

ITEM# UJKA483

A SHODAI IPPÔ KATANA

SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (KAN'EI ERA: 1624~1644)

Swordsmith: *Ippô (shodai, first generation)*
Measurements: **Length:** 63.1cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.2cm **Moto-haba:** 2.74cm **Weight:** 620g
Jihada: *Beautifully forged itame-hada and masame-hada, plentiful chikei*
Hamon: *Gorgeous gunome-chôji-midare with splendid sunagashi and kinsuji*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (*Especially Worthy of Preservation*)
Certificates #2-4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic*)
Fujishiro rank: **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Sharpness: **Wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of sharp swords*)
Included: Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD

Shôdai Ippô was the founder of the *Ômi branch* of the *Ishidô school*. Swords crafted by Ippô are rare - more commonly seen are blades by his son *Sasaki Ippô*, making this piece highly collectible and a great pleasure to study. This katana is a well-preserved example with thick *ji-nie*, and soft *chikei* with a hamon that combines artistic brush strokes of *notare* and *gunome-midare*, with a *tôranba*-like peak at the *monouchi*. At 63.1 cm, the blade is compact and powerful, with graceful curvature. It reflects the quiet strength prized in the very early Edo-period. A handsome late-Edo period *koshirae* lacquered in vermillion with a black base is pure samurai aesthetic. The *tsuba* captures the magnificence of Mount Fuji with a waving tribute to *Hokusai's Kanagawa* masterpiece. All told, this is a collectible samurai sword by a leading figure of early 1600s Japan and master artisan.



Saki-kasane: 4.4mm

Moto-kasane: 6.6mm

Omosa: 620g

Kissaki: 3.33cm

Saki-haba: 1.90cm

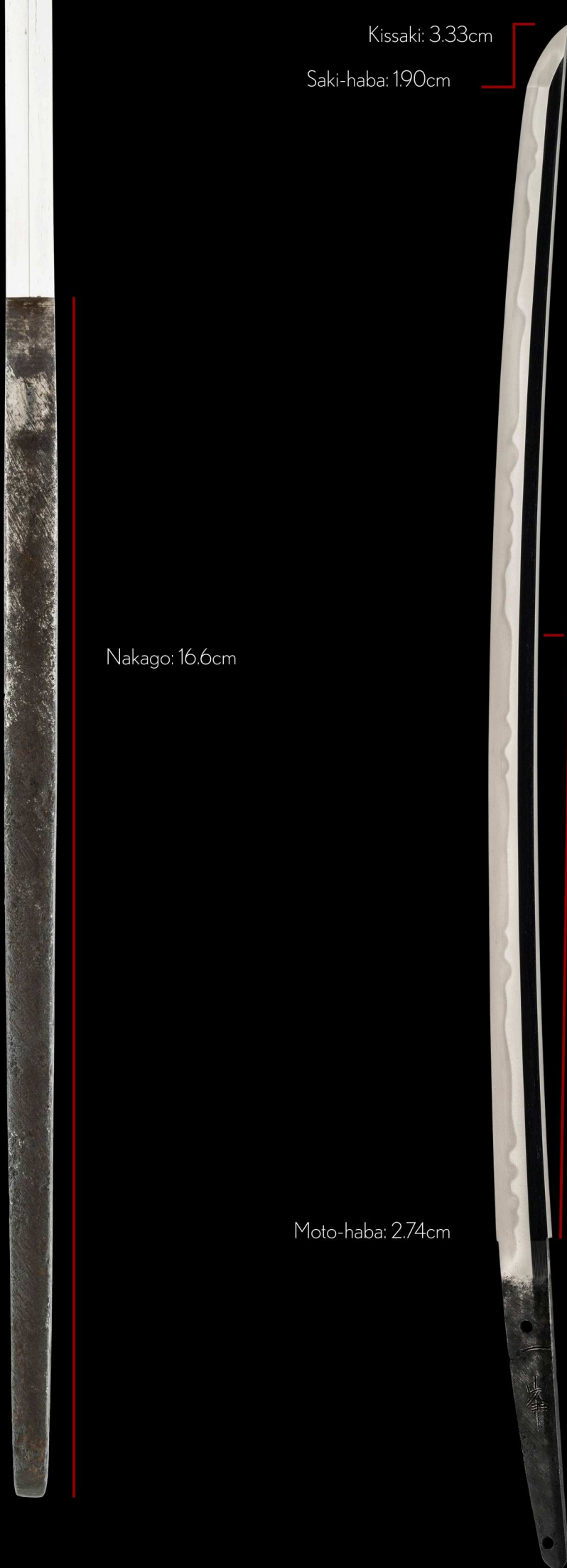
Nakago: 16.6cm

Moto-haba: 2.74cm

Nagasa: 63.1cm

Sori: 1.2cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Shodai Ippô (一峯) was active in *Ômi* Province during the *Kan'ei* era (1624-1644), a transitional period in the early Edo era when peace under *Tokugawa* rule shifted swordmaking from battlefield utility to personal refinement. *Ippô* is regarded as the founder of the *Ômi-Ishidô* school, closely aligned with *Bizen* and *Seki* traditions. His trademark signature features two large characters with a dramatic elongated final stroke.

Ippô's blades blend technical precision with bold aesthetic character. His *hada* typically features flowing *itame* mixed with *mokume*, with prominent *ji-nie* and *chikei* adding visual depth. His *hamon* often takes expressive *notare* or *gunome-midare* forms with *tôranba*-like motion, enhanced by *ashi*, *yô*, gorgeous *sunagashi*, and *kinsuji*. The *bôshi* varies by side: often a tight *ko-maru* on one, and a sweeping *kaen*-like flame on the other.

This katana is a well-preserved example attributed to the first-generation *Ippô* and certified *Tokubetsu Hozon* by the NBTHK. Its *hada* is a tight *itame* with small *mokume*, thick *ji-nie*, and soft *chikei*. The *hamon* combines *notare* and *gunome-midare*, with a *tôranba*-like peak at the *monouchi*. Inside the temper line, active *ashi*, *yô*, *sunagashi*, and *kinsuji* add vibrancy. The *bôshi* shows contrast: the *omote* returns in *ko-maru* with an *ichimonji* feel, while the *ura* lifts in *hakikake*, resembling a flickering flame. So much steely variety to cherish.

The *nakago* has two *mekugi-ana*, one at the tang's end - likely a *hikae-mekugi* for reinforcement during *tameshigiri*. The bold “一峯” signature aligns with early *Ippô* work. At 63.1 cm, the blade is compact and powerful, with graceful curvature and elegant handling. It reflects the quiet strength and balance prized in early Edo-period craftsmanship.

A handsome late-Edo period *koshirae* lacquered in vermillion with a black base is pure samurai aesthetic. The *tsuba* captures the magnificence of Mount Fuji with a waving tribute to Hokusai's Kanagawa masterpiece. Oversized catfish are depicted as *menuki* symbolizing natural power and vigilance. All told, this is a super collectible samurai sword by a leading figure of early 1600s Japan and master artisan.



Location: *Ômi province*

Swordsmith: *Ippô* (first generation)

Cutting ability: *wazamono*

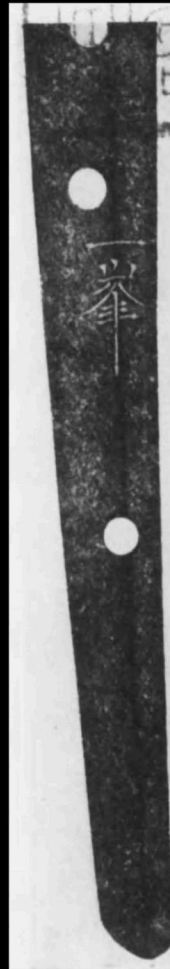
ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

sujikai-yasurime (slanting file marks)



一 (I)

峯 (ppô)



1st gen

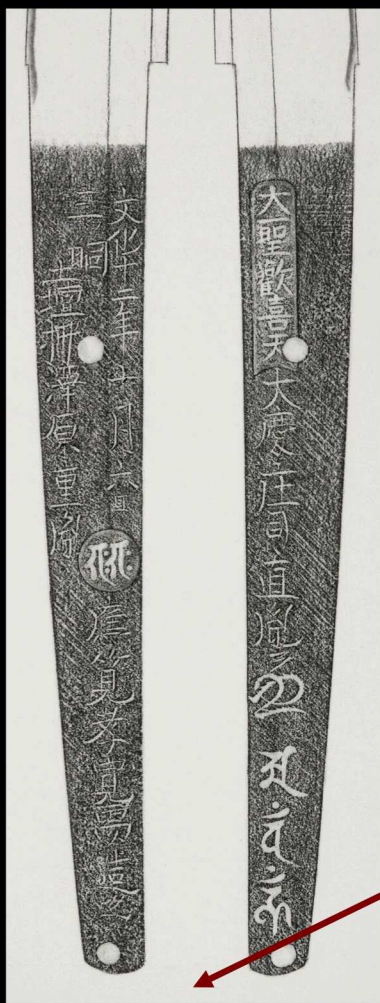


2nd gen

First-generation Ippô typically signed his name using just the two characters "Ippô (一峯)," while the second generation often included his given name, "*Sasaki Zenshirô* (佐々木善四郎)," in the inscription.

Although this blade retains *ubu-nakago*, an additional hole has been drilled near its base. This is known as a *hikae-mekugi-ana* - a secondary peg hole used to insert a second mekugi for reinforcement during *tameshigiri* or heavy use. While this sword bears no test-cutting inscription, the presence of the hole strongly suggests that it was either actually used for such purposes or was forged with serious practical application in mind.

The image below shows the nakago of a katana by *Taikei Naotane* that was used for cutting test. It features a supplementary *hikae-mekugi-ana* drilled near the bottom of the tang for added reinforcement.



ujka403 Taikei Naotane Katana
NBTHK Jûyô Tôken, featured in Catalogue 40.

hikae-mekugi-ana

The *nakagojiri* (butt-end of the tang) is rounded, similar to that of *kurijiri* (chestnut shaped) but the cutting edge side slants more steeply than the back (*mune* side).

ha agari kurijiri



一 (one)

峯 (summit, peak)



山 (mountain)

The direct translation of the name *Ippô* is "one mountain top / summit / peak".

This inspiring name suggests the swordsmith is constantly striving for perfection - a quest towards the pinnacle of crafting excellence.





鑑定書

長三尺八分

一、刀 銘 一峯

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

平成元年 五月十六日

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 ast year of Heisei (1989), May 16th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Ippô

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 0-sun 8-bu (63.1cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



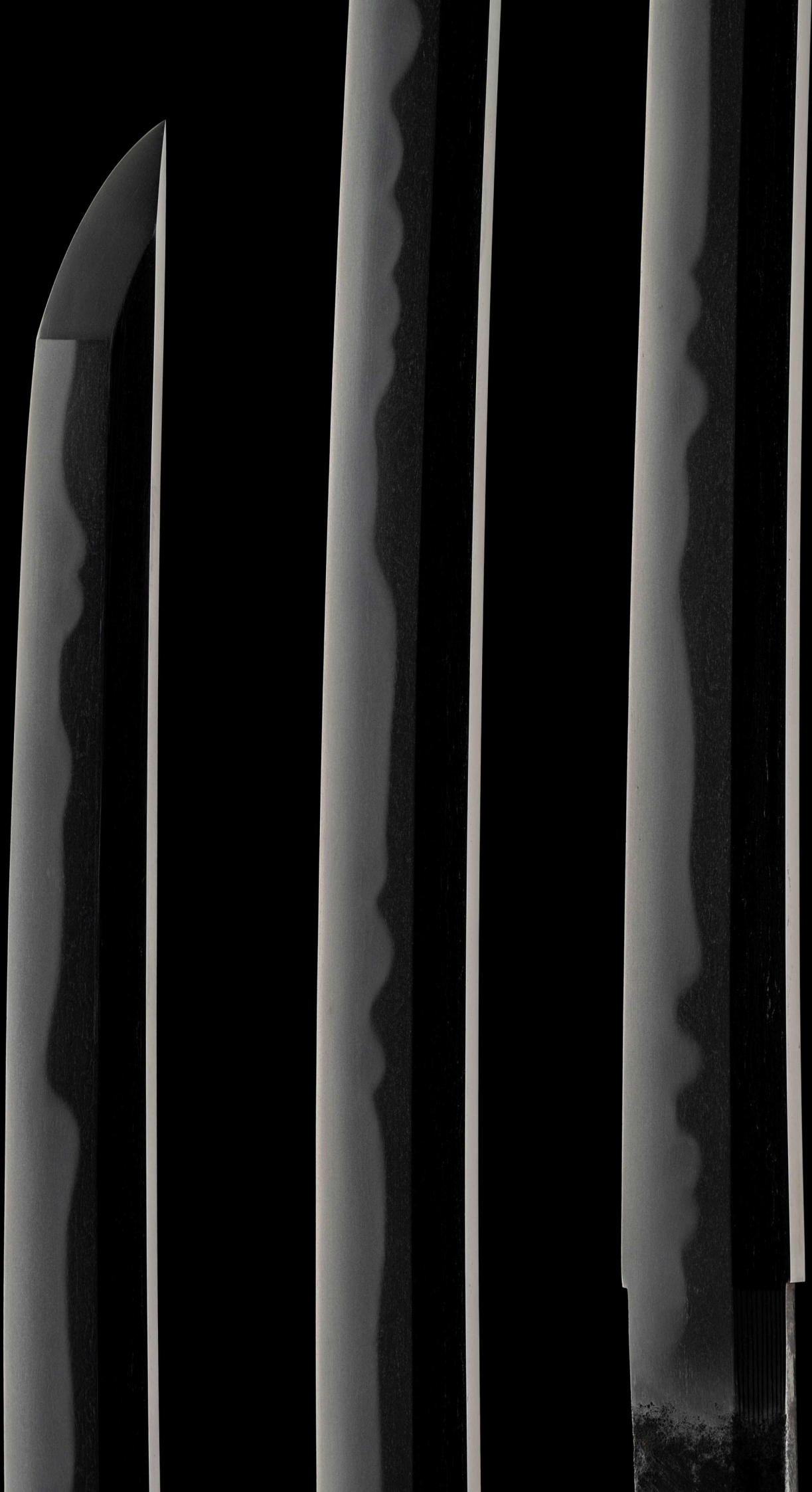
一峯
Ippô
Ippô

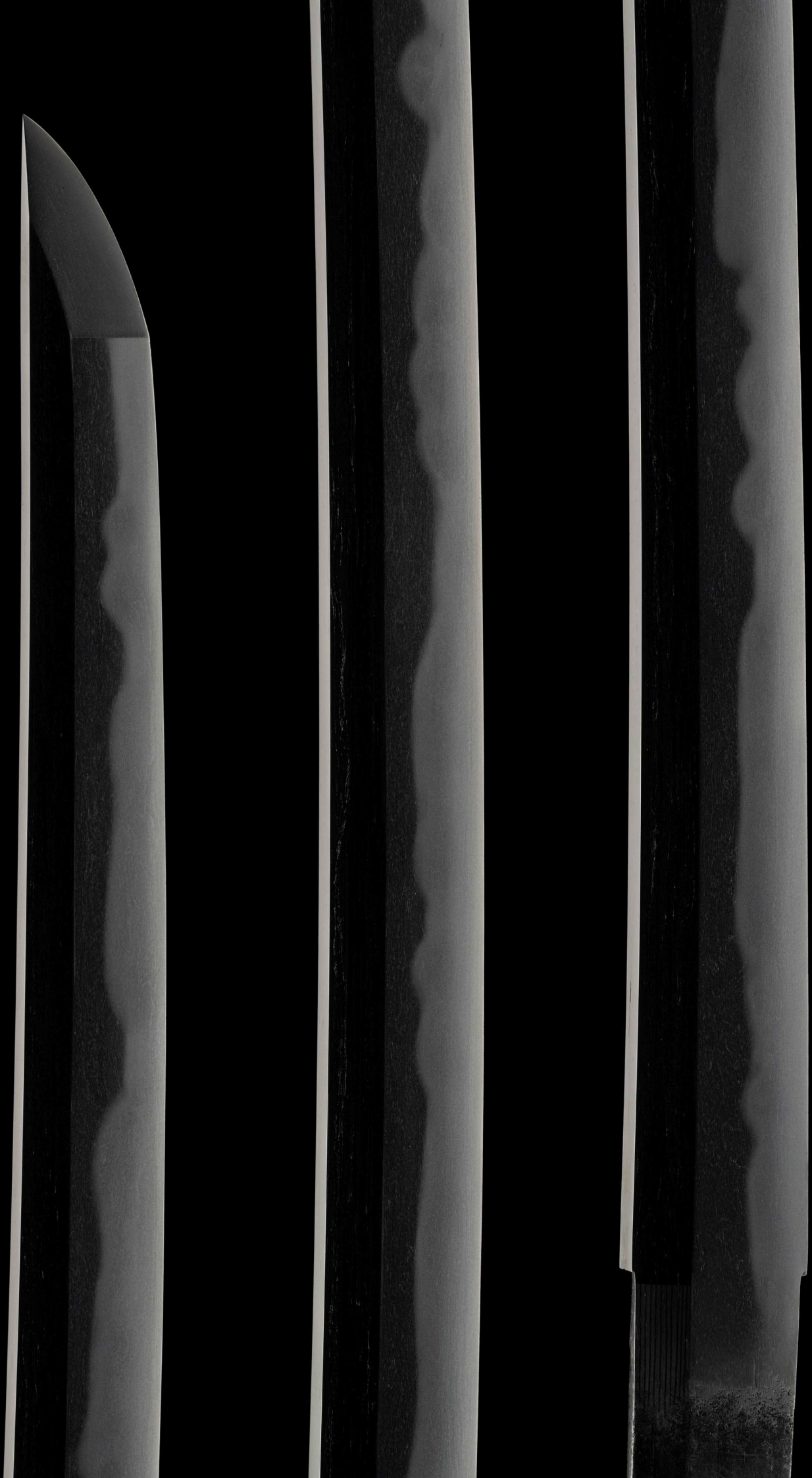
初代作也
Shodai saku nari
Crafted by the first generation

時代寛永頃
Jidai Kan'ei goro
Around Kan'ei period (1624~1644)

長貳尺寸八分有之
Nagasa 2-shaku 0-sun 8-bu kore ari
Blade length 63.1 cm

令和七乙巳年葉月吉日誌之
Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Hazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the eighth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (August 2025)



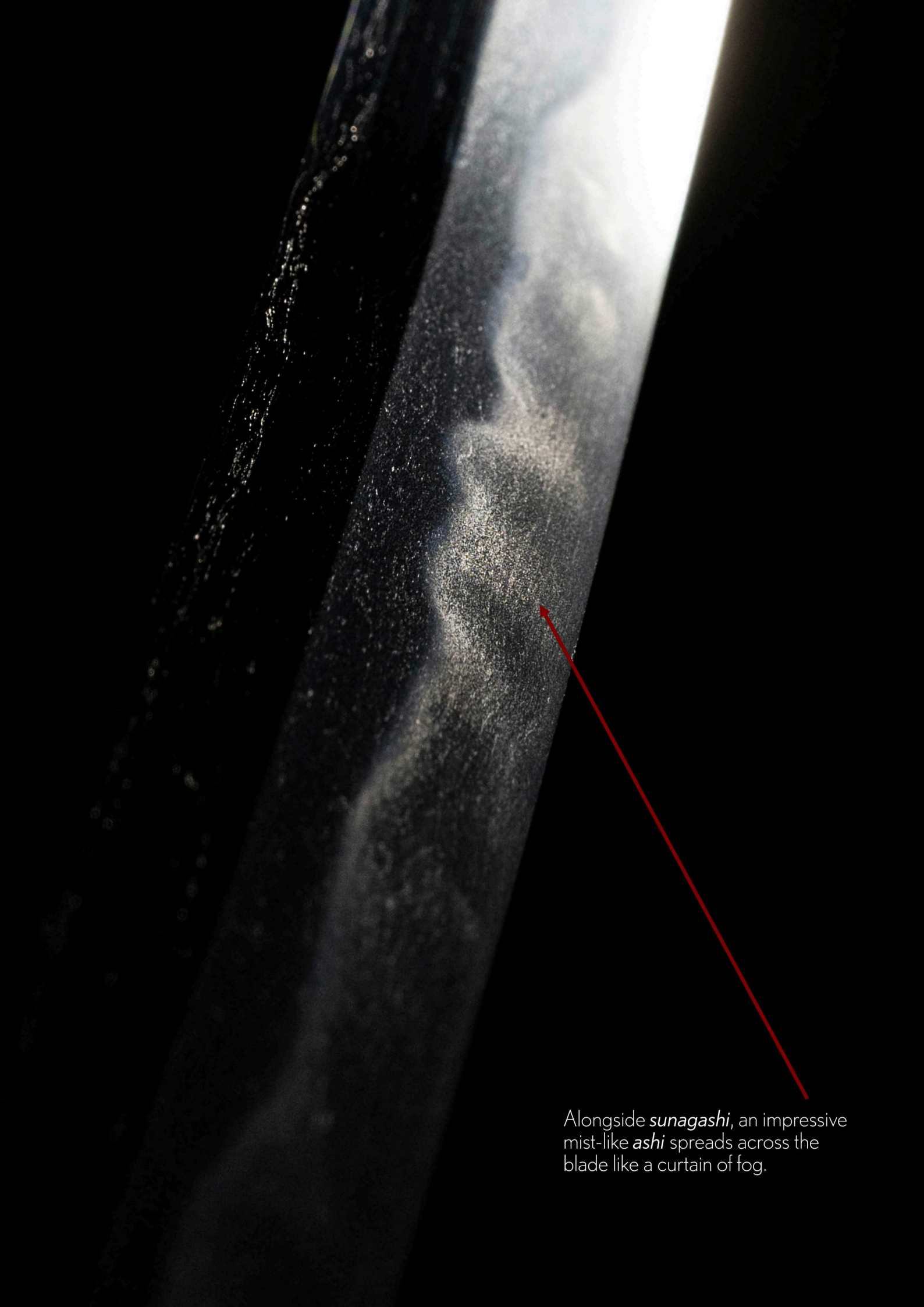





A *ko-maru* turn-back in the style of *Ichimonji*.



Layers of history



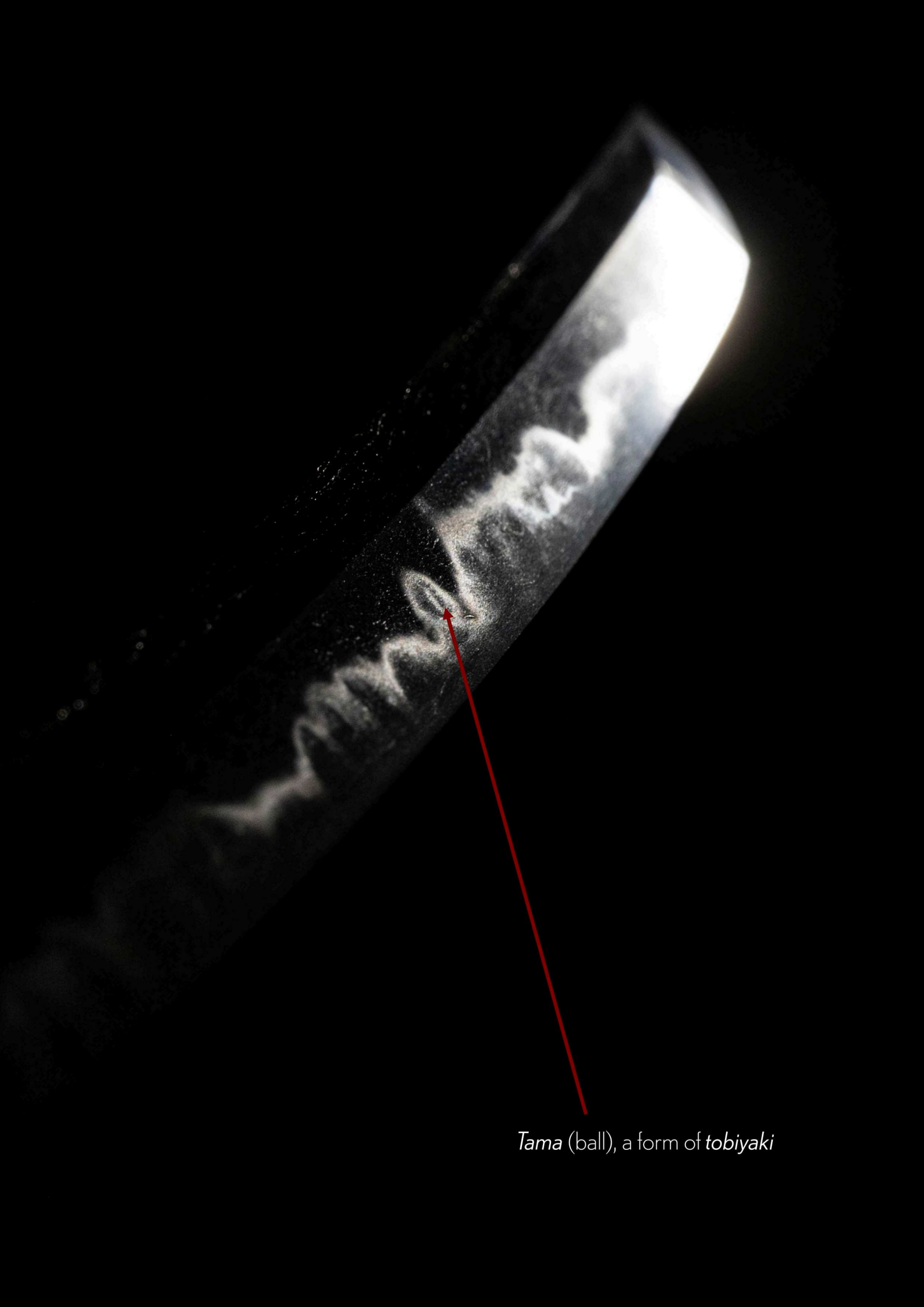
Alongside *sunagashi*, an impressive mist-like *ashi* spreads across the blade like a curtain of fog.

The image shows two Japanese swords, likely katana, positioned diagonally against a black background. The blades are illuminated from the side, highlighting the intricate, wavy patterns of the hamon (edge tempering). The pattern is a 'gunome-midare' style, characterized by its fluid, undulating lines. The top sword is in sharper focus than the bottom one, which is slightly blurred, creating a sense of depth. The overall aesthetic is dramatic and emphasizes the craftsmanship of the blades.

A free-flowing *gunome-midare hamon* formed by the hands of a true artist.

Fabulously long lightning bolts of *kinsuji*
formed by hardened martensite.





Tama (ball), a form of *tobiyaki*

A close-up of the blade's glorious rounded *mokume-hada*.



Shodai Ippô is ranked *wazamono* for producing sharp swords, such as this one.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

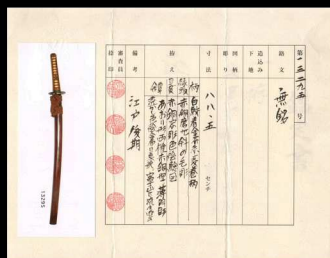


gold *habaki* with
unique diagonal file marks
that match the *fuchi-kashira*.

*Shuguro-natane-togidashi-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(朱黒菜種研出塗鞘脇指拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in vermilion revealing
the black foundation beneath*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780 ~ 1868)



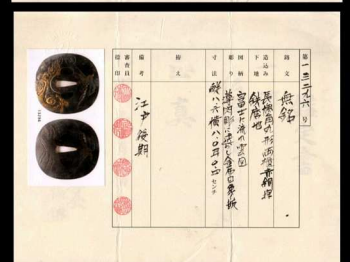
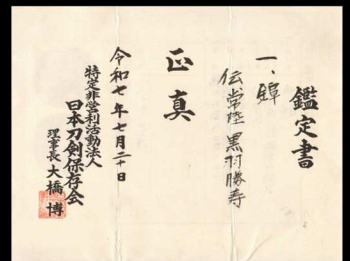
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

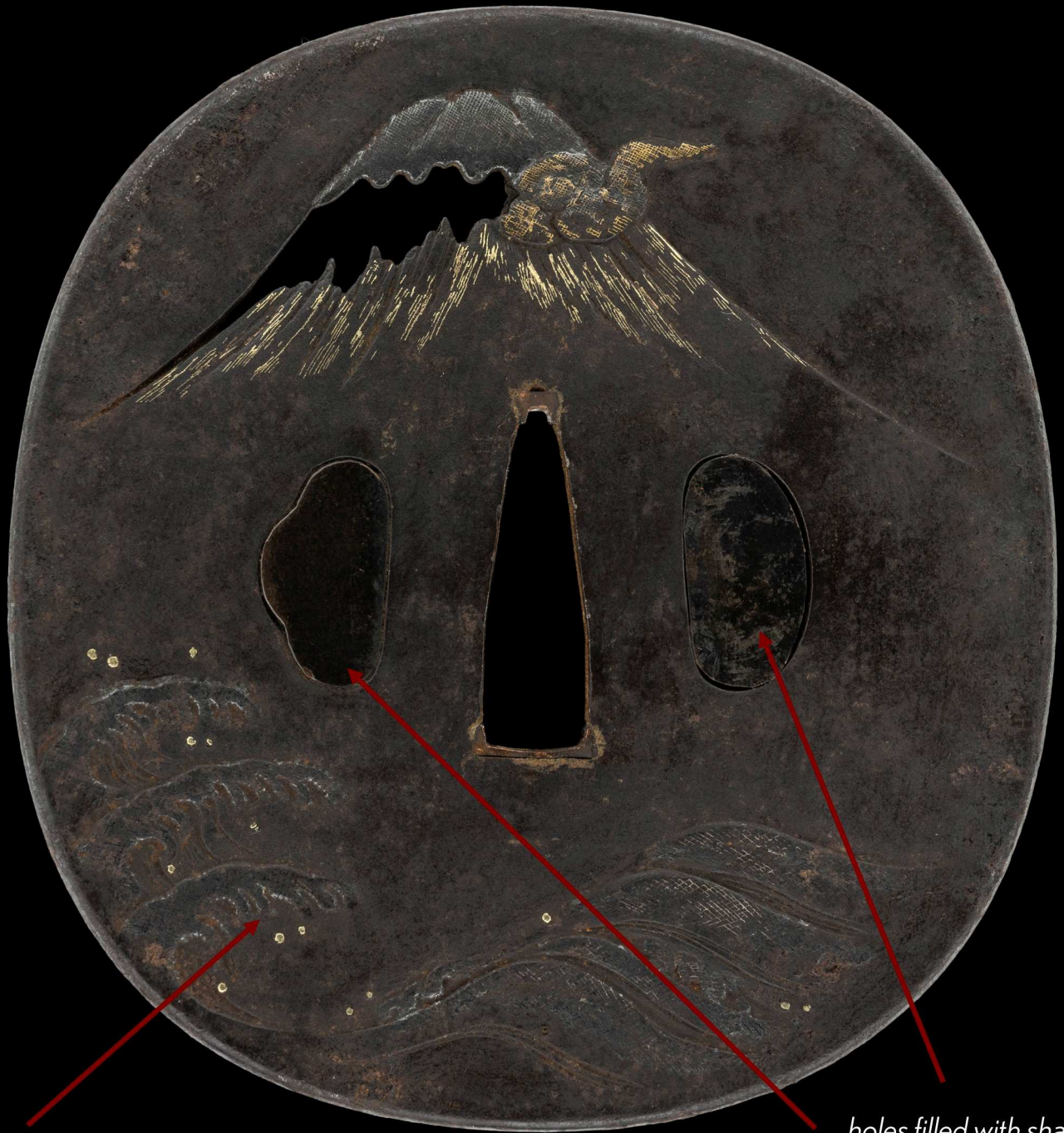


This superb *tsuba* was crafted in the late Edo period by *Kurobane Katsutoshi* (黒羽勝寿). The refined iron plate depicts Mt. Fuji with drifting clouds, executed in low-relief carving (*usuniku-bori*) and accented with gold inlay and cross-hatched inlay.

Mt. Fuji has long held deep spiritual and cultural significance in Japan. By the late Edo period, *Fujikō* pilgrim societies had grown immensely, with thousands venerating the mountain as a path to enlightenment. The image of Fuji rising through clouds symbolizes not only natural beauty but also aspiration and purity.

This *tsuba*'s theme resonates with the work of the swordsmith *Ippō* (一峯), whose name "One Peak" evokes similar ideals of singularity and elevation. A fitting tribute to the spirit of the man and mountain.





curling waves

holes filled with shakudô

(reverse)



Fuji-san

The Great Wave off Kanagawa

The reverse side of the *tsuba* features the same motif as the front - Mount Fuji with drifting clouds - but what stands out is the wave design at the bottom of the piece. The motif clearly draws inspiration from *Katsushika Hokusai's* iconic "The Great Wave off Kanagawa" from "the Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji series."

This print was created during the *Tempô* era (1830-1844) in the late Edo period, suggesting that the *tsuba* was likely crafted around the same time.



This *fuchi-kashira* made of *shakudô* dates to the late Edo period and is attributed to an unnamed *Kanagu-shi* (metalsmith artisan). With its simple diagonal line strokes and rounded *kashira*, it resembles fittings seen on *Higo*-style *koshirae*.

Higo-*koshirae* are known for their compact, practical design - often paired with shorter blades suited for one-handed use (*katate-uchi*). These swords offered greater reach and faster draw times than two-handed katana, making them ideal for *iaidô* and close combat.

The minimalist style reflects the *wabi-sabi* aesthetic, valuing simplicity, imperfection, and quiet elegance. Instead of lavish decoration, the subdued metalwork invites contemplation, honouring restraint and natural form. In Higo fittings, such simplicity was a deliberate expression of samurai values and *Zen*-informed discipline.



Antique-style white *samekawa* hilt wrapped in a *hishimaki* style with golden-brown silk braids.



The *menuki* depict carved motifs of catfish (*namazu*). In Japanese folklore, the catfish is associated with earthquakes, as it was believed that a giant *namazu* living beneath the earth caused tremors when it moved. As a result, the image of the catfish came to symbolize both natural power and the need for vigilance -making it a fitting emblem for a warrior's sword.





Koshirae bag with a cloud pattern mixed with maple leaves - perfect for this fall catalogue. ;)