



ITEM# UJKA481

## A MIIKE KATANA

UNSIGNED, CHÛ-KOTÔ LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (CIRCA EARLY 1300S)

- Swordsmith:** *Miike school (Late Kamakura period)*
- Measurements:** **Length:** 68.2cm (*o-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba:** 3.07cm **Weight:** 565g
- Jihada:** *Densely forged itame that tends somewhat to nagare and that features plenty of fine ji-nie and some shirake all over the blade*
- Hamon:** *Large and gently undulating notare that tends to suguha-chō and that is mixed with gunome, many chōji-ashi, shimi along the entire ha, sunagashi, and kinsuji in places*
- Certificate #1:** **11th NBTHK Jūyō Tōken** (an important sword, passed on November 15, 1963)
- Authentication:** **Sayagaki by Kanzan-sensei** (Mr. Kanzan Satō)
- Included:** Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description

## SOLD

The *Miike* school, based in *Chikugo* province, traces its origins to the late *Heian* period with their most renowned blade being the *Ôdenta Mitsuyo*, a National Treasure, and one of *Five Great Swords*, once held by the *Maeda* family. This wonderful katana attributed to the *Miike* school dates back to the late *Kamakura* period, circa 1300. It comes with a prestigious early 11th session *jūyō-tōken* level certification and vintage *sayagaki* by *Kanzan-sensei* from 1970 attesting to the sword being an heirloom of the powerful *Shimazu* family from *Satsuma* province. Its *sugata* is broad and commanding, with a *hamon* filled with *ashi*, *sunagashi*, and *kinsuji*. A fine sword from a notable *daimyō* family who took care of it for centuries. Now, onto its next chapter of life.



Saki-kasane: 3.6mm

Moto-kasane: 4.9mm

Kissaki: 4.04cm

Saki-haba: 2.45cm

Nagasa: 68.2cm

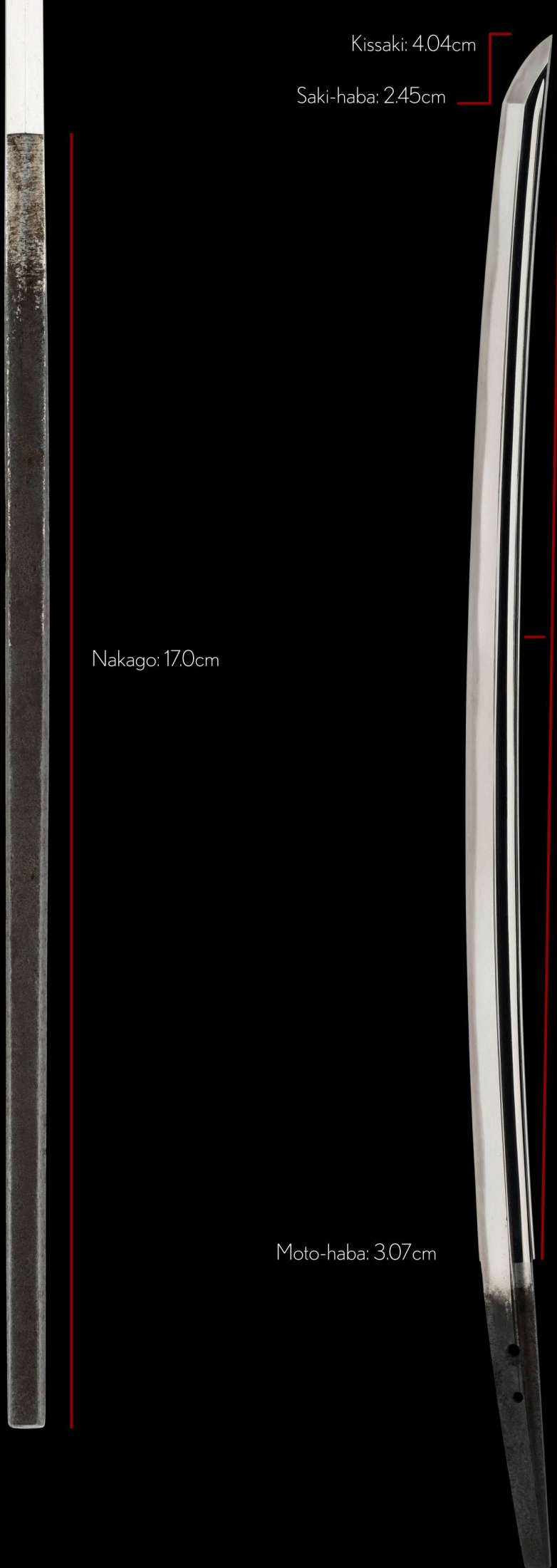
Nakago: 17.0cm

Sori: 1.3cm

Omosa: 565g

Moto-haba: 3.07cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



The *Miike* school, based in *Chikugo* province, traces its origins to the late *Heian* period and is one of the oldest sword-smithing traditions in *Kyûshû*. Its founder, *Miike Denta Mitsuyo* (三池典太光世), flourished in the 11th century. The most renowned blade from this lineage is the *Ôdenta Mitsuyo* (大典太光世), a National Treasure and one of the legendary *Tenka Goken* (Five Great Swords), once held by the *Maeda* family. Its massive size and formidable craftsmanship symbolize the early *Miike* school's legacy.

By the late *Kamakura* period, warfare had evolved into more mobile, close-quarter combat, prompting the development of lighter, more agile blades without sacrificing cutting power. *Miike* smiths responded with swords featuring wide *mihaba*, thinner *kasane*, and slightly extended *chû-kissaki*, optimized for battlefield functionality. *Miike* craftsmanship is marked by robust construction and dignified *jihada*. Their blades often show flowing *itame* mixed with *mokume* and *masame*, with *shirake* - known as "*Miike-hada*" - along with thick *chikei* and occasional *utsuri*. These features convey visual richness and technical skill.

The *hamon* usually follows a straight *suguha* base blended with soft *gunome* or *chôji* elements. Executed in *nie-deki*, it includes active details like *sunagashi* and *kinsuji*. *Miike* blades often feature bold carvings such as *bôhi*, sometimes paired with *soebi*. Especially notable is the *Miike-bôhi* - a broad, deep groove with sharp termination points - reflecting the school's emphasis on structure and rhythm.

This wonderful *ô-suriage* blade from the late *Kamakura* period displays all the hallmarks of the *Miike* school - a prestigious early *jûyô-tôken* level sword to join any quality *nihontô* collection. Its *sugata* is broad and commanding, with a shallow curvature and a slightly extended *kissaki*. The *jihada* features tight *itame* with a whitish tone and thick *chikei*, while the *hamon* combines straight and irregular forms, filled with *ashi*, *sunagashi*, and *kinsuji*. There is much to study and appreciate in a sword of this pedigree.

This katana comes with *sayagaki* by *Kanzan-sensei* attesting to the sword being an heirloom of the powerful *Shimazu* family from *Satsuma* province in *Kyûshû*. One can consider building a custom *koshirae* with the *Shimazu kamon* (crest), which would pay honourable tribute to the sword and family who took care of it for centuries. Unique Japan will gladly assist the new custodian with this process.





(*ura*, reverse)



*kurijiri*  
chestnut shaped *nakagojiri* (butt end)

重要第九九六號

指定書

刀 大磨上無銘 三池 一口

長二尺二寸五分 反五分弱

鑄造 庵棟 中鋒

鍛板目流れごころに地沸細かにつき

総体に白けごころがある

又文直刃仕立て淺く湾れ互の目交

り丁子足入り金筋かかる

彫物表裏棒樋に漆樋

茎大磨上目釘孔二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果

重要刀劍に指定する

昭和卅八年十一月十五日

財團法人日本美術刀剣保存協會

會長 細川護立



Jûyô Certificate No. 996  
Shiteisho (指定書) Certificate of Designation  
Katana, ô-suriage mumei: Miike school (三池)

Measurements

nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 5-bu (68.2 cm), sori 5-bu jaku (1.3 cm)

Description

Keijô: *shinogi-zukuri*, *iori-mune*, *chû-kissaki*

Kitae: *itame* that tends somewhat to *nagare* and that features plenty of fine *ji-nie* and some *shirake* all over the blade

Hamon: large and gently undulating *notare* that tends to *suguha-chô* and that is mixed with *gunome*, many *chôji-ashi*, and some *kinsuji*

Horimono: on both sides a *bôhi* with *soebi*

Nakago: *ô-suriage*, two *mekugi-ana*

According to the result of the shinsa committee of our society we judged this work as authentic and rate it as *Jûyô-Tôken*.

November 15, 1963

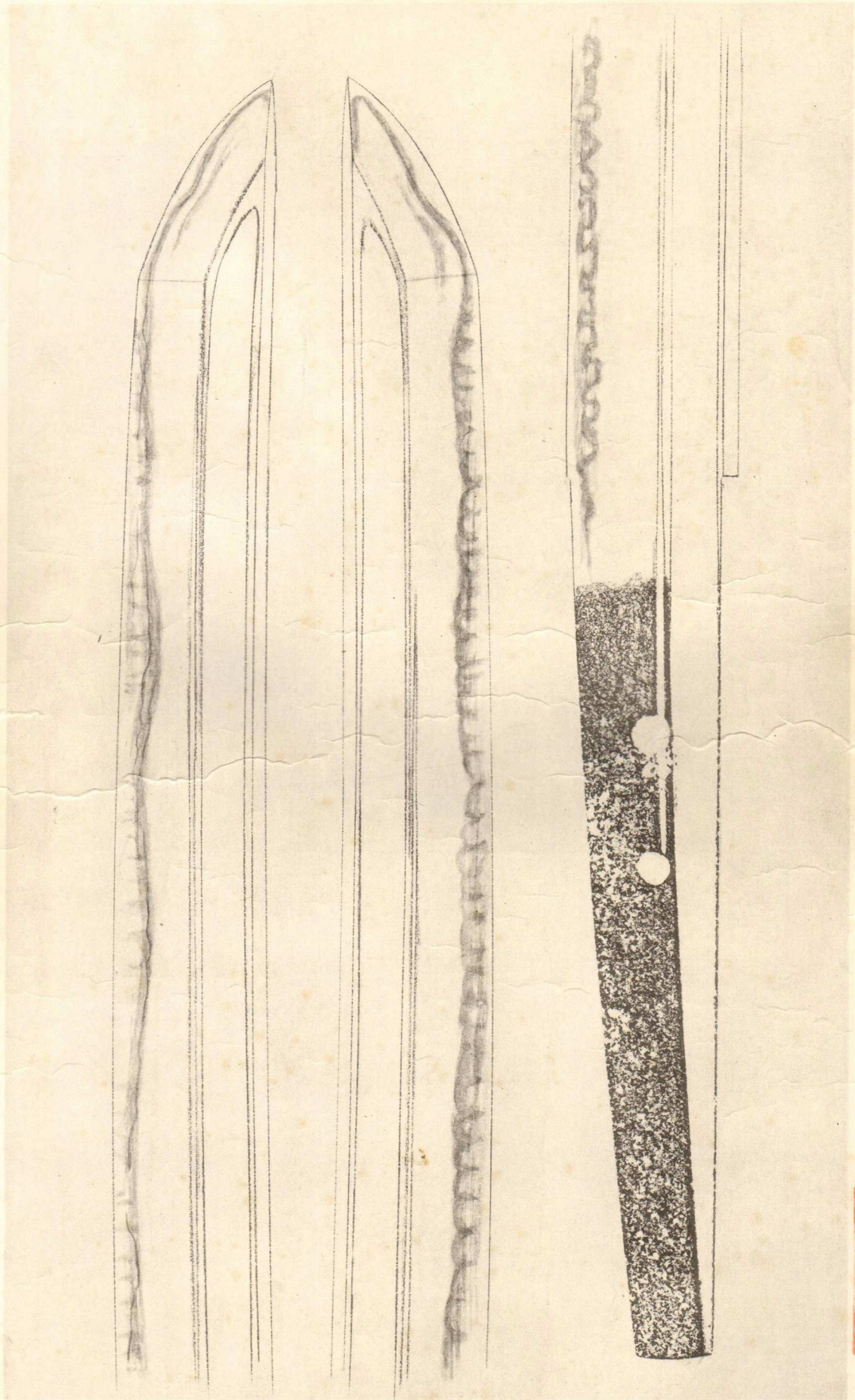
[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Tôken Hozon Kyôkai, NBTHK

[President] *Hosokawa Moritatsu* (細川護立)

This katana was awarded NBTHK *jûyô-tôken* at the 11th session way back in November 1963. At that time, *Tokubetsu Jûyô* had yet to be introduced, thus this was the highest honour at the museum. These early *jûyô* certificates make such swords extra special for that reason.



刀 無銘 三池



The Jûyô-Tôken white paper



第十一回重要刀劍指定  
三池  
但大磨上無銘也  
島津家傳來之一

*Dai jûikkai Jûyô-Tôken shitei*  
*Miike*  
*Tadashi ô-suriage mumei nari*  
*Shimazu-ke denrai no hitotsu*

*Jûyô-Tôken at the 11th Jûyô Shinsa*  
*Miike*  
This blade is *ô-suriage mumei*.  
It was a heirloom of the Shimazu family.

刃長貳尺貳寸五分有之  
*Hachô 2-shaku 2-sun 5-bu kore ari*  
Blade length ~ 68.2 cm

昭和庚戌年夏日  
寒山誌「花押」  
*Shôwa kanoë-inudoshi kajitsu*  
*Kanzan shirusu + kaô*

Written by Kanzan on a summer day in the year of the dog of  
the Shôwa era (1970) + monogram.



The *Shimazu* clan were the *daimyô* of the *Satsuma han*, which spread over Satsuma.

The *Shimazu* were identified as one of the *tozama* or outsider *daimyô* families in contrast with the *fudai* or insider clans which were hereditary vassals or allies of the *Tokugawa* clan.





The NBTHK remarks on the 11th *jûyô* certificate are concise and impacting.

*"This blade is ô-suriage mumei, and its powerful shape dates it to the end of the Kamakura period. With its skilfully engraved wide and shallow hi and the interpretation of its jiba, the blade reflects the typical characteristics traditionally associated with the Miike School."*





*notarekomi* (wavy) with a very small turnback

*nijû-ba*





A bright, beautiful *noiguchi* displaying  
a calm *notare hamon*.




*Chôji-ashi* captured on this dignified blade.



An exceptionally long *kinsuji*—formed by martensitic structures within the *hamon* - runs along the blade, indicating precise differential hardening and expert *yakiire* control.

From *chikei* to *kinsuji*, this is what makes *kotô* period swords so intriguing. Note this lovely burl-grain *mokume* formation that expands like a *zen* rock garden.



A close-up photograph of a sword blade, showing the transition from the dark, polished *itame-hada* (cuttlefish skin pattern) to the lighter, crystalline *nie* (white metal) section. The blade is oriented diagonally from the top-left to the bottom-right. Two red arrows point from text annotations to specific features on the blade's surface.

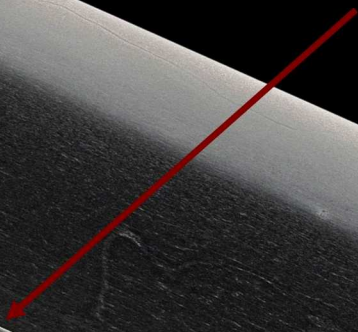
Densely forged *itame-hada* with *shirake* (whitish tone), characteristics of the *Miike* school.

Lovely stream of consistent *nie* crystals.



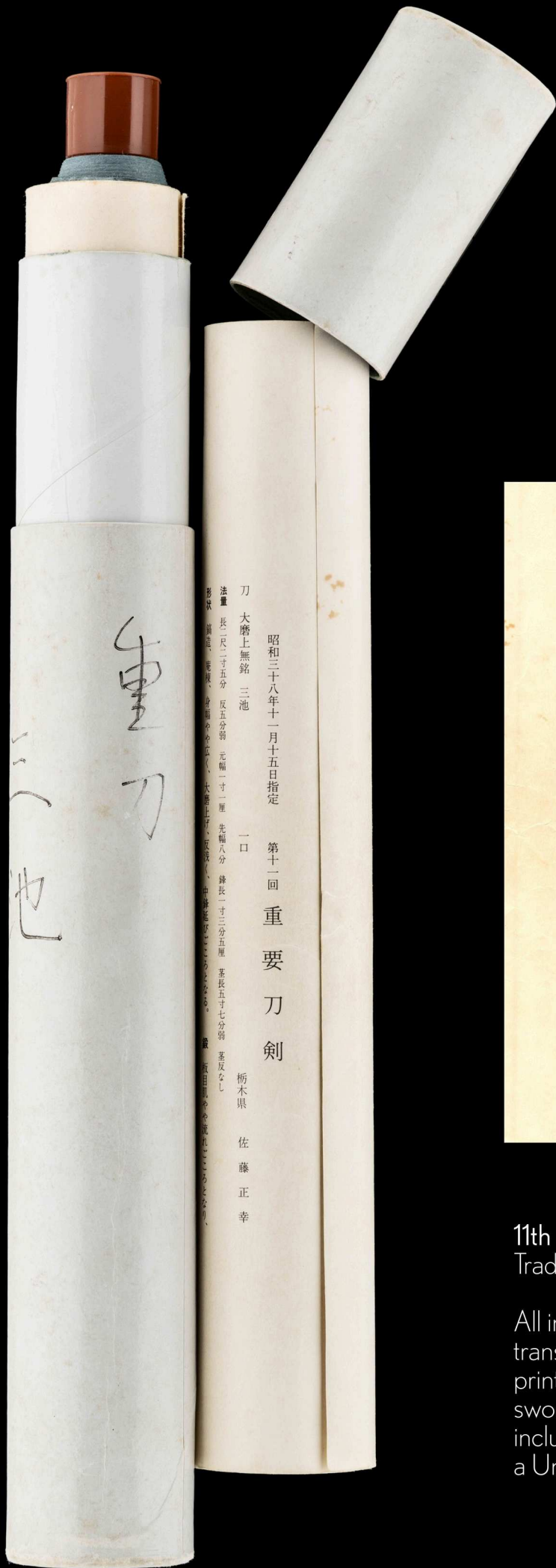
A broad *bôhi*, carved close to the *mune* in the distinctive Miike style—known as the “Miike *bôhi*”—paired with a slender *soebi* running alongside. This combination exemplifies the school’s balance of strength, functionality, and refined detail.

*soebi*



*bôhi*

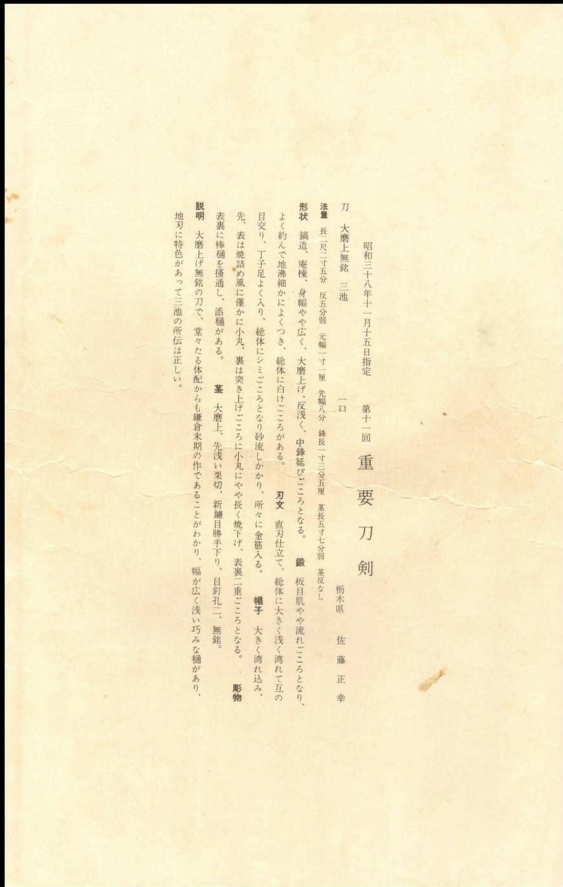




刀 大磨上無銘 三池  
 法量 長二尺二寸五分 反五分弱 元幅一寸一厘 先幅八分 鋒長一寸三分五厘 莖長五寸七分弱 莖反なし  
 形状 廣造、巻腹、身幅やや広、大磨上げ、反収、中鋒延びところとなり、鍔、板目肌や流れところとなり、

昭和三十八年十一月十五日指定 第十二回 重要 刀 劔

栃木県 佐藤 正幸



昭和三十八年十一月十五日指定 第十二回 重要 刀 劔  
 刀 大磨上無銘 三池 一口 桐木肌 佐藤 正幸  
 法量 長二尺二寸五分 反五分弱 元幅一寸一厘 先幅八分 鋒長一寸三分五厘 莖長五寸七分弱 莖反なし  
 形状 廣造、巻腹、身幅やや広、大磨上げ、反浅く、中鋒延びところとなり、鍔、板目肌や流れところとなり、よく約々地沸細かよつき、総体に白けところがある。刃文 直刀仕立て、総体に大きく湾れて五の目交り、丁子足より入り、総体にシミところより砂流しかり、所々に金筋入り。 鑢子 大きく湾れ込み、先、表は巻腹の風に僅かに小丸、裏は突き上げところに小丸にややく捲き、表裏二重ところとなり。 彫物 表裏に縁を掻き通し、形跡がある。 莖 大磨上、先浅い巻切、新鑢目手すり、目打仕、無銘。  
 説明 大磨上げ無銘の刀で、堂々たる依配からも鎌倉末期の作であることがわかり、幅が広く浅い巧みさゆきあり、地方に特色があつて三池の所伝は正しい。

11th NBTHK Juyo Token Certificate  
 Traditionally rolled in protective tube.

All information will be precisely translated for the new caretaker. A printed and bound description of the sword from this catalogue will also be included along with a sword stand and a Unique Japan maintenance kit.



*Shirasaya*  
(protective scabbard)



gold *habaki* with  
copper ground