 元

(nen) 年

(hachi) 八

(gatsu) 月

(kichi) 吉

(jitsu) 日

Ha-agari kurijiri is a tang-end style where the rounded tip curves slightly toward the cutting edge.

It is a variation of the *kurijiri* (chestnut-shaped) finish, adding subtle asymmetry.



ha-agari kurijiri

The *Shôhō* era (1644-1648): Consolidation and Control

The *Shôhō* era began in late 1644 with the enthronement of *Emperor Go-Kômyō* and lasted just four years until early 1648. This brief period fell squarely within the reign of *Tokugawa Iemitsu*, the third *shogun*, who had spent two decades methodically consolidating Tokugawa power. By the mid-1640s, Iemitsu's most dramatic policies were already in place - the *sankin-kôtai* system forcing *daimyō* to maintain households in Edo, the *sakoku* edicts sealing Japan off from the world (completed in 1639), and the brutal suppression of Christianity. The last Jesuit was executed or forced to apostatize (renounce their faith) by 1644, the year *Shôhō* began. This was a Japan already locked down, already isolated, already under control.

August 1648: First Year of *Keian*

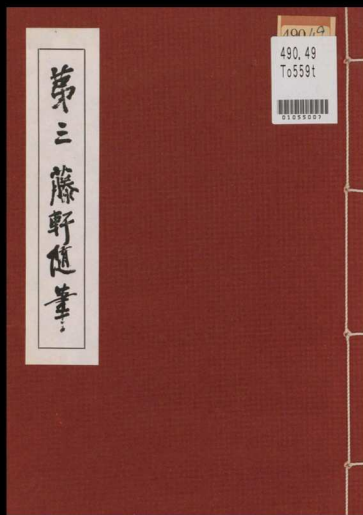
This katana was forged in August 1648 - just months into the *Keian* era, which replaced *Shôhō* in February of that year. The era name changed because "*Shôhō*" sounded too similar to "*Shôbō*" (death by burning), which was considered inauspicious. *Keian* meant "joy of quiet righteousness" - an optimistic name that didn't quite match reality. In 1649, a major earthquake struck Edo. That same year, *Iemitsu* issued the *Keian no Ofuregaki*, a comprehensive set of proclamations designed to control rural administration and farmers' lives down to the smallest detail. The shogunate's grip was tightening further. By 1651, just three years into the era, disgruntled *rônin* - masterless samurai pushed into hardship by Iemitsu's seizure of *daimyō* estates - attempted the *Keian Uprising*. The plot to burn Edo and storm the castle failed when one conspirator fell ill and revealed the plan in his delirium.

An Era of Iron Stability

The *Keian* era lasted only until September 1652, but it represented something significant - Japan at peak Tokugawa control, a society completely reorganized and locked in place. Iemitsu died in June 1651 at age 46, leaving behind a nine-year-old heir and a Japan utterly transformed from the chaotic Warring States period his grandfather had ended. The sword forged in August 1648 came from a moment when the long peace was established but still young enough to remember conflict - when *rônin* conspiracies still simmered, when the machinery of control was running at full power, when Japan had turned completely inward and would remain that way for two more centuries.



Tokugawa Iemitsu ruled from 1623 to 1651 - three decades that sealed Japan shut. He crucified Christians, expelled every European from Japanese soil, and locked the borders. That policy of total isolation lasted over 200 years.



Token's Essay vol.3 (1975)



Toriumi Katsumi

The actual sword appears in a collection of essays titled 'Token Zuihitsu' (Token's Essay) by Dr. Katsumi Toriumi. According to the text written in November 1945, this sword was confiscated by the U.S. Forces after the war.

translation

Joshû-jû Fujiwara Kunishige, on a lucky day in August, Keian 1

2 刀 狩 り

口惜しい、情無い……あらゆる形容詞を羅列しても言い足りない一日を憂鬱に過した。と言うのは聯合國側の日本刀供出の意向益々強烈となり、納めた以上如何なる処置が行われるかは神のみぞ知る。所詮再び我手に戻る事は絶望と見られる。又不履行の場合は厳罰に処すると言う威嚇も伴なっている。

止むを得ず手許の刀三振を納めることにした。念の為、刀銘と由来を書き止めて置こう。

一、城州住、藤原国重、慶安元年八月吉日、刀身二尺二寸、此れは僕が生れると間もなく、祖父正泰翁が祝福して呉れた新刀である。

一、千手院是重、古刀、昨年軍刀用として、友人中村重宜君から譲り受けたものである。当地の鑑定家中沢氏によると延寿より一段上であるそう。

一、無銘、刃渡り二尺三寸九分、焼丁字みだれ。右は彌三政翁から豚尻等に贈られた記念品。中沢氏によると一竿子忠行、寛文頃の新刀、先程果から福島駐屯軍部隊長に献納する刀の候補として徵発されたものである。

一、相州忠広小刀、新刀、此れは僕が渡欧の首途、土屋竹雨から護身用として餞られたもので、白鞘に五律一首の竹雨自筆の詩がある。

此の際愚痴をこぼすのは男子として面目無いが、一言云わせて貰わんと腹の虫が治まらない。米軍が我国民間の武器を徹底的に解除せんとする意味の或る部分は彼等の日本刀に対する極端な恐怖心の表現と解せらる。日本刀が武器であると同時に、世にも稀なる美術品であることは彼等には全然解らないのである。その無理解の犠牲となつて没収せられんとする、我等の祖先の心血を踐いで完成された日本刀の身になって考えるが好い。一山百文で利刀も鈍刀も名刀も凡刀も一時に溶鉱炉の中で溶かされるとすれば、全く浮ばれぬ次第である。希くは米軍の中に故フエノロサの

The Sword Hunt (Katana-gari)

I spent the day in a state of profound melancholy – a feeling so bitter and heartless that no list of adjectives could ever suffice. The Allied forces' demand for the surrender of Japanese swords has become increasingly aggressive. Once handed over, only God knows what will become of them. The prospect of them ever returning to my hands seems hopeless. Furthermore, the demand is accompanied by threats of severe punishment for non-compliance.

Reluctantly, I have decided to surrender the three swords in my possession. As a precaution, I shall record their signatures and origins here.

One, *Joshu-ju Fujiwara Kunishige*, dated a lucky day in August, the first year of *Keian* (1648). Blade length: approx. 2-shaku 2~3-sun. This is a *shintô* that my grandfather, *Masayasu*, gave to me as a gift shortly after I was born.

One, *Senjuin Koreshige*, a *Kotô*. I received this last year from my friend, *Shigenori Nakamura*, to be used as a military sword. According to *Mr. Nakazawa*, a local appraiser, its quality surpasses that of the *Enju* school.

One, *Mumei*, length is 2-shaku 3-sun 9-bu. The *hamon* is *chôji-midare*. This was a commemorative gift from *Mitsumasa Hori*. According to *Mr. Nakazawa*, it is a *Shintô* by *Ikkanshi Tadayuki* from the *Kanbun* era. It was previously requisitioned by the prefecture as a candidate for a sword to be presented to the commander of the *Fukushima* garrison.

One, *Sôshû Tadahiro kogatana*, a *Shintô*. This was gifted to me by *Takeu Tsuchiya* as a weapon for self-defense just before I left for Europe. The *shirasaya* bears a poem handwritten by *Takeu* himself.

特選
11199909



No 144750

鑑定書

長二尺三寸一分

一刃銘

城州住藤原国重
慶安元年八月吉日

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

平成十一年十月八日

財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



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 11th year of Heisei (1999), October 8th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Jôshû-jû Fujiwara Kunishige
Keian gannen hachigatsu kichijitsu

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu (70.0cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



城州住藤原国重

Jōshū-jū Fujiwara Kunishige

Fujiwara Kunishige, a resident of Jōshū (Yamashiro) province

慶安元年八月吉日

Keian gannen hachigatsu kichijitsu

On a lucky day in the eighth month in the first year of Keian era
(August 1648)

長貳尺參寸一分有之

Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun 1-bu kore ari

Blade length 70.0 cm

令和八丙午年如月吉日誌之

Reiwa hachi hinoe-uma doshi Kisaragi kichijitsu kore o shirusu

Written on a lucky day in the second month in the eighth year of
Reiwa period, the Year of the Horse (February 2026)



割印

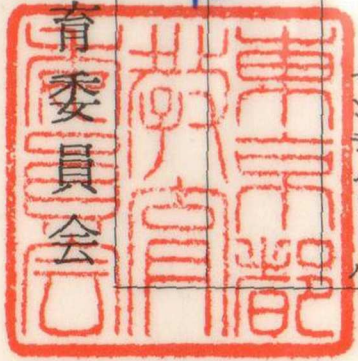
銃砲刀剣類登録証

登録記号番号 東京都第 276452 号

備考	銘文	目くぎ穴	反り	長さ	種別
	(裏) 慶長 (表) 安永 元禄 重 月 吉 日	個	八 センチメートル	七〇 センチメートル	刀剣類
		口径	銃身長	全長	種別
		センチメートル	センチメートル	センチメートル	銃砲

平成 平成九年三月拾八日

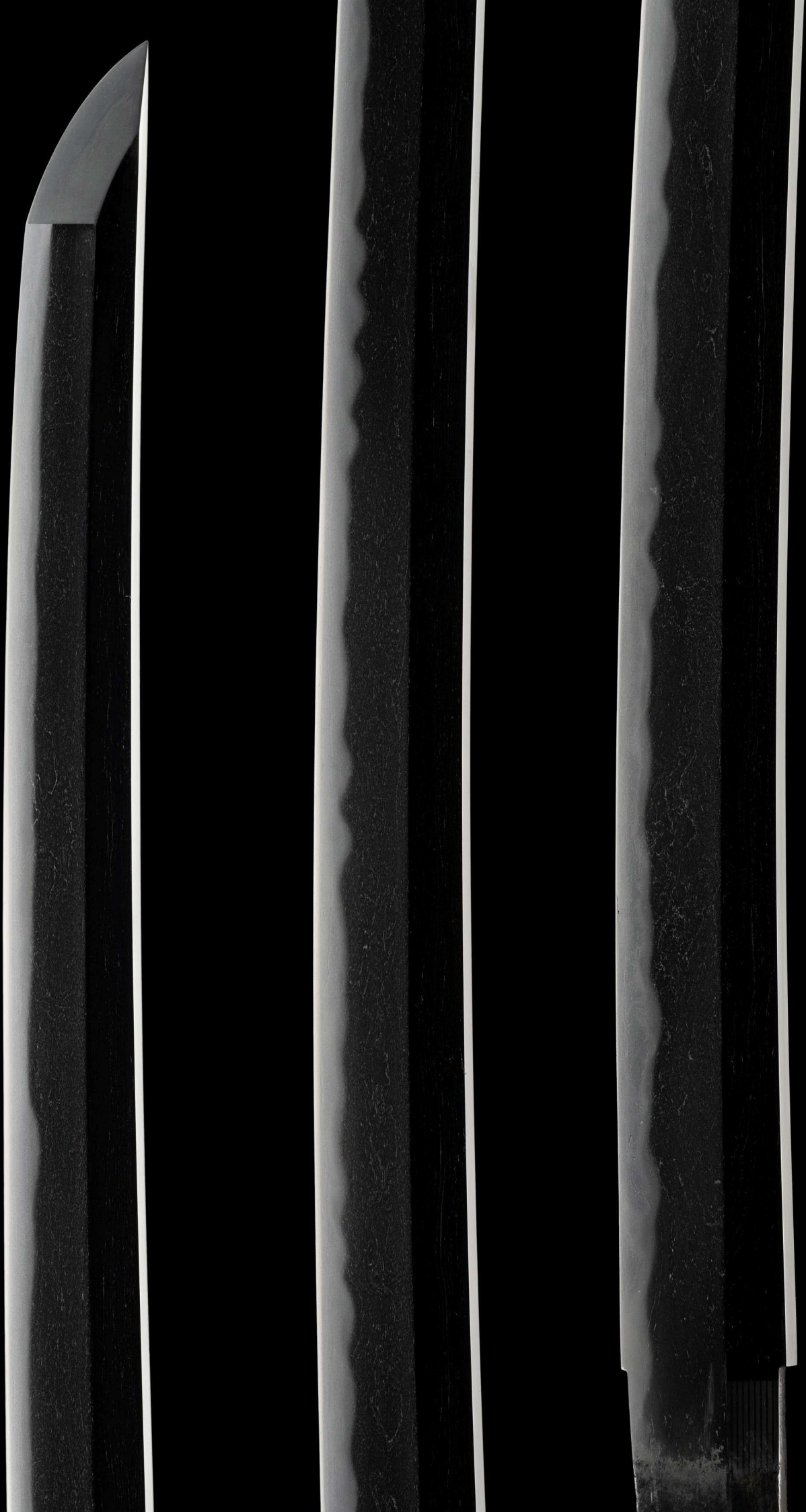
東京都教育委員会

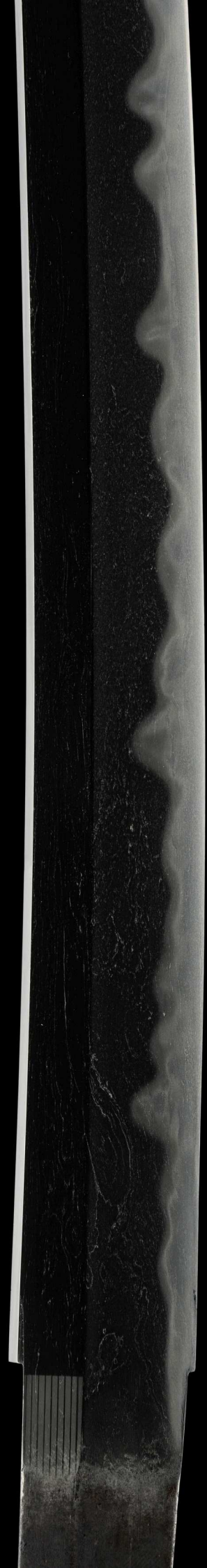
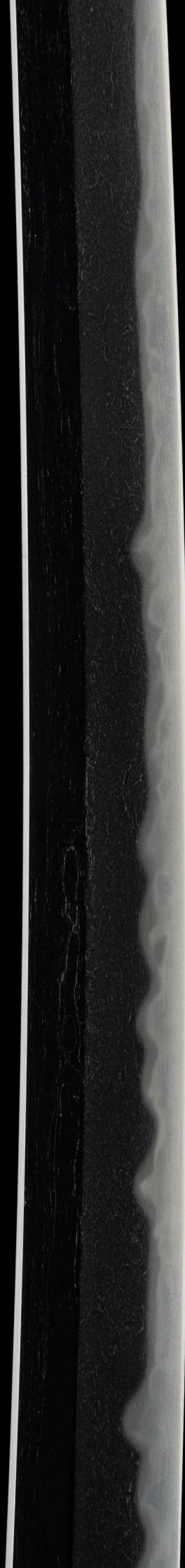
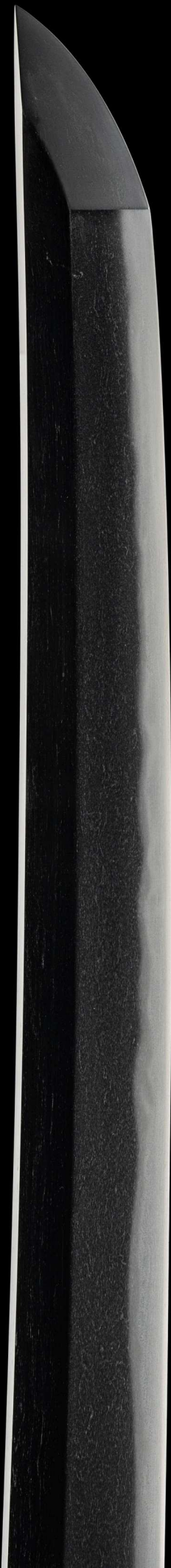


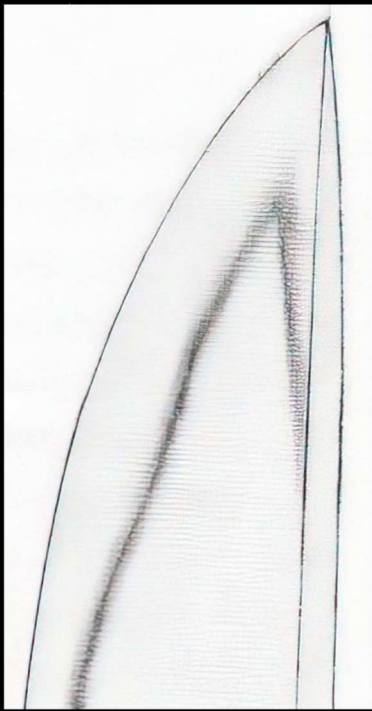
This is the *torokusho* (registration card) for the *Jōshū Kunishige katana*. Official registration in Tokyo, 1997.

The timeline tells the story: Confiscated by Allied forces in November 1945, taken to the United States. Fifty-two years later returns to Japan in 1997. Two years later, it was submitted to the NBTHK for appraisal and awarded Tokubetsu Hozon certification.

Now, the sword is about to embark onto its next journey. Who will proudly carry the torch?







Mishina-bôshi
source: Markus Sesko

Mishina bôshi

Slight *hakikake* (brushed), and the *kaeri* (return) turns back toward the *mune* (spine) rather than running straight.

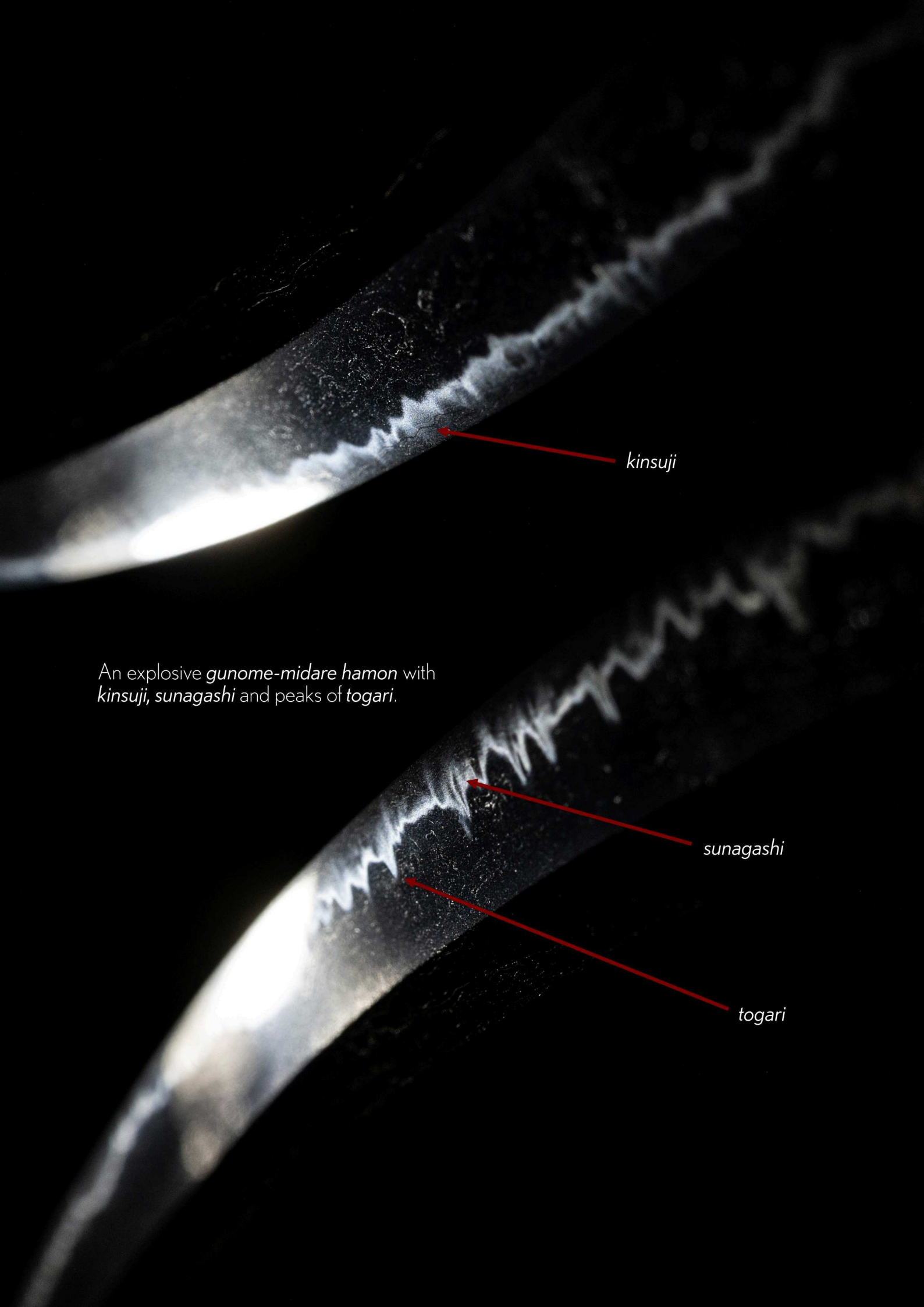


masame-hada

ô-mokume

sunagashi

A delightful mix of *mokume* and *nagare-hada* with *masame-hada* in the *shinogi-ji*.



kinsuji

An explosive *gunome-midare hamon* with *kinsuji*, *sunagashi* and peaks of *togari*.


sunagashi

togari

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (temper line) pattern. The blade is dark, and the hamon is highlighted in a bright, shimmering white. The pattern is complex, featuring rhythmic, wavy lines in the upper section and larger, more irregular swells in the lower section. Red arrows point to specific features: one points to a small, sharp peak labeled 'tiny tobiyaki', and another points to a larger, more pronounced swell. A red square highlights a section of the blade in the lower part of the image, which is further detailed in a separate view below. The background is black, making the blade's details stand out.

tiny *tobiyaki*

The *hamon* shifts dramatically from rhythmic *gunome-midare* to big swells of *notare* in the *monouchi* on both sides of the blade.

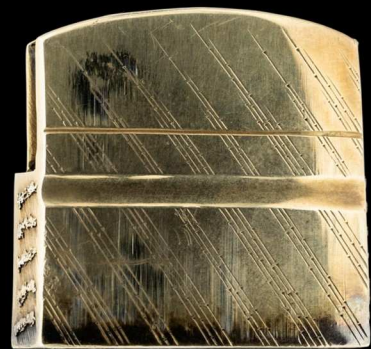
A close-up view of the hamon pattern in the monouchi section of the blade. The pattern is characterized by large, irregular, wavy swells that create a sense of depth and movement. A red square highlights a specific section of the blade, which is shown in a separate view above. A red arrow points to the pattern, which is labeled 'notare (wave)'. The background is black, emphasizing the texture and color of the hamon.

notare (wave)



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

bamboo strips



gold *habaki* with
copper ground



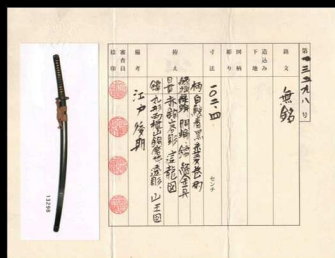
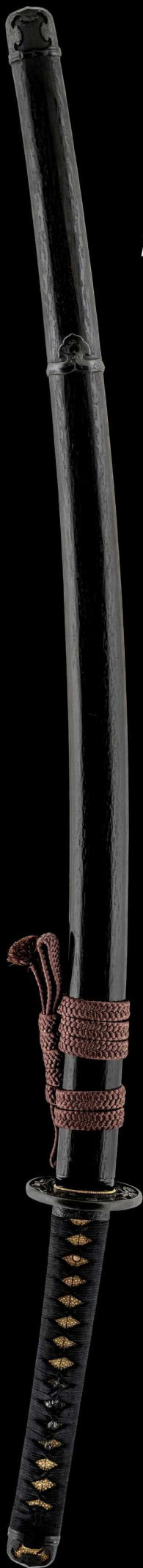
城州住国重

城 (jô)
州 (shû)
住 (jû)
国 (Kuni)
重 (shige)

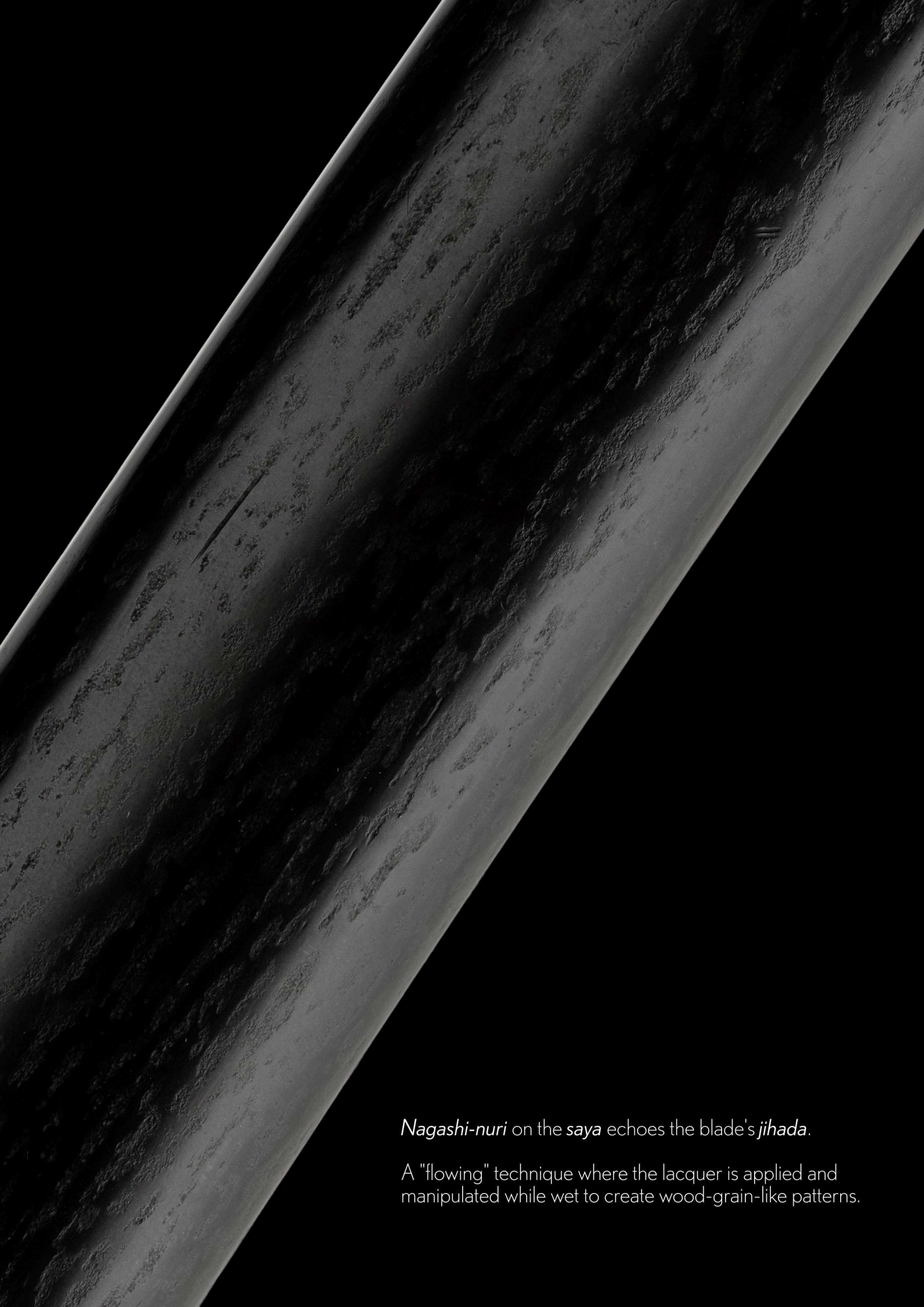
*Kuro-nagashi-nuri saya
handachi-fû-koshirae*
(黒流塗鞘半太刀風拵)

*Handachi-style koshirae lacquered
in black with flowing texture*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



Nagashi-nuri on the *saya* echoes the blade's *jihada*.

A "flowing" technique where the lacquer is applied and manipulated while wet to create wood-grain-like patterns.

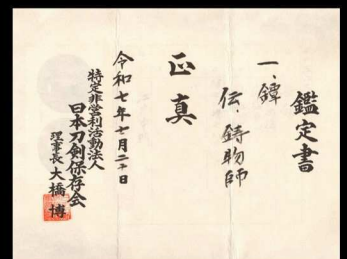


Sannô monkey

This fascinating polished *yamagane* copper *tsuba* depicts a *Sannô* figure - a monkey regarded as a divine messenger. But rather than veneration, we see subjugation.

The male figure wears *Heian*-period attire, pointing to a legend from the *Konjaku Monogatari-shû*, a late Heian collection of tales. The story: a monstrous monkey demanded the sacrifice of young girls until a hunter cornered and killed it. Then the demands stopped.

The *tsuba* captures humanity's resolve to punish an evil deity. The rugged, austere finish - no gilding, no decorative flourishes - lets the triumph speak for itself.





Monkey-hunting scenes as portrayed in *ukiyo-e* prints





(reverse)



The *tsuka* is late Edo period work - white *samekawa* with black silk in classic *hishi-maki* style.



The black *shakudô menuki* depict dragons - a motif prized since ancient times for its sacred power and associations with victory and prosperity.





kojiri



fuchi



kashira

Handachi soroi-kanagu
with arabesque pattern

A terrific matching set of *handachi* fittings attributed to *Kanagu-shi*, an artisan who catered to the *samurai* class in the Edo period.

dōrin





Koshirae bag with gold chrysanthemums