



ITEM# UJKA479

A KANENORI 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

UNSIGNED, SUE-KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI PERIOD (EISHÔ ERA: 1504~1521)

Swordsmith:	<i>Nôshû-jû Kanenori (San'ami school)</i>
Measurements:	Length: 64.7cm (<i>o-suriage</i>) Sori: 1.4cm Moto-haba: 2.85cm Weight: 630g
Jihada:	<i>Well-forged itame-hada with mokume-hada with shirake-utsuri and chikei</i>
Hamon:	<i>Brilliant gunome-chôji-midare with sunagashi, kinsuji, tobiyaki and togari</i>
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Hozon (Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #2:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic)
Fujishiro rank:	Chûjô-saku (ranked as an above average swordsmith)
Sharpness:	Wazamonô (rated as a maker of sharp swords)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD ([click here](#) to watch Pablo's video presentation of this sword on YouTube)

This riveting katana has been attributed to *Kanenori*, a *wazamonô* smith of the *San'ami* group in *Mino* province during the *Eishô* period, circa 1504~1521. The *hamon* is a brilliant *gunome-midare* with thick *nie*, interspersed with *chôji*, pointed *togari*, *tobi-yaki*, and frequent sightings of *sunagashi* and *kinsuji*. This sharp sword severed through the chunky shoulder area of a human torso in November of 1642 by tester *Ôkawa Hachiemon* who was retained by lords of the *Maeda* family. This katana also comes with *sayagaki* by *Hon'ami Chôshiki* dating way back to 1884 and accompanied by a fabulous *koshirae* with a set of exquisitely crafted matching-themed fittings depicting the famous late *Heian* period *Ujigawa Battle* during the tumultuous *Genpei* war. A superb samurai collectible.



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Kissaki: 3.48cm

Saki-haba: 1.95cm

Moto-kasane: 6.0mm

Nagasa: 64.7cm

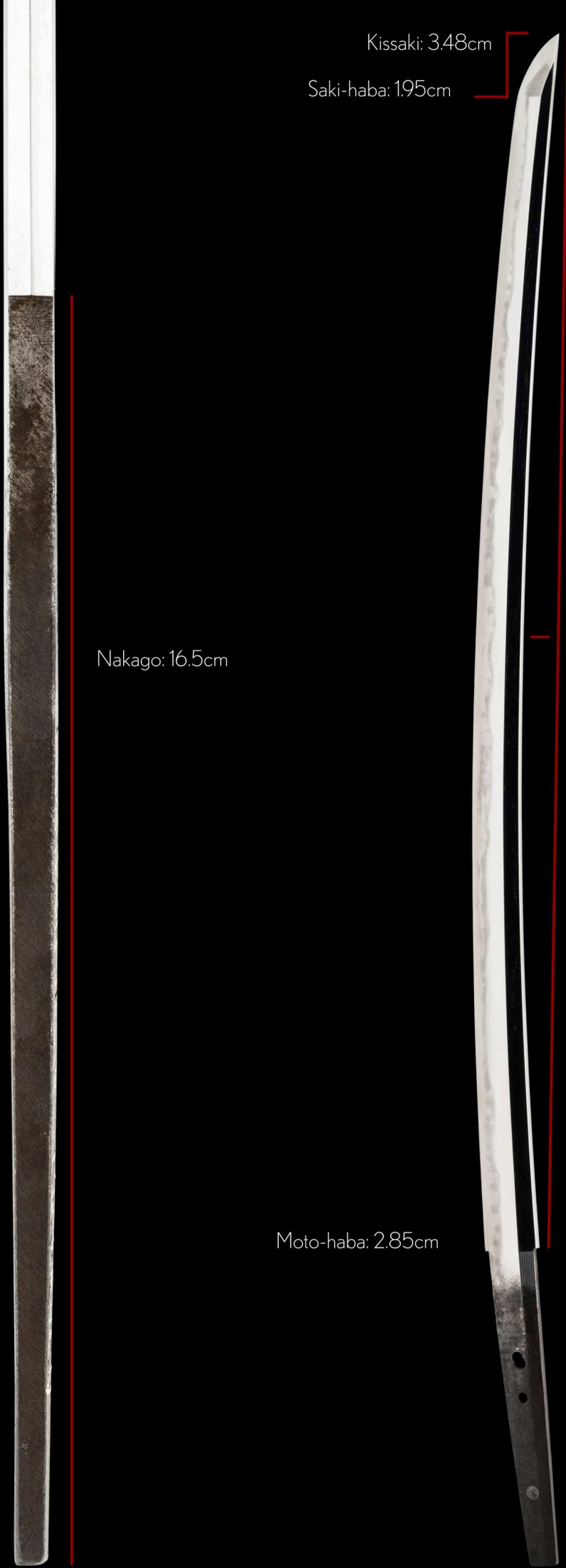
Nakago: 16.5cm

Sori: 1.4cm

Omosa: 630g

Moto-haba: 2.85cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



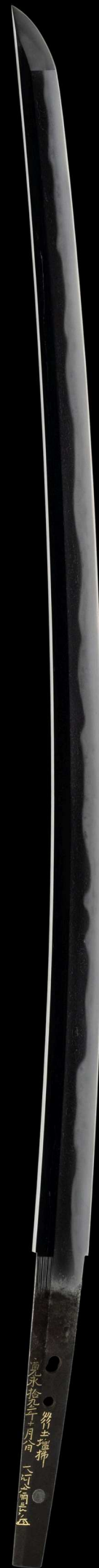
This riveting katana has been attributed to *Kanenori* (兼則), a distinguished smith of the prestigious *San'ami* (三阿弥) group in *Mino* province who worked during the *Eishô* period, circa 1504~1521. The *San'ami* school was founded by a craftsman who bore the personal name *Rokurôzaemon* and signed his works *Kanenori*. Active between 1358~1426, he was the son of the accomplished *Kanetomo*, who in turn descended from the legendary *Kaneuji* - one of the most gifted students of the great Masamune. When Kaneuji established himself in Shizu in Mino province, he became widely celebrated as the founding father of the Mino tradition.

The forging of the sword shows *itame-hada* with flowing patterns (*nagare*) mixed with *mokume*, accompanied by a distinct *shirake-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a brilliant, bubbling *gunome-midare* with thick *nie*, interspersed with *chôji*, pointed elements (*togari*), occasional *tobiyaki*, and frequent *sunagashi* and *kinsuji*.

What really gets the motor running, is that on the reverse of the *nakago*, a gold-inlaid inscription records a test cut: "*Taitai dadan-barai on the eighth day in the eleventh month of Kan'ei 19 (November 8, 1642), Ôkawa Hachimon Nagatsugu + monogram.*" The term *tai-tai* (fat/fat) refers to the shoulder area of the torso - one of the most chunky/difficult sections of the body to sever. That this sword severed through the target and into the earthen mound more than 100 years *after* its forging attests to its extraordinary sharpness. Kanenori is ranked *wazamonô*, it's clear to see why.

This katana comes housed in a *shirasaya* with *sayagaki* dating back to 1884 - a truly extraordinary survival from the Meiji period. According to the *sayagaki* by *Hon'ami Chôshiki* (本阿弥長識), sword tester *Ôkawa Hachimon* (大河八右門) was a retainer of the *Maeda* family, having served both lords of the *Kaga* domain. Through further research, we discovered that this remarkable sword was documented in two separate scholarly publications, which we expand on later on.

The blade is accompanied by a fabulous *koshirae* with a set of exquisitely crafted matching fittings depicting the famous *Ujigawa Battle* - a formal samurai *uchigatana koshirae* that compliments this terrific sword. This katana may only have Hozon-level certification but that is because the sword is unsigned from the Muromachi period. Without question, this is a *Tokubetsu Hozon* level sword in terms of forging quality.



Location: *Echizen province*

School name: *Seki school*

Swordsmith: *Kanenori*

suriage-nakago (shortened tang)

katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

Traces of the original *hamon*

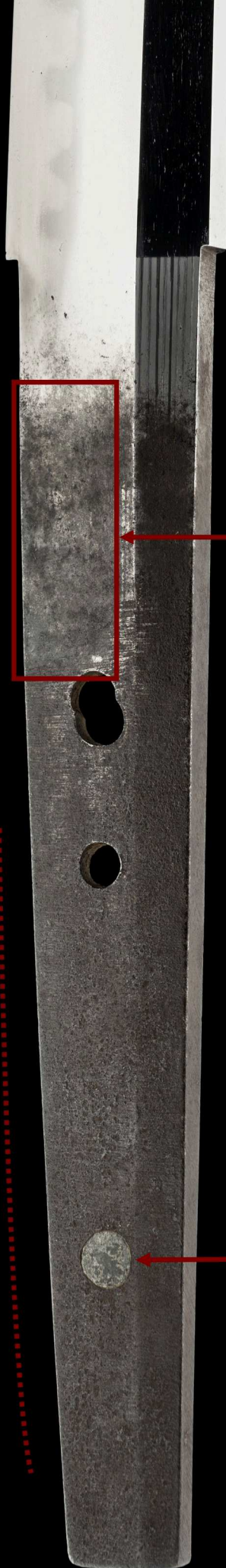
This sword has been shortened (*suriage*).

Such modifications were often carried out in response to changing modes of combat, from mounted to close-quarter fighting, as well as to suit the stature of a new owner or by order of the *shogunate*.

As this blade was forged in the late *Muromachi* period, it was likely intended from the outset for close combat. The fact that it was later shortened suggests that it was further adjusted to enhance usability for the next samurai owner.

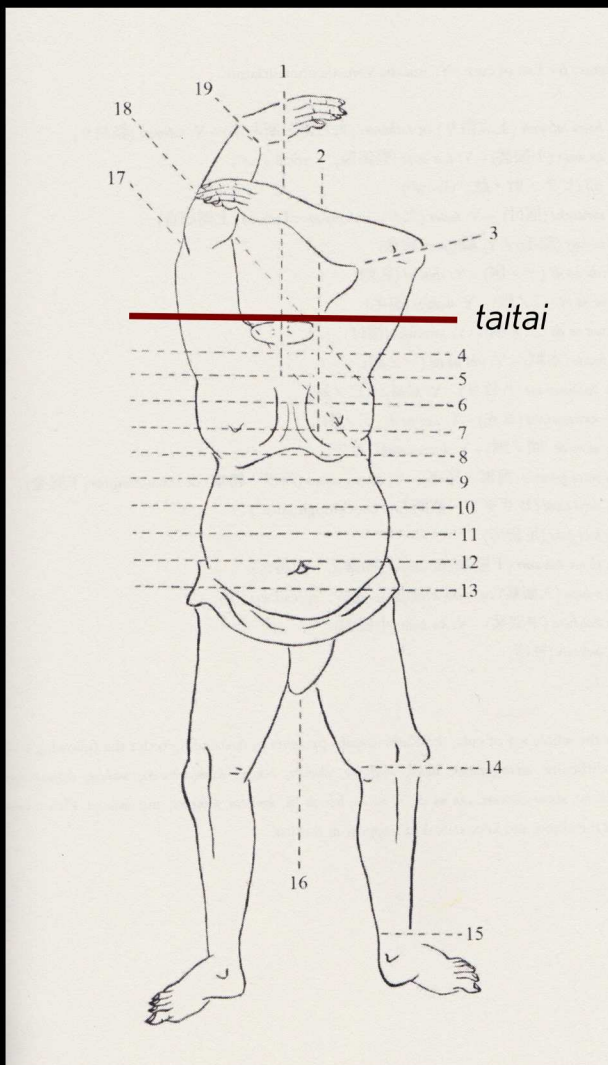
The original *mekugi-ana* before *suriage*

Estimated original shape



Taitai dodan-barai, Kan'ei jûkyû-nen jûichigatsu yôka
Ôkawa Hachiemon Nagatsugu + kaô

Ôkawa Hachiemon Nagatsugu severed through a human body at the height of the collarbones and into the earthen mound below using this blade on the eighth day of the eleventh month in the nineteenth year of *Kan'ei* era (November 8th, 1642). *Tai tai* translates to 'fat/fat', suggesting the cut was thick and difficult.



Cutting test on a dead prisoner's body

- (Kan) 寛
- (ei) 永
- (jû) 拾
- (kyû) 九
- (nen) 年
- (jû) 十一
- (ichi) 一月
- (yô) 八日
- (ka) 日
- (Ô) 大
- (kawa) 河
- (hachi) 八
- (e) 右
- (mon) 門
- (Naga) 長
- (tsugu) 次
- (kaô) 花押



- タイタイ (Taitai)
- 土 (do)
- 壇 (dan)
- 拂 (barai)

pure gold inlay

According to a *sayagaki* by *Hon'ami Chôshiki* (本阿弥長識), sword tester *Ôkawa Hachiemon* (大河八右門) was a retainer of the *Maeda* family, both the lords of the *Kaga* domain.

Records indicate that he served *Maeda Toshitsune* (前田利常), the second lord of *Kaga*. Since this sword bears an inscription dated Kan'ei 19 (1642), *Toshitsune* was still alive at the time, but the domain had already passed to the third lord, *Maeda Mitsutaka* (前田光高).

Other source note that *Ôkawa Hachiemon* carried out numerous test cuts, and that during the tenure of the fourth lord, *Maeda Tsunanori* (前田綱紀), he is recorded as having succeeded in a remarkable three-body test cut (*mitsu-dô*).



Maeda Toshitsune
(1594~1658)



Maeda Tsunanori
(1643~1724)

寛永拾九年十月八日
然土壇拂
大河八右門長識

06202406

No 3034843



鑑定書
一、刀 無銘（兼則）
（金象嵌）
タイタイ土壇拂
寛永拾九年十一月八日大河八右門長次（花押）
長二尺一寸三分半
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
令和六年八月二十三日
公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會

石川県教育委員会
第 28104 号
令和6年1月15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 6th year of Reiwa (2024), August 23rd

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Kanenori
(Kinzôgan) *taitai dodan-barai*
Kanei jûkyû-nen jûichigatsu yôka Ôkawa Hachiemon Nagatsugu (kaô)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 1-sun 3-bu han (64.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

* As a rule at the NBTHK, if an unsigned sword is judged to be from the Muromachi period (or younger), the highest certificate level that the sword can receive is NBTHK Hozon.

This katana is fitted in a wonderfully old *shirasaya* with *Hon'ami sayagaki* that dates back to March 1884, wow.

It would be wise to create a new *shirasaya* for the long-term health of the blade (and of course keep the existing *shirasaya*). Unique Japan will assist the new owner with this production. Note that Hon'ami sensei attributed the sword to *Sakakura Masatoshi*, a skilled swordsmith from the early 1500s in Mino province.

美濃國坂倉正利

Mino no Kuni Sakakura Masatoshi

Sakakura Masatoshi from Mino province

長貳尺壹寸四分磨上無銘也

Nagasa 2-shaku 1-sun 4-bu suriage mumei nari

Blade length 64.7 cm, shortened, unsigned

但寛永拾九年十一月八日大河八右衛門様象嵌在之
Tadashi Kan'ei jûkunen jûichigatsu yôka Ôkawa Hachiemon tamesu zôgan kore ari

A gold-inlaid inscription notes that on November 8th, 1642, Ôkawa Hachiemon performed a test cutting.

代金参拾枚

Dai kin sanjû-mai

Value: 30 gold coins

大河八右衛門者加賀之士元和寛永頃利常中納言ニ
仕フ當時其業ヲ以名アリ

Ôkawa Hachiemon wa Kaga no shi Genna Kan'ei goro

Toshitsune Chûnagon ni tsukau tôji sono gô o motte mei ari

Ôkawa Hachiemon was a retainer of Kaga. During the Genna and Kan'ei eras (1615-1644), he served Lord Maeda Toshitsune, the Chûnagon of Kaga, and was renowned in his time for his skill in this artform.

明治十七年甲申春三月鑑定併記之本阿弥長識

Meiji jûnananen kinoe-saru haru sangatsu kantei awasete kore o shirusu Hon'ami Chôshiki

Written and appraised by *Hon'ami Chôshiki* in the spring month of March, Meiji 17 (1884) in the Year of the Monkey.



Kenwa-roku
(Sword Chronicles)



When searching the National Library database of Japan, we discovered a book called *Kenwa-roku* (Sword Chronicles), published during the 45th year of the *Meiji* period (1912), which highlighted three swords (including this one) that completed cutting tests under the hand of *Ôkawa Hachiemon*.

It reads:

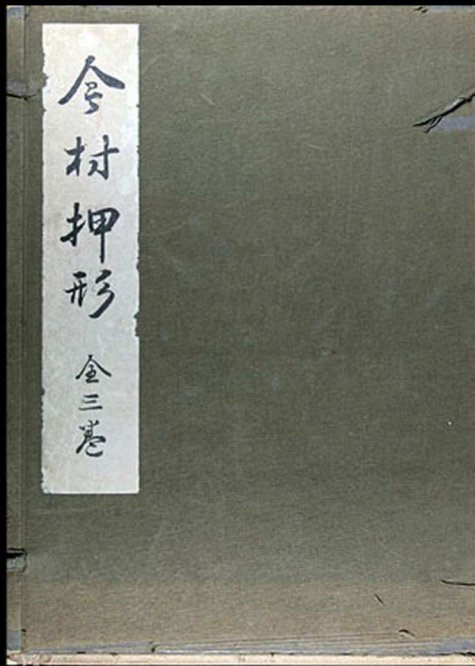
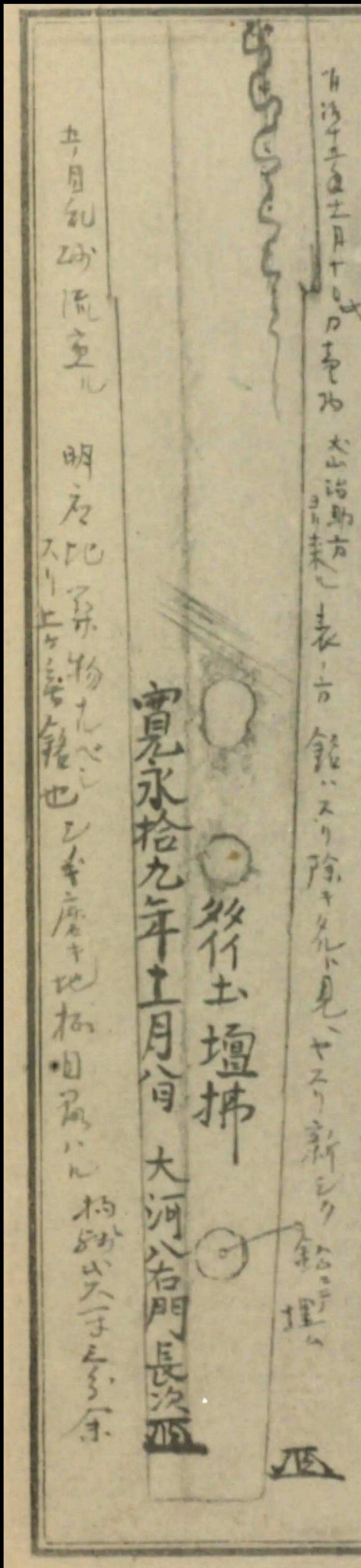
"*Ôkawa Hachiemon* (大河八右衛門), a retainer of the *Maeda* family of *Kaga*, appears to have been an exceptionally skilled tester of blades.

One test inscription reads: "Three-body cut (*mittsu-dô*) through the mound by *Ôkawa Hachiemon*," on a sword by *Kashû Kanewaka* (加州兼若). Another, on a *Kanemoto* (兼元) blade, states: "On June 8th in the 2nd year of the *Manji* era (1659), this sword severed through three bodies through the mound, tested by *Ôkawa Hachiemon*."

On an unsigned sword attributed by *sayagaki* to *Sakarakura no Seki Masatoshi* (坂倉関正利) (this *katana*), the *nakago* bears a gold-inlaid inscription: "Cutting through the mound by *Ôkawa Hachiemon Nagatsugu*, November 8th, in the 19th year of *Kan'ei* era (1642)." All of these test inscriptions were rendered in gold inlay."

"The *saya* of the *Masatoshi* blade also carries *sayagaki* by *Hon'ami Chôshiki* (本阿弥長識), which reads: "*Ôkawa Hachiemon* was a retainer of the *Maeda* family of *Kaga*. During the *Genna* and *Kan'ei* eras he served Lord *Maeda Toshitsune* (前田利常), *Chûnagon* of *Kaga*, and at that time he was renowned for his skill in this art. Recorded together with an appraisal in the spring of March, 17th year of the *Meiji* era (1884). – *Hon'ami Chôshiki*."

大河八右衛門
○大河八右衛門は是は加州前田家の家臣で、餘程達者に切つたやうに見える。此試し銘は加州住兼若の刀に「三ッ胴土壇拂ふ大河八右衛門試之」とあり、兼元の刀「萬壽二年六月八日三ッ胴土壇に入る」とあつて、「大河八右衛門様之」とあつた。
無銘の坂倉関正利と鞘書ある刀に、「土壇拂ふ大河八右衛門長次寛永十九年十一月八日」の試があり、孰れも金象眼に入つて居る。此大河八右衛門の試の坂倉関の鞘書に、本阿彌長識の書付がある。それに「大河八右衛門は加賀之士、元和寛永の頃利常中納言に仕ふ、當時其業を以て名あり、明治十七甲申年春三月鑑定併識之、本阿彌長識」とある。



Imamura Oshigata Collection

Upon further investigation, this sword was also introduced in the *Oshigata Collection* compiled by the renowned sword appraiser *Imamura Nagayoshi* (今村長賀, 1837~1910).

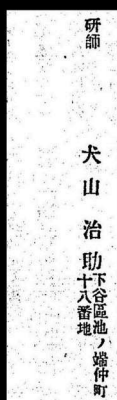
Although the entire text is difficult to read, it records the following points:

On November 10th, 1882 (Meiji 15), a man named *Inuyama Jisuke* (犬山治助) brought it in.

The blade shows *gunome-midare* with *sunagashi*. It is *mumei* (unsigned) and *suriage* (shortened).

The lowest *mekugi-ana* had already been filled with lead at that time.

It is further documented in 1890 that *Mr. Inuyama Jisuke* was active in *Shitaya-ku Tokyo*, working as a polisher while also engaging in sword dealing.

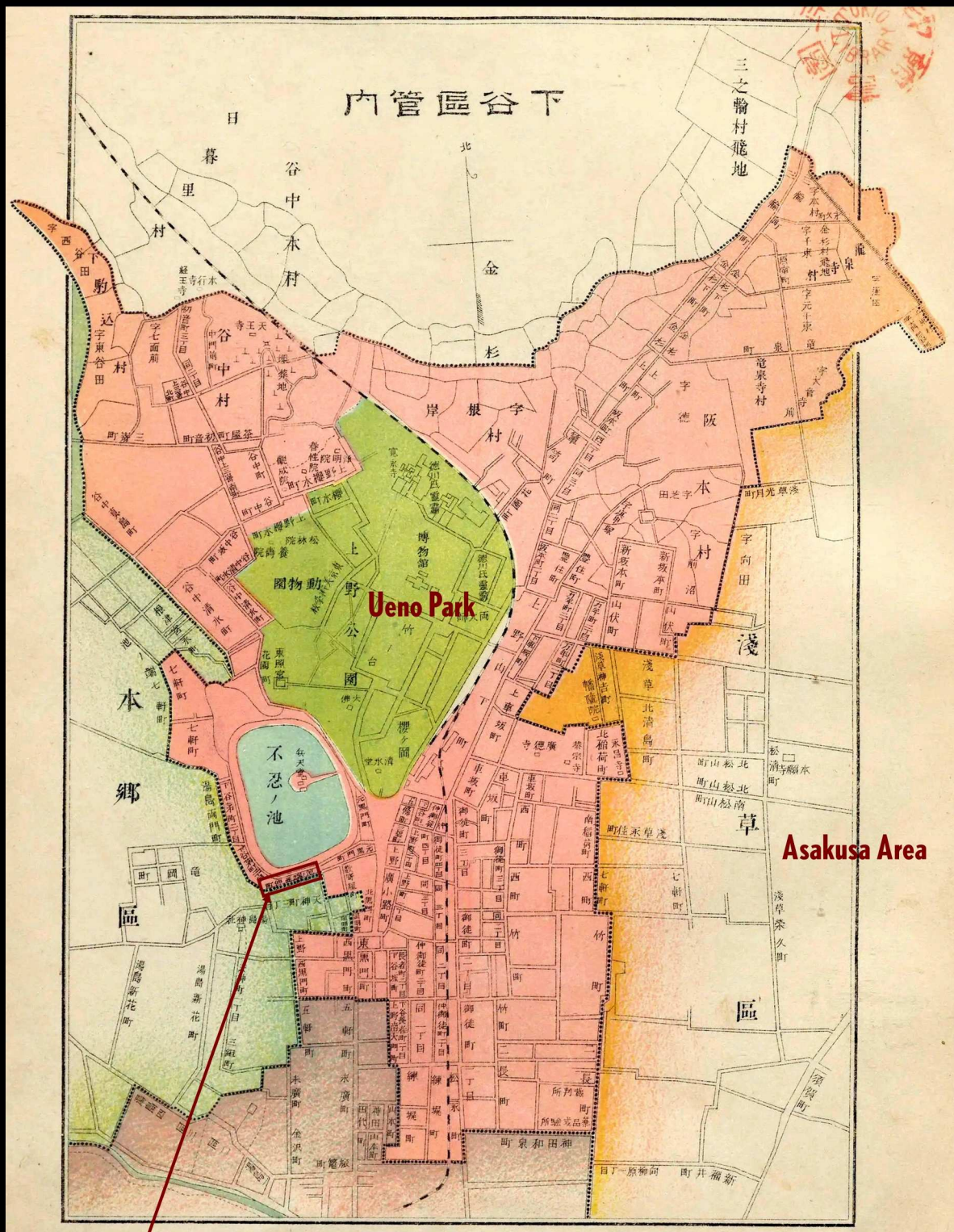


Polisher
Inuyama Jisuke
 Nakamachi 18, Ikenohata, Shitaya-ku

Shitaya-ku is now *Taitô-ku*, a ward in Tokyo. This is a map created in 1891.

Ikenohata means 'edge of the pond.'

In this case the pond is *Shinobazu Ike* in *Ueno Park*.



Ikenohata Nakamachi





midare-komi

The *bôshi* begins with a soft *midare-komi*, turning back in *ko-maru* (small round) with *hakikake* (swept pattern) at the tip.

ko-maru with *hakikake*



gunome-midare hamon

A striking *gunome-midare hamon* bubbles like champagne - a toast to the katana!

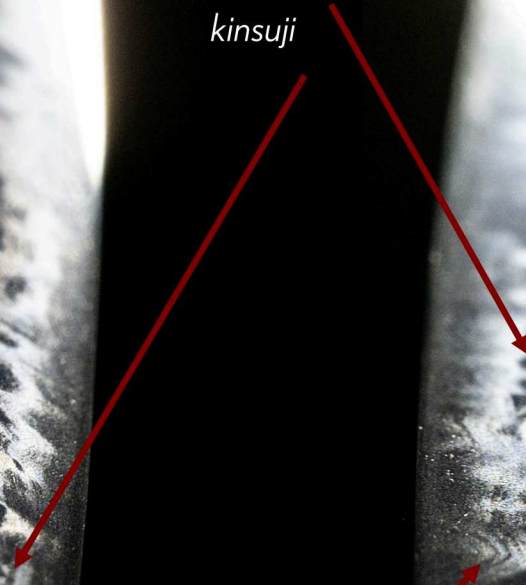
kinsuji

The *hamon* displays a super intense multi-layer light show with an abundance of *hataraki* featuring *kinsuji*, *tobiyaki* and *sunagashi*.

tobiyaki

kinsuji

sunagashi





ying/yang

feel the energy



mokume

Itame-hada mixed with *mokume*

A close-up photograph of a metal cutting tool's edge, likely a chisel or similar tool, set against a dark background. The tool's edge is highly reflective, showing a bright, white, serrated line. Two red arrows originate from the word 'ashi' and point to the cutting edge. The word 'ashi' is written in a light, sans-serif font.

ashi

Long legs of *ashi* (legs) extend to the cutting edge.

A subtle treat is the presence of white *shirake-utsuri* reflecting the *hamon* inside the dark *jigane* (body) of the sword.

Look for it, you'll be glad you did.

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, showing the dark, textured *jigane* (body) and the lighter, wavy *hamon* (edge). The image highlights a subtle feature called *shirake-utsuri*, which is a white, wavy line reflecting the *hamon* inside the dark *jigane*. Two red arrows point to these white lines on both sides of the blade. The text *shirake-utsuri* is centered below the arrows.

shirake-utsuri

togari



Togari-ba (pointed) area of the *hamon* can be observed, a staple of the *Mino* tradition.



Shirasaya (protective scabbard)
made in (or before) 1884

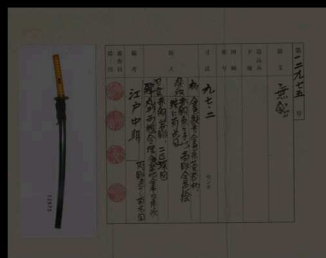
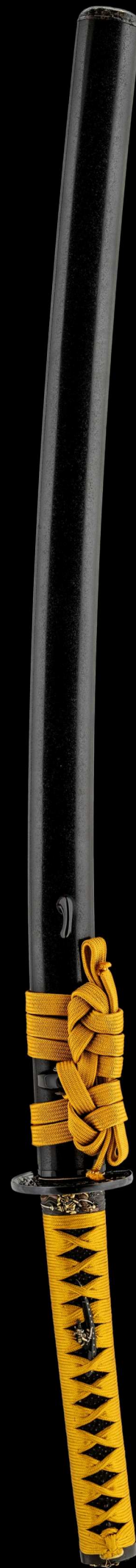
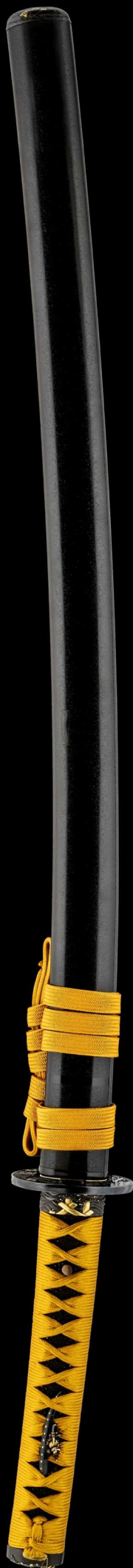


silver *habaki* on a
copper base

*Kuro-ishime-ji-fû-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒石目地風塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black
with stone-surface texture*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity
(certificate issued in Oct 2025)

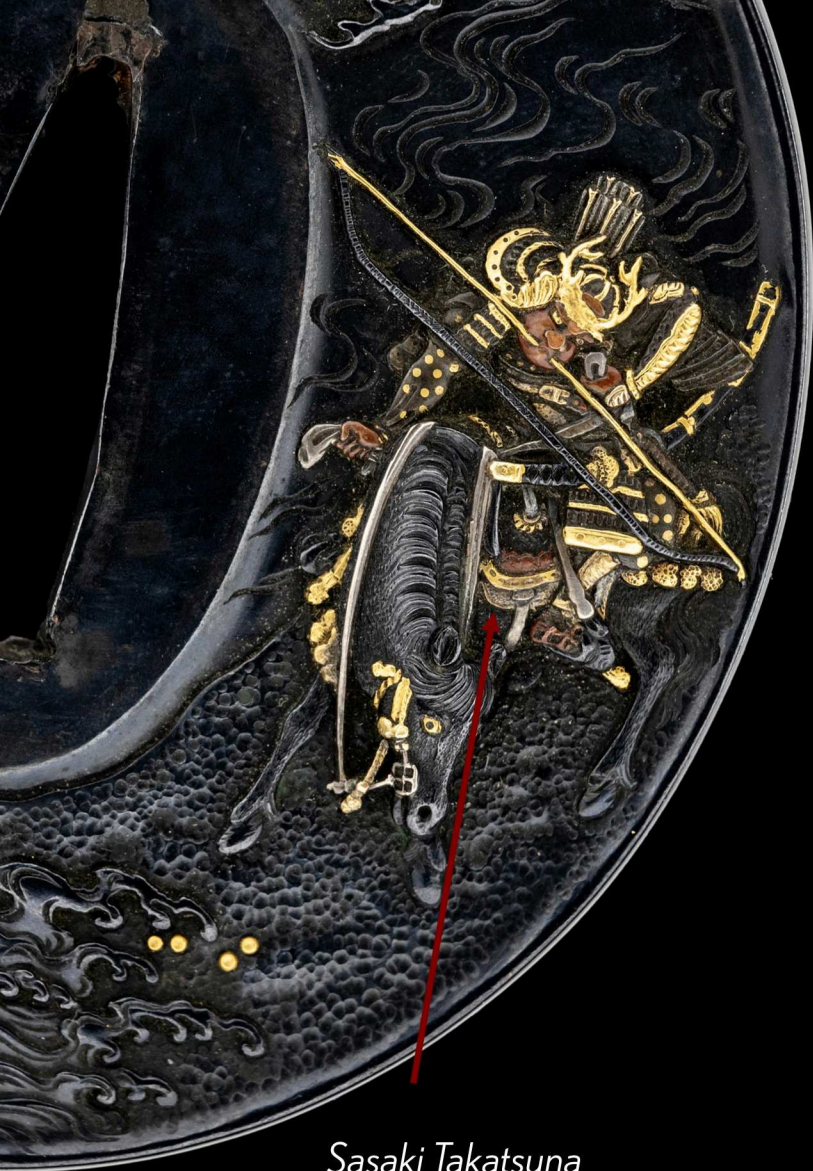


A *shakudô tsuba* depicting two samurai warriors engaged in the *Battle of the Uji River*. The surface is polished *shakudô*, dramatically represented in high relief. The level of detail is out of this world. This is the kind of *tsuba* to appreciate under a microscope.

The motif is a celebrated episode from the late *Heian* period. In 1184, during the *Genpei War*, the armies of the *Minamoto* clan clashed at the *Uji River* near *Kyoto*. When *Minamoto Yoshinaka* (源義仲) pursued *Minamoto Yoshitsune* (源義経), the warriors *Sasaki Tadatsuna* (佐々木忠綱) and *Kajiwara Kagesue* (梶原景季) competed to be the first to cross the river and strike the enemy. Their fierce rivalry to claim the honour of the vanguard became legendary, symbolizing the valour and competitive spirit of samurai warriors.



(reverse)



Sasaki Takatsuna



Kajiwara Kagesue



The contest for the vanguard at the Battle of the Uji River
by Utagawa Sadahide (1861)



This brilliant *fuchi-kashira* valiantly continues *the Battle of Uji River* theme as seen on the *tsuba*. The work here was performed by a different Edo period metalsmith as when illustrating the same motif, variations in style often appear depending on the maker.

The carving emphasizes deeper contrasts of light and shadow when compared to the *tsuba*. Particular attention may be drawn to the detailed rendering of the armour and the distinct facial expressions of the samurai on horseback.

Feel the energy!



Two large and powerful *menuki* are both finely detailed, depicting *samurai* advancing aboard a boat during the *Genpei War*. The imagery suggests *the Battle of Dan-no-ura*, the final and most decisive conflict of *the Genpei War*.





Tsuka (hilt) is wrapped over black-lacquered *samekawa* (rayskin) and golden silk





This is samurai spirit.



Koshirae bag