



ITEM# UJKA478

## A SHODAI TADAKUNI 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (MEIREKI ERA: 1655~1658)

|                           |                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Swordsmith:</b>        | <i>Hizen-jû Harima Daijô Fujiwara Tadakuni (shodai)</i>                                               |
| <b>Measurements:</b>      | <b>Length:</b> 63.9cm ( <i>ubu</i> ) <b>Sori:</b> 0.76cm <b>Moto-haba:</b> 3.16cm <b>Weight:</b> 745g |
| <b>Jihada:</b>            | <i>Splendid konuka-hada with wonderful ji-nie and plenty of chikei</i>                                |
| <b>Hamon:</b>             | <i>Beautiful deep chû-suguha with bright nioguchi, nijû-ba, sunagashi and kinsuji</i>                 |
| <b>Certificate #1:</b>    | <b>NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon</b> ( <i>Especially Worthy of Preservation</i> )                             |
| <b>Certificates #2:</b>   | <b>NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku</b> ( <i>as sword designated as Masterwork</i> )                                |
| <b>Certificates #3-4:</b> | <b>NTHK-NPO Kanteishô</b> ( <i>koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic</i> )                        |
| <b>Fujishiro rank:</b>    | <b>Jô-saku</b> ( <i>ranked as a superior swordsmith</i> )                                             |
| <b>Sharpness:</b>         | <b>Wazamonô</b> ( <i>rated as a maker of sharp swords</i> )                                           |
| <b>Included:</b>          | Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description                                                |

**SOLD**

*Shodai Harima Daijô Tadakuni* was a distinguished swordsmith of *Hizen* Province during the mid-1600s. While many of his works feature a flamboyant *gunome-chôji-midare hamon*, Tadakuni also forged blades in an elegant *suguha* exhibiting a dignified aesthetic which this gorgeous katana encapsulates. On June 7th, 1665, sword-tester *Yamano Ka'emon Nagahisa* using this muscular blade, severed through two human bodies in one stroke. The test result is documented in gold inlay on the *nakago* solidifying Tadakuni's *wazamonô* ranking. A gorgeous Edo-period *koshirae* with an eye-catching *aoi-gai* (mother-of-pearl) lacquered scabbard and beautiful fittings showcasing a striking wave motif will look incredible on display in any home or office. This is a top-class samurai sword.

^  
Saki-kasane: 4.9mm

Moto-kasane: 6.7mm

Omosa: 745g

Kissaki: 3.63cm

Saki-haba: 2.30cm

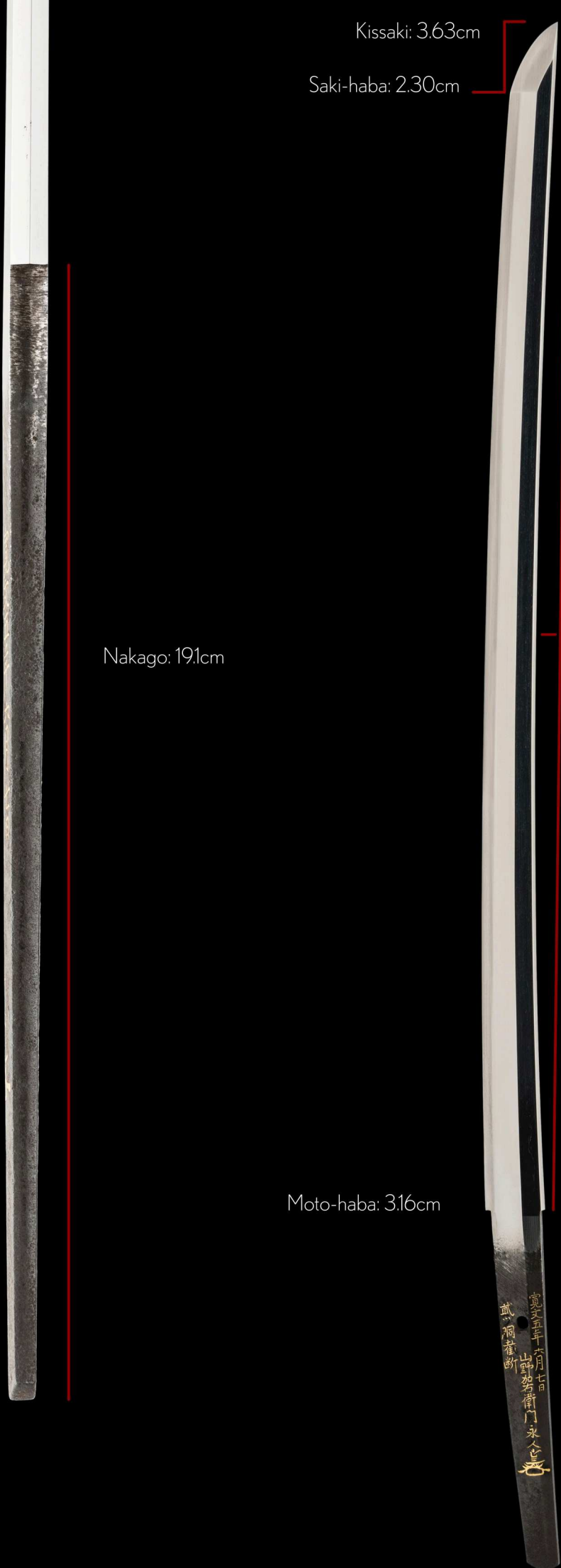
Nakago: 19.1cm

Moto-haba: 3.16cm

Nagasa: 63.9cm

Sori: 0.76cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



*Shodai Harima Daijō Tadakuni* was a distinguished swordsmith of Hizen Province active during the mid-1600s. A nephew and direct student of grandmaster *Tadayoshi*, he was part of the *Hashimoto* family lineage and contributed significantly to the development of the *Hizen-tō* tradition. In 1634, he was granted the honorary title "*Harima Dajō*," marking the formal beginning of his career under the name *Tadakuni*. Working primarily under the *Nabeshima* clan, he forged swords for the *Ōgi* domain and earned a strong reputation for both technical excellence and elegant craftsmanship.

Tadakuni's blades are admired for their graceful proportions typical of the *Keian-Meireki-shintō* period, often featuring a shallow curvature and a well-balanced *chū-kissaki*. His *jigane* is especially fine, displaying the tight, compact *ko-mokume* pattern known as "*konuka-hada*" (rice-bran grain), rich with sparkling *ji-nie* and subtle *chikei*. The steel appears soft and moist in texture, a hallmark of high-quality *Hizen* swords.

While many of his works feature a flamboyant *hamon*, Tadakuni also forged blades in an elegant *suguha* (straight temper) style. These examples exhibit refined control, evenness of the *nioiguchi*, that resulted in a dignified aesthetic. The present sword is forged in *suguha* - a fine expression of Tadakuni's classical side.

Tadakuni signed his works in a long, confident *mei*: "*Hizen-jū Harima Dajō Fujiwara Tadakuni*," carefully carved in flowing strokes. His *nakagō* often shows a single *mekugi-ana* and well-angled *sujikai* file marks.

This weighty katana underwent a cutting test with the most famous test cutters of the Edo period, *Yamano Ka'emon Nagahisa*, who on June 7th, 1665, using this very blade, severed through two human bodies in one stroke. The test result is documented in gold inlay on the *nakago* of the sword testifying to Tadakuni's *jō-saku* (superior swordsmith) and reputation for crafting sharp swords earning the prized *wazamono* ranking.

A gorgeous Edo-period koshirae with an eye-catching *aoi-gai* (mother-of-pearl) lacquered scabbard and beautiful fittings showcasing with a wave motif will look



Location: *Hizen province*

Title name: *Harima Daijô* (Lord of Harima province)

Family name: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Tadakuni* (shodai, first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)

*sujikai-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

(Hi) 肥

(zen) 前

(jû) 住

(Hari) 播

(ma) 磨

(Dai) 大

(jô) 掾

(Fuji) 藤

(wara) 原

(Tada) 忠

(kuni) 國

The title "*Harima Daijô Tadakuni*" indicates that this blade was forged by *shodai*, first-generation Tadakuni. Second generation adopted the title *Harima no Kami*. Signature examples below.



shodai



nidai

The shape of the *nakago-jiri* (butt-end of the tang) is called *iriyama-gata*. *Iri* means 'enter' and *yama* is 'mountain', suggesting at the 'base of a mountain.'

*Kanbun gonen rokugatsu nanoka Yamano  
Ka'emon Nagahisa (kaô) futatsu-dô setsudan*

On the seventh day in the sixth month in the fifth year of *Kanbun* era (June 7th 1665), *Yamano Ka'emon Nagahisa* conducted a test cut severing two bodies [in one stroke].

(futa) 貳  
(tsu) ツ  
(dô) 洞  
(setsu) 截  
(dan) 断

寛文五年六月七日  
山野加右衛門永人  
貳ツ洞截断

寛 (Kan)  
文 (bun)  
五 (go)  
年 (nen)  
六 (roku)  
月 (gatsu)  
七 (nana)  
日 (ka)  
山 (Yama)  
野 (no)  
加 (Ka)  
右 (e)  
衛 (e)  
門 (mon)  
永 (Naga)  
久 (hisa)  
花押 (kaô)



*Yamano Ka'emon Nagahisa* was a renowned sword tester in the Edo period and served under the *Tokugawa* shogunate as a member of the *Gokoshimono-gata* - officials responsible for sword-related affairs. The Yamano family held a hereditary role in sword testing, and Nagahisa is considered one of its most skilled members.



gorgeous finely-chiseled signature

The cutting edge of the katana of 63.9cm is similar to what we'd see of one-handed fighting swords known as *katate-uchi* from the Late Muromachi period, circa mid-1500s.

The majority of katana in the Edo period measure around 70cm in *nagasa*. This sword, however, was clearly commissioned by a samurai who desired a supremely crafted blade that is weighty, agile, and exceptionally sharp.

Although NBTHK Jûyô Tōken is a challenge, this sword has an outside chance of being awarded such certification. We plan to submit the katana to NBTHK Jûyô competition in October 2025.

特選  
05202306

No 1020773



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

令和五年八月二十五日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會

鑑定書

一、刀銘 肥前住播磨大掾藤原忠国  
(金象嵌) 山野加右衛門永久(花押)  
寛文五年六月七日  
長 二尺一寸一分  
貳ツ胴截断

長崎県 教育委員会  
第 1198 号  
昭和26年11月25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

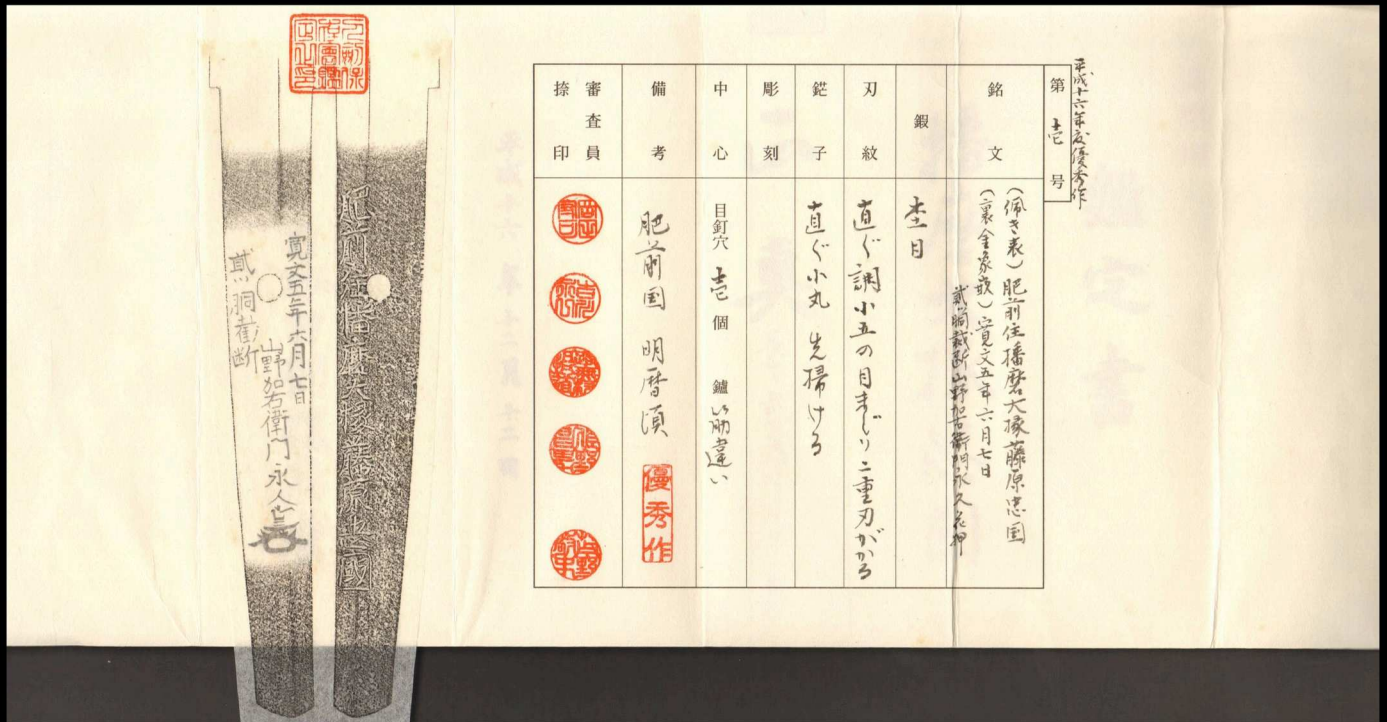
Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), August 25th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)  
*Hizen-jû Harima Daijô Fujiwara Tadakuni*  
(Kinzôgan) Kanbun gonen rokugatsu nanoka Yamano Ka'emon Nagahisa (kaô)  
futsu-dô setsudan

Nagasa (length)  
2-shaku 1-sun 1-bu (63.9cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)



## NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku Certificate of Authenticity

This katana was designated as *Yûshûsaku* (Masterwork)  
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

*Mei* (signature)

*Hizen-jû Harima Daijô Fujiwara Tadakuni*

*Kanbun gonen rokugatsu nanoka futatsu-dô setsudan Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa kaô*

*Nagasa* (length)

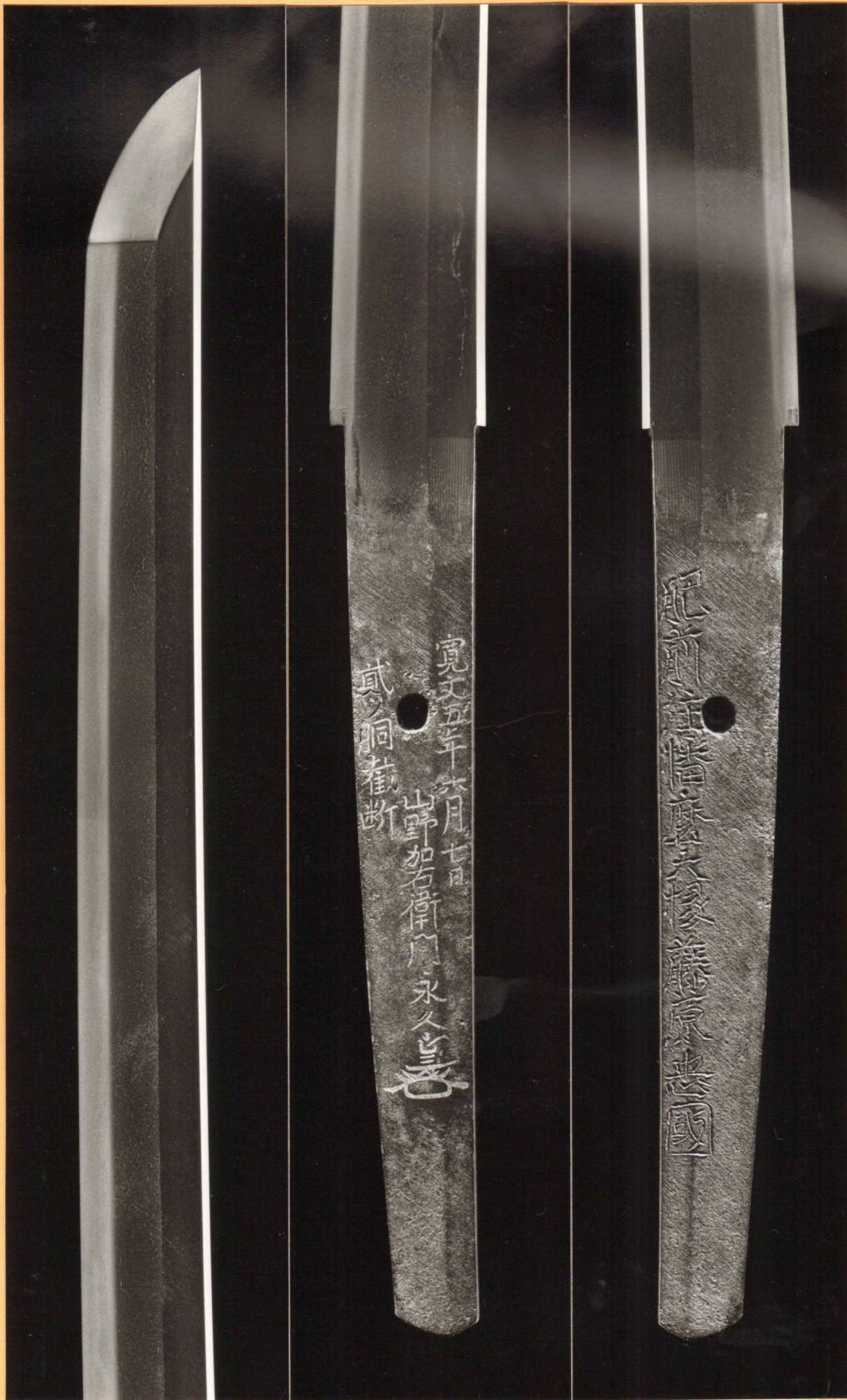
2-shaku 1-sun bu han kore ari (63.9cm)

Issued in 16th year of Heisei (2004), December 12th

Nihon Token Hozon Kai  
(NTHK-NPO)

This sword has reached the highest level of honour at the NTHK-NPO.  
Five judges have stamped their names to the certificate.

This is the highest honour within this sword organization.



優秀作

日本刀剣保存会

A framable photograph of the sword accompanies the NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku certificate.



肥前住播磨大掾藤原忠国

寛文五年六月七日山野加右衛門永久貳ツ胴截断

長貳尺壹寸一分

令和七乙巳年水無月吉日誌之

肥前住播磨大掾藤原忠国

*Hizen jû Harima Daijô Fujiwara Tadakuni*

Harima Daijô Fujiwara Tadakuni, a resident of Hizen province

寛文五年六月七日山野加右衛門永久貳ツ胴截断

*Kanbun gonen rokugatsu nanoka Yamano Kaemon Nagahisa futatsu-dô setsudan*

On the seventh day in the sixth month in the fifth year of Kanbun era (June 7th, 1665), Yamano Ka'emon Nagahisa conducted a test cut severing two bodies [in one stroke].

長貳尺壹寸一分

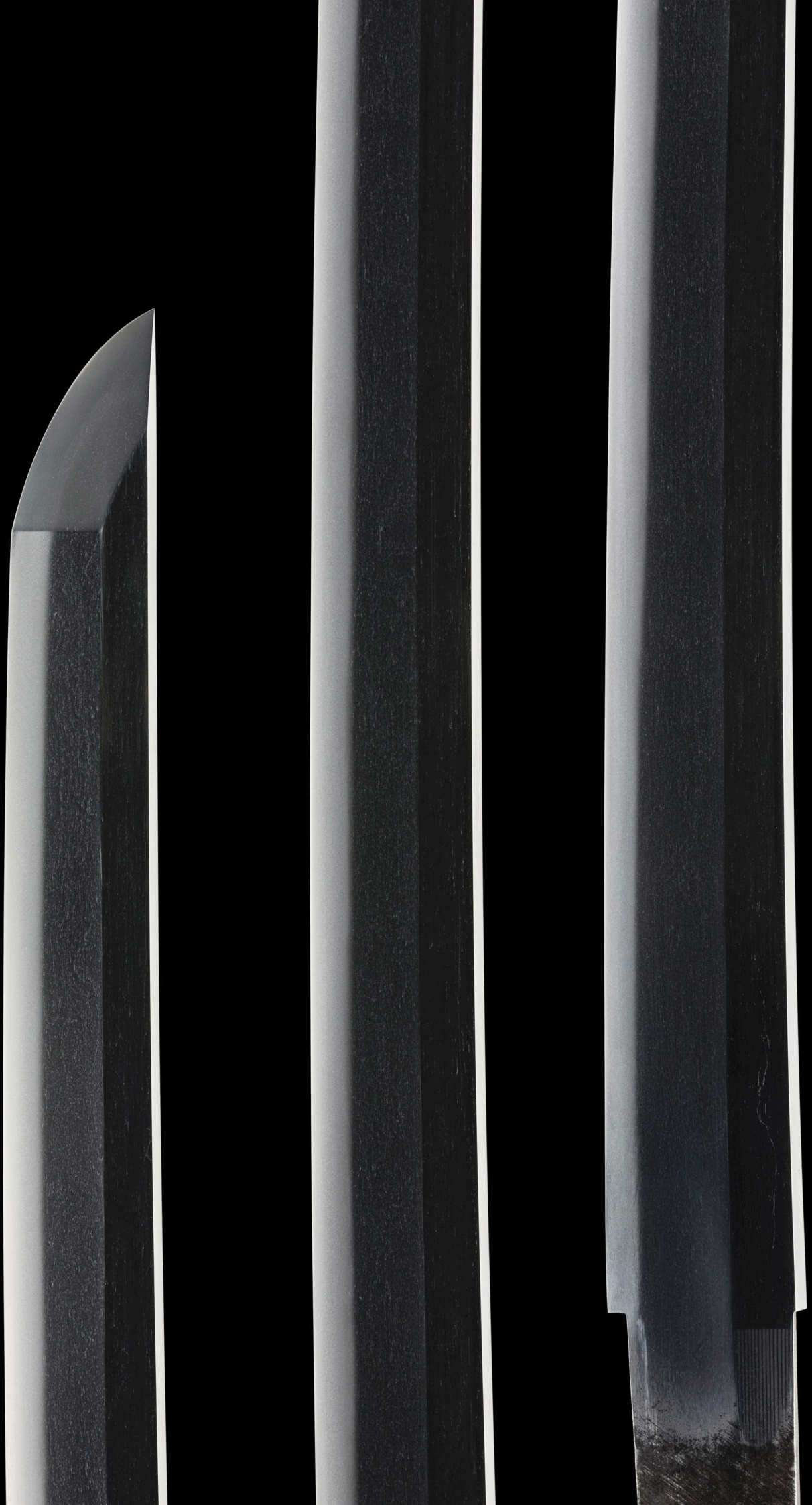
*Nagasa 2-shaku 1-sun 1-bu*

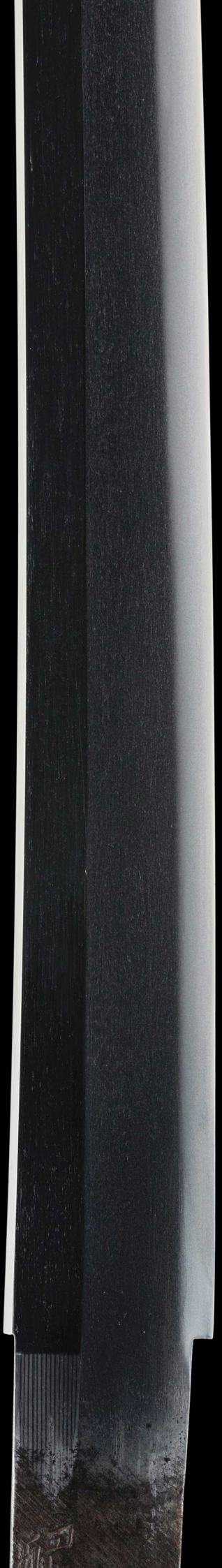
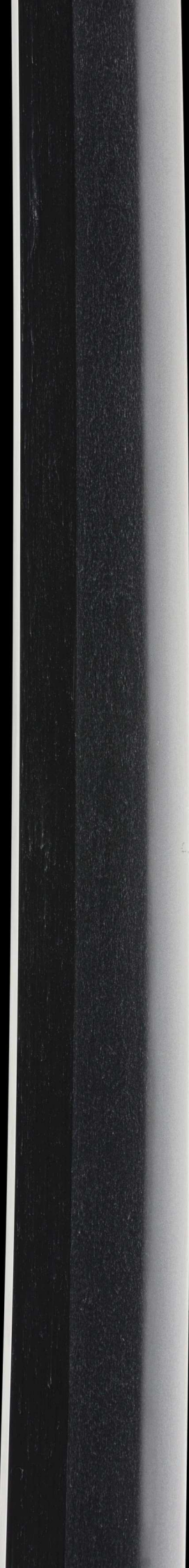
Blade length 63.9 cm

令和七乙巳年水無月吉日誌之

*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Minazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*

Written on a lucky day in the sixth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (June 2025)





A close-up photograph of a sword blade, focusing on the yakidashi area. The blade is dark and textured, with a bright, glowing line of light running along its length. A red arrow points from the text 'yakidashi' to this bright line. The background is dark, making the blade stand out.

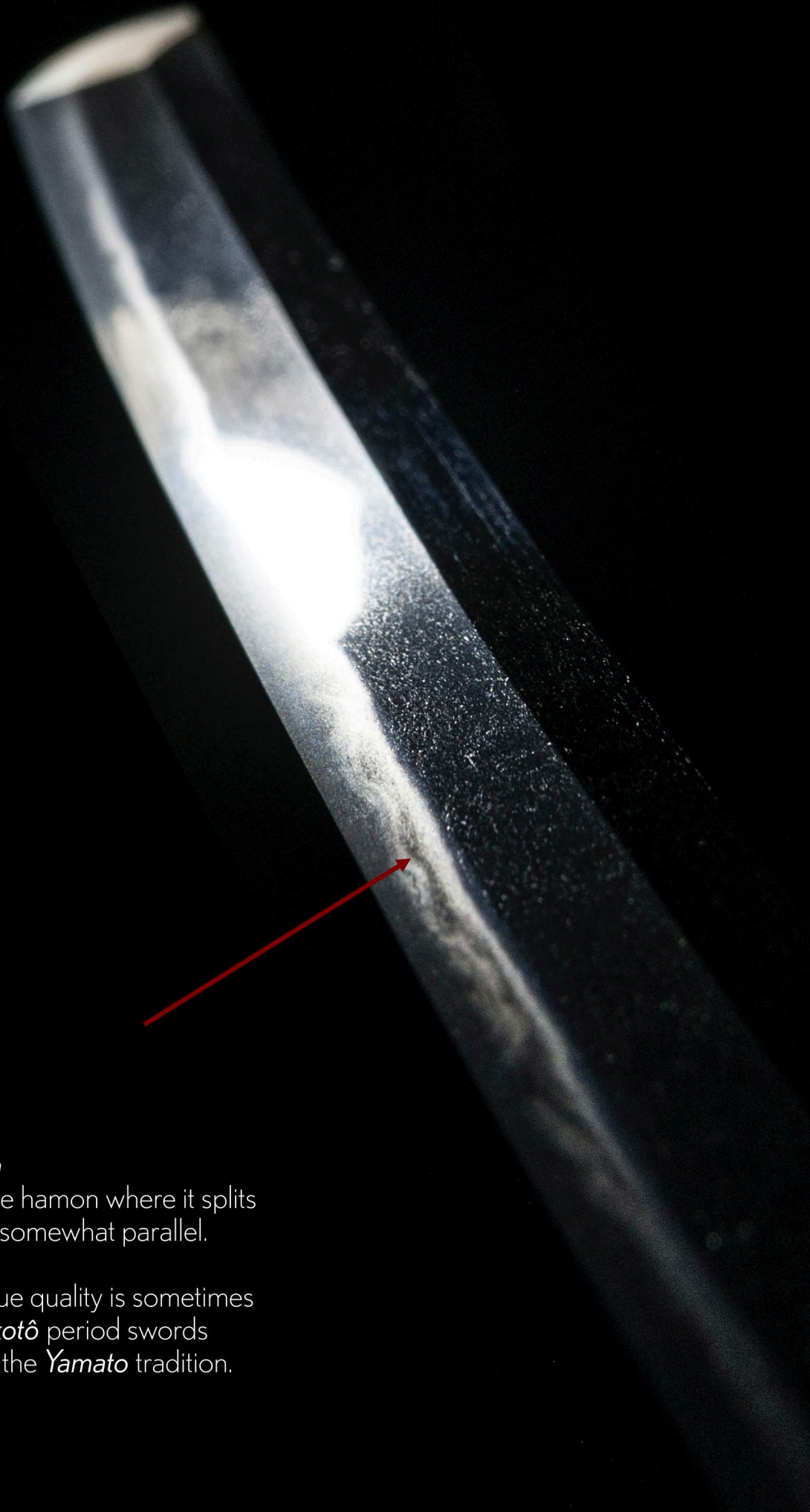
*yakidashi*

It's important to soak in the *yakidashi*, where the *hamon* actually starts on the blade. Here we see the bright *suguha* beam beautifully against the dark swirls of *chikei* in the *hada*. Simply truly observing this one area of the sword immediately tells you that we have a special piece here.

*Ko-maru* (turnback) *bôshi*.

Standing tall.





*nijûbu-ba*

area of the hamon where it splits and runs somewhat parallel.

This unique quality is sometimes seen on *kotô* period swords forged in the *Yamato* tradition.

Rings of *mokume*  
form subtle shadows

*chikei*

*sunagashi*

*kinsuji*

Like a fine wine, this sword will open up, *if* you take the time to admire all the fine elements that it is blessed with. From its exacting geometry to its keen *hataraki*, this is a sword to enjoy spending time with - as you would with a great friend.



*Shirasaya*  
(protective scabbard)



gold *habaki* on  
copper ground with  
exquisite file marks

*Aogai-mijin-nuri saya  
uchigatana-koshirae*  
(青貝微塵塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae  
decorated with mother-of-pearl*

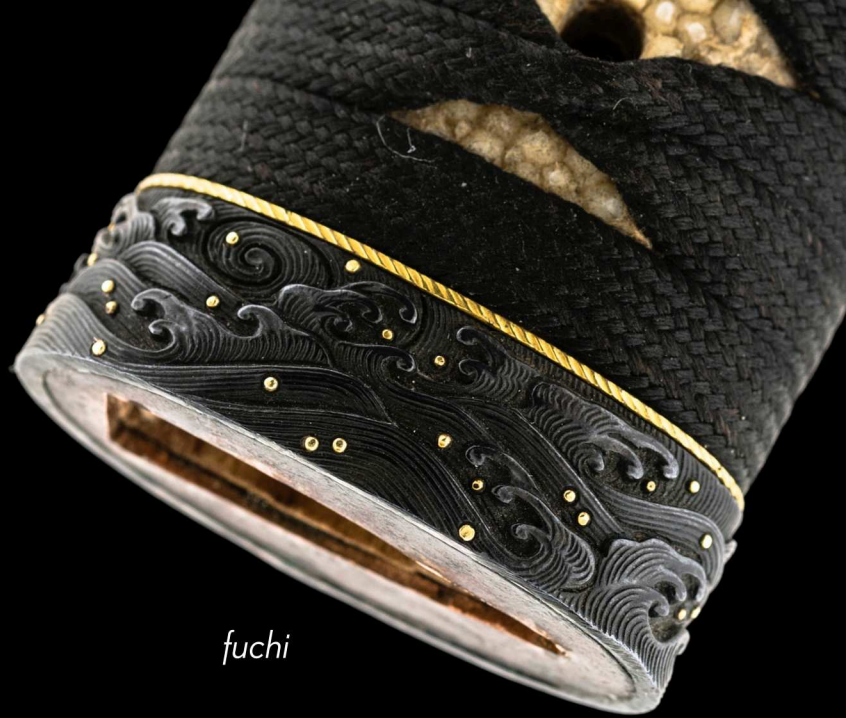
Crafted during the  
Late Edo period  
(1780~1868)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho  
Certificate of Authenticity



*kojiri*



*fuchi*



*kashira*

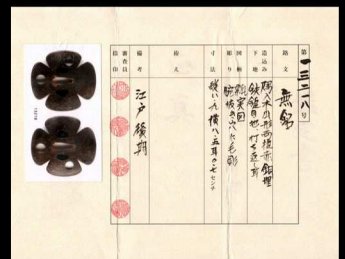
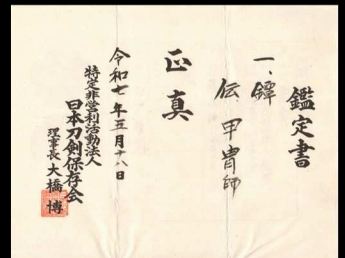
*Fuchi-kashira and kojiri*  
with wave motif

Though crafted by different hands, the *fuchi*, *kashira*, and *kojiri* all depict variations of a wave motif, bringing visual harmony to the koshirae. The *fuchi* is forged in a rich, dark-chocolate coloured *shakudô* with splashes of gold highlighting the power of the open seas. In delightful contrast, the *kashira* and *kojiri* are rendered in a more softer-toned *shibuichi* with deep channels, evoking the indelible spirit of ocean currents.



This handsome *tsuba* was made by an armourer (*katchû-shi*) during the late *Edo* period. Traditionally, armourers were craftsmen responsible for forging and assembling suits of samurai armour, and some of them also produced *tsuba* using their refined skills in ironworking. Unlike the ornate and decorative *tsuba* made by specialized artisans, *katchû-shi tsuba* are characterized by their simplicity, strength, and bold austerity.

This piece, forged from iron with a hammered surface (*tsuchime-ji*), exhibits such characteristics. Its wide and elongated lobed form, combines an intentionally rough surface, embodying a practical and martial spirit. The lack of signature is typical of *katchû-shi* works, where function and form took precedent over individual recognition.



(reverse)



The round holes found on this *tsuba* serve as "*udenuki-ana*," or "arm cord holes." These openings allowed a cord to be passed through and tied to the user's wrist, preventing the sword from being dropped during battle.

Such features are often found in older or martial-style *tsuba* and reinforce the utilitarian philosophy - the placement and size of the holes suggest a functional intent rooted in battlefield pragmatism.



example with cord running through *udenuki-ana*



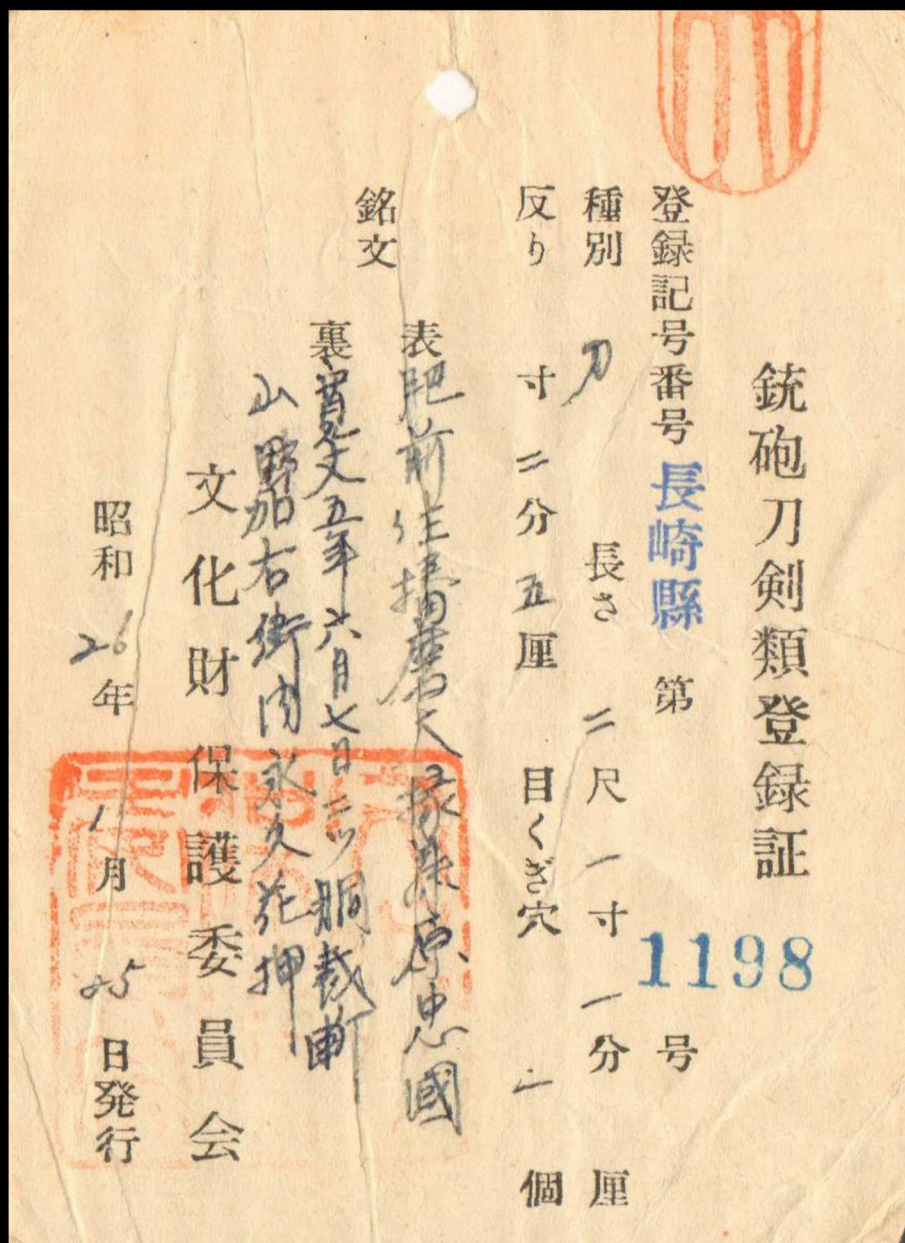
*Ukai* is a traditional Japanese method of fishing using trained cormorants, once cherished as courtly river entertainment. This *menuki* (decorative grips on the hilt) depicts a cormorant, paddle, and fish basket in a compact, poetic composition.

The obedient bird symbolizes the samurai ideal of loyalty and the master-retainer bond. The paddle suggests human intent; the basket, the reward of labor.



### Cormorant Fishing on the Nagara River By Keisai Eisen, Late Edo Period

This *ukiyo-e* print depicts a traditional *ukai* scene, with a fisherman guiding trained cormorants by torchlight. Such images reflect how deeply *ukai* was embedded in the cultural imagination of the Edo period - celebrated not only as a practical tradition but also as a subject of aesthetic appreciation.



This is the original *torokusho* (registration card) for the *Tadakuni katana*. The card was registered in the 26th year of Showa (1951), January 25th.

This is significant as 1951 was the very first year that swords were formally registered in Japan. Many former *daimyô* (great) families were invited to submit their collections suggesting this blade was once held by a prominent family.

This is one of the very first swords registered in Japan with a serial number of just 1198. Quite remarkably, the blade was registered in *Nagasaki* in *Kyûshû*, the modern-day name for Hizen province. This katana had essentially remained and was cared for in Hizen since it was made some 380 years ago.

Straight to the point.





Koshirae bag with unique  
chrysanthemum design.