



ITEM# UJKA486

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

A SENJUIN KATANA

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

Swordsmith: *Senjuin School*
Measurements: **Length:** 69.7cm (*ô-suriage*) **Sori:** 2.4cm **Moto-haba:** 2.53cm **Weight:** 665g
Jihada: *Exquisite mix of mokume, itame, nagare-hada with ji-nie, plentiful chikei and utsuri*
Hamon: *Vivid hosô-suguha with ko-gunome, sunagashi, kinsuji and sweeping hakikake*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (*Especially Worthy of Preservation*)
Certificates #2-4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic*)
Included: Shirasaya, Mid-Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

\$15,000 ([click here](#) to watch Pablo's video presentation of this sword on YouTube)

The *Senjuin* school represents the earliest and most refined among the five major schools of the *Yamato* tradition. Its origins trace back to the late *Heian* period, when smiths connected with *Tôdaiji* temple and its warrior monks forged blades at a sub-temple in the *Senju* valley. The founding figure was *Yukinobu* (行信) in the mid-12th century, followed by *Shigehiro* (重弘), who served *Emperor Go-Toba* (後鳥羽天皇). The splendid sword with its long and elegant *tachi sugata* shape with *koshi-zori* and small *kissaki*, recalls the classical form of the golden Kamakura age. The *jigane* is an *itame* with *nagare*, mixed with *mokume*, covered in fine *ji-nie* and streaked with *chikei*. The *hamon* is a refined *hosô-suguha* bright with *nie*, gently varied by small *gunome*. A marvellous *uchigatana koshirae* dating back to the mid-Edo period (1700s) accompanies the sword with the *tsuba* and *menuki* recounting the powerful stories of the *Go-Hôjô* clan and *Honda* family warriors and the brutal siege of *Odawara* castle during the *Sengoku-jidai* in the Late *Muromachi* period. All told, this is an impressive 700-year-old *Kamakura*-period collectible samurai sword with integrity and class.

Saki-kasane: 3.1mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 5.5mm

Omosa: 665g

Kissaki: 3.0cm
Saki-haba: 1.73cm

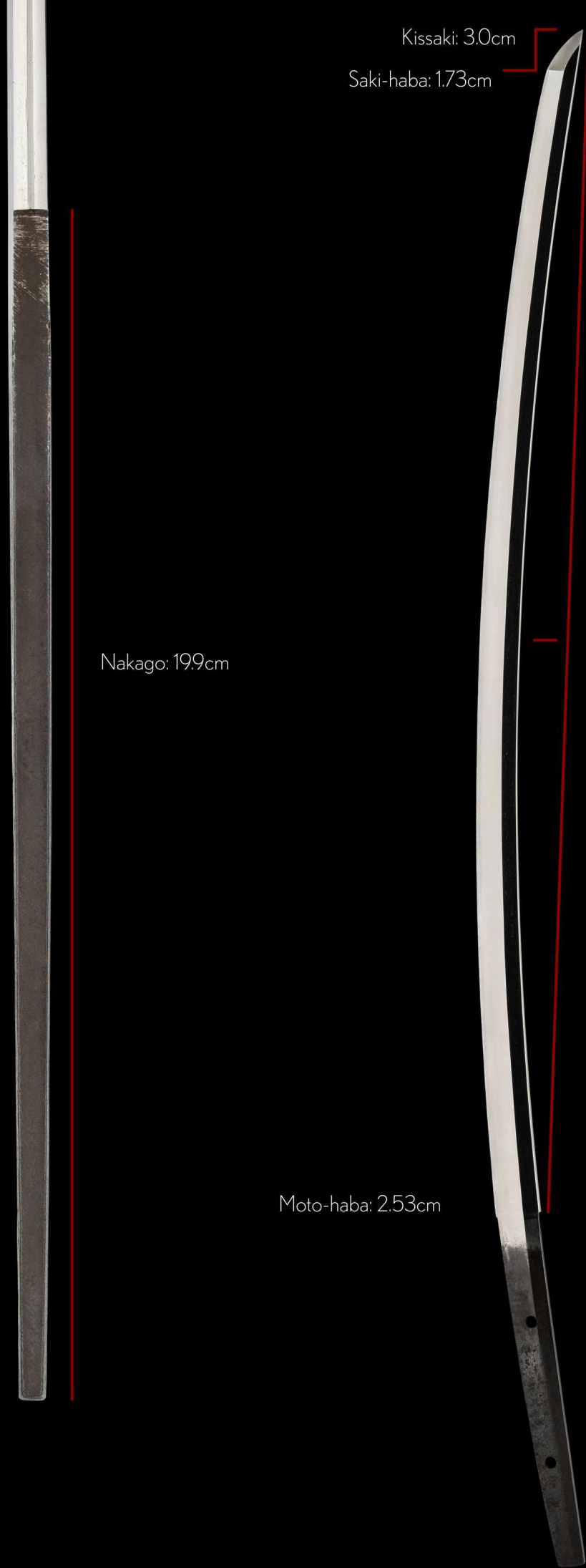
Nakago: 19.9cm

Moto-haba: 2.53cm

Nagasa: 69.7cm

Sori: 2.4cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



The *Senjuin* school represents the earliest and most refined among the five major schools of the *Yamato* tradition. Its origins trace back to the late *Heian* period, when smiths connected with *Tôdaiji* temple and its warrior monks forged blades at a sub-temple in the *Senju* valley, named *Senju-in* after the bodhisattva *Senju Kannon*. The founding figure was *Yukinobu* (行信) in the mid-12th century, followed by *Shigehiro* (重弘), who served Emperor *Go-Toba* (後鳥羽天皇). From these beginnings arose the *Senjuin-kaji*, a lineage of temple smiths who produced swords as both weapons and spiritual amulets. Because their works were made so early and most later shortened, signed examples are almost unknown, which heightens their aura of antiquity.

Over the centuries, scholars identify three phases of production: *Ko-Senjuin* ("Old" *Senjuin*) of the late *Heian* to early *Kamakura*, *Chû-Senjuin* during the mid-*Kamakura* to *Nanbokuchô*, and *Sue-Senjuin* ("Late" *Senjuin*) into the *Muromachi* period. Among these, the earliest works are held in the highest regard for classical beauty and restraint. Even as later generations absorbed influences from other schools, the core traits of *Yamato* elegance and austerity remained.

The present blade is a splendid late *Kamakura* example, embodying the qualities of the *Senjuin* tradition. Its long and elegant *tachi sugata* shape with *koshi-zori* and small *kissaki*, recalls the classical forms of the golden *Kamakura* age. The *ji-gane* is an *itame* with *nagare*, mixed with *mokume*, covered in fine *ji-nie* and streaked with *chikei*. A captivating *utsuri* flowing parallel to the *hamon*, gives the blade a mysterious edge.

The *hamon* is a refined *hoso-suguha* bright with *nie*, gently varied by small *gunome* and enriched with subtle *hataraki* - wisps of *hotsure*, streams of *sunagashi*, and flashes of *kinsuji*. The *boshi* continues the restrained beauty, running straight with a small *ko-maru* return. The nakago is (*ô-suriage*) with *kiri-mei* and two *mekugi-ana*.

A marvellous *uchigatana koshirae* dating back to the mid-*Edo* period (1700s) accompanies the sword. The *tsuba* and *menuki* tell the powerful stories of the *Go-Hôjô* clan and *Honda* family warriors and the brutal siege of *Odawara* castle during the *Sengoku-jidai* in the Late *Muromachi* period. All told, this is an impressive 700-year-old historical *Kamakura* period samurai sword with integrity and class.



Location: *Yamato province*

School: *Senjuin*

ô-suriage-nakago (greatly shortened tang)

kiri-yasurime (horizontal file marks)

The *mekugi-ana* from the second *suriage*



..... The second *suriage* border

The *mekugi-ana* from the first *ô-suriage*



This sword was originally longer but has been shortened to *2-shaku 3-sun* (69.7 cm). From the rust on the tang and the number of *mekugi-ana*, it can be inferred that it underwent at least two *suriage* shortenings.

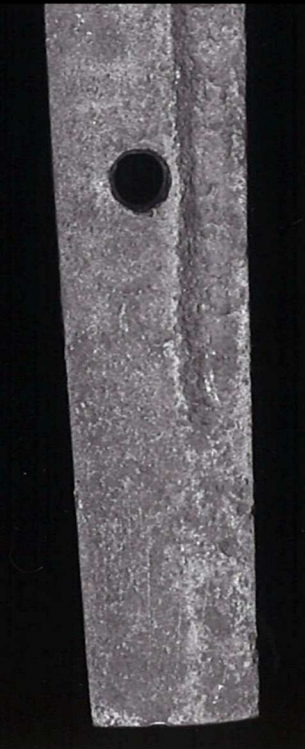
The first was likely carried out before the Edo period to adapt the blade for close combat. Later, during *Tokugawa Iemitsu's* time (~1651), when a regulation set *2-shaku 3-sun* as the maximum length, the sword appears to have been shortened again to match that standard.

Although length regulations were further reduced thereafter, this sword has remained at *2-shaku 3-sun*. This suggests it was no longer intended for combat use but preserved with care as a treasured heirloom within a (likely) formal *daishô*.

This blade has undergone twice *suriage*, yet the shape of the tang's tip is worth noting.

Its form is called *kurijiri*, named for its resemblance to the rounded curve of a *kuri* (chestnut). In this case, however, the curve is rather shallow, making it closer to what is known as *kirijiri* (horizontal).

From this feature, it is suggested that the second *suriage* was performed around the *Keichō* era (1596-1615). This timing corresponds to the period when the legal standard length of swords was about *2-shaku 3-sun* (69.7 cm).



Old Senjuin with horizontal butt



Senjuin Morikuni (Mid 1600s) with chestnut butt

shallow *kurijiri*

特 選
01201903

No 1011365



鑑定書

一 刀 無銘 伝(千手院)

長二尺二寸九分強

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

令和元年五月二十三日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



福島県 教育委員会
第 9064 号
昭和29年3月4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 1st year of Reiwa (2019), May 23th

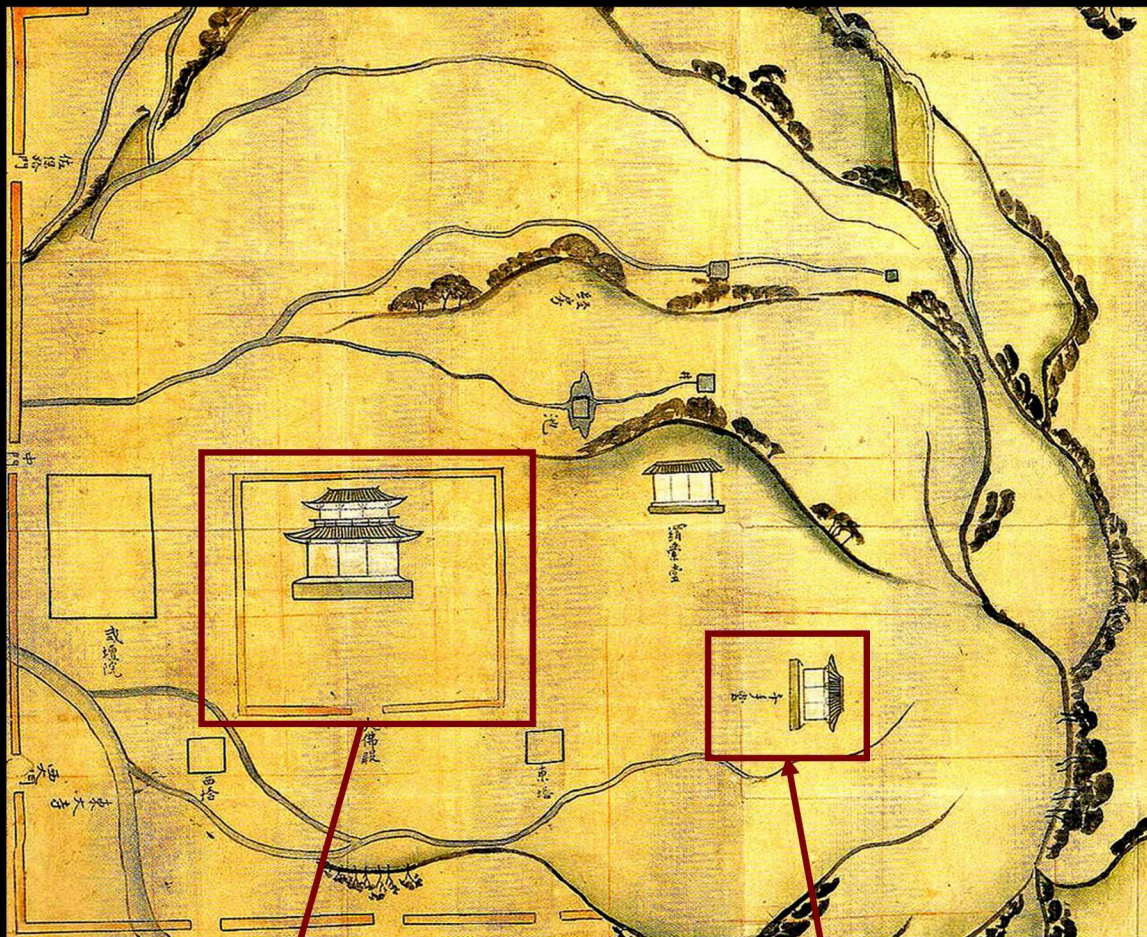
One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Den Senjuin

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu kyô (69.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

A map of the area around *Tôdaiji*, made in 756 during the mid-*Nara* period.



Senju-dô hall

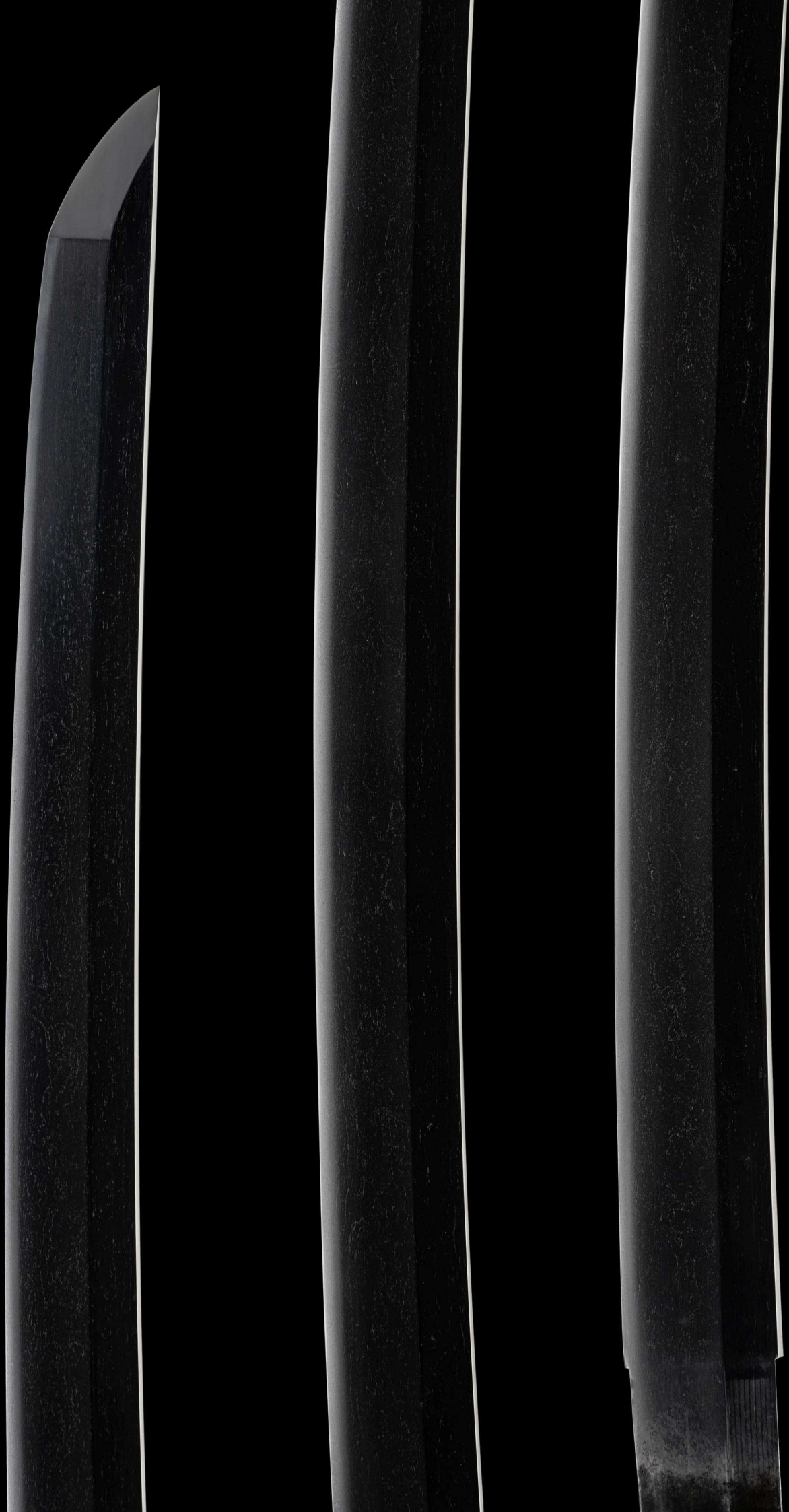


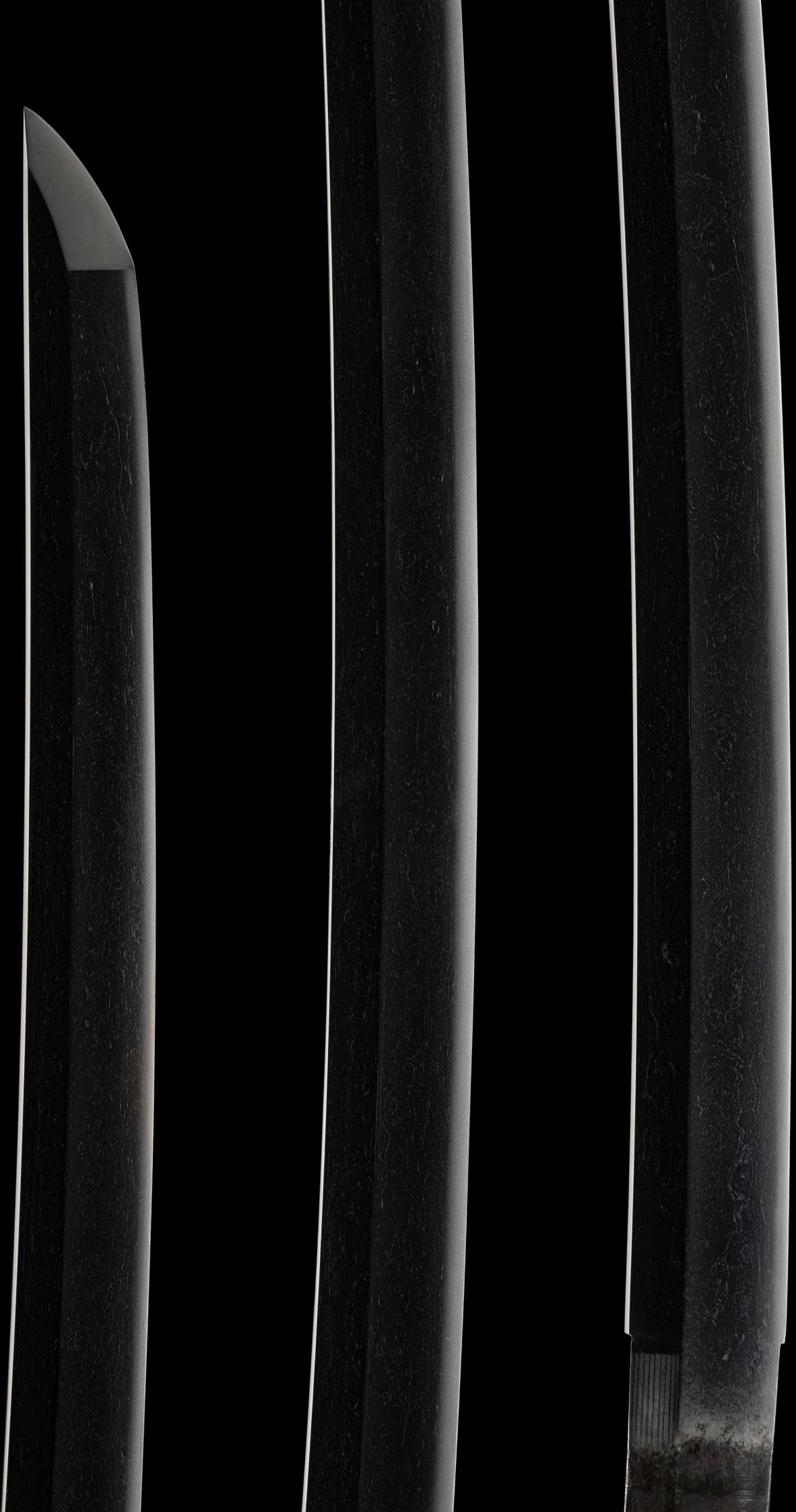
The Great Buddha Hall of Tôdaiji.



The former *Senju-dô* site is now occupied by old residences of *Tôdaiji*'s high priest.

The Senjuin school derives its name from the Senju-dô hall, situated at the foot of Mount Wakakusa, where swordsmith-monks of Tôdaiji are believed to have forged blades for the temple's warrior monks. The original hall no longer survives, having been reestablished at a different site in the Edo period. However, a map of the Tôdaiji precincts dated to 756 provides firm evidence of the Senju-dô's presence east of the Main Temple at the mountain's base. This historical record offers rare testimony to the geographical and spiritual origins of the Senjuin lineage, situating it firmly within the sacred landscape of the old capital of Yamato, modern-day Nara.





As this sword is *ô-suriage mumei* (greatly shortened and unsigned) it is technically certified as a *katana*. However, this sword was originally crafted as a *tachi* and it will always be a *tachi*.



A glorious *tachi-sugata* shape.

And turn back in a small round (*ko-maru kaeri*)

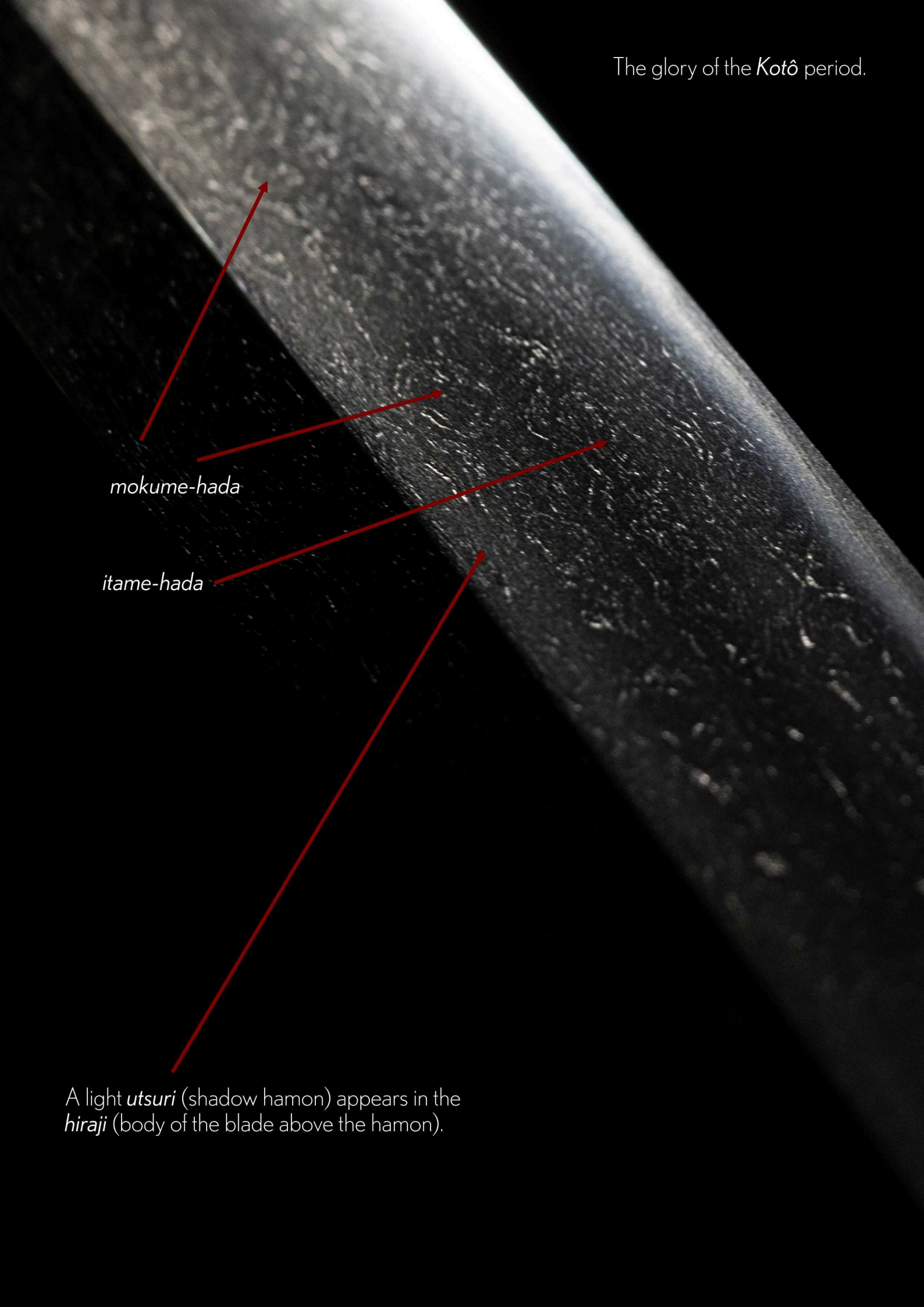
kissaki starts in straight with
a hint of brush strokes (*hakikake*)





kinsuji (glorious golden lines of *nie* crystals)

The glory of the *Kotô* period.



The image shows a close-up, diagonal view of a sword blade. The blade is dark, likely black or dark grey, and exhibits a complex, textured pattern of light-colored lines and spots, characteristic of a hamon. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture and creating a strong contrast between the dark blade and the lighter patterns. Four red arrows point from text labels to specific areas of the blade's surface.

mokume-hada

itame-hada

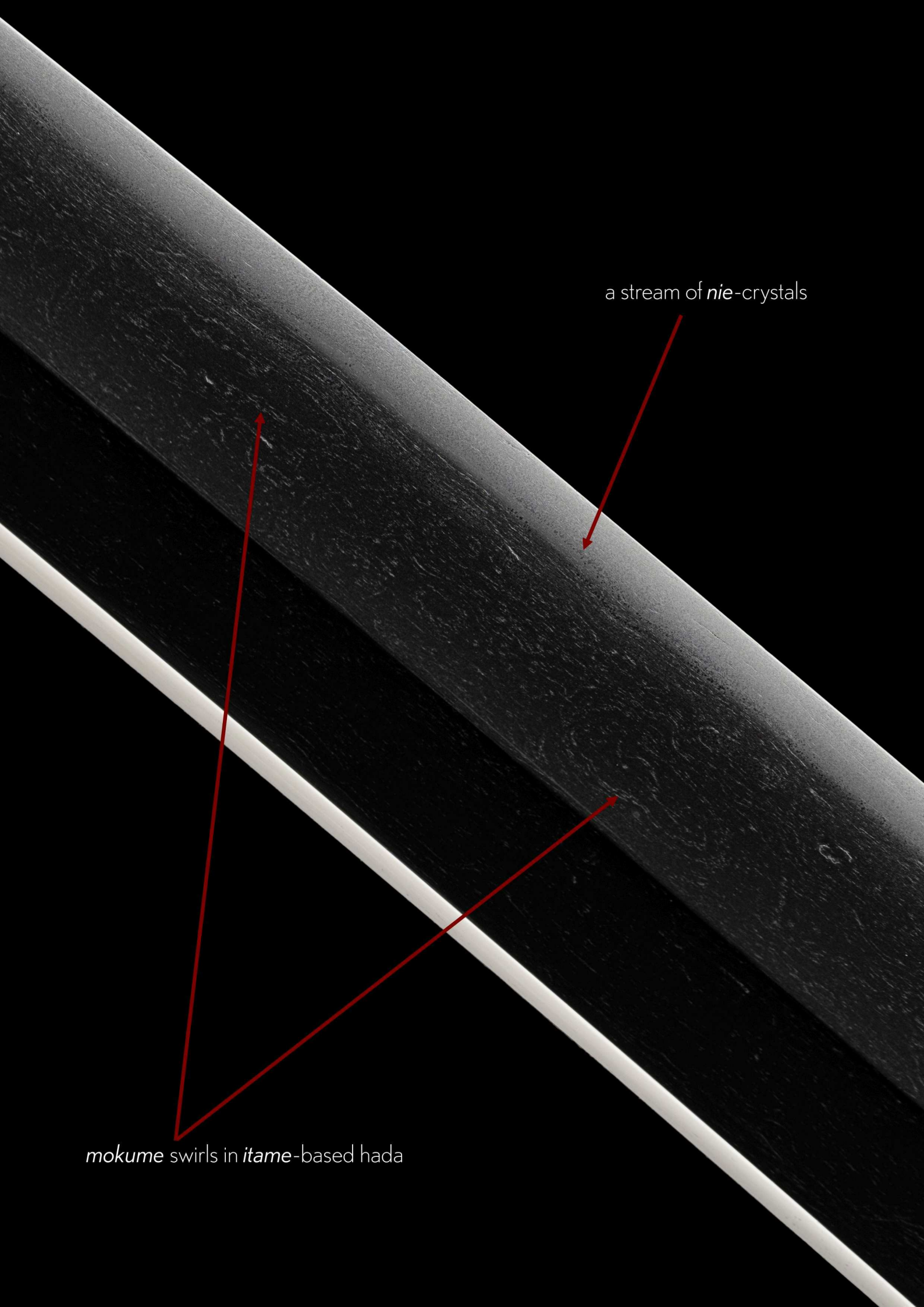
A light *utsuri* (shadow hamon) appears in the *hiraji* (body of the blade above the hamon).



A close-up look at the flowing *nagare-hada*.

A close-up photograph of two blades of a sunagashi brush. The blades are dark, almost black, with a fine, fibrous texture. They are positioned diagonally, with the top blade above the bottom blade. A central text overlay reads "Brushes of *sunagashi* sweeps us back 750 years...". Two red arrows originate from the text, pointing towards the blades.

Brushes of *sunagashi* sweeps us back 750 years...



a stream of *nie*-crystals

mokume swirls in *itame*-based hada



sayagaki potential

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

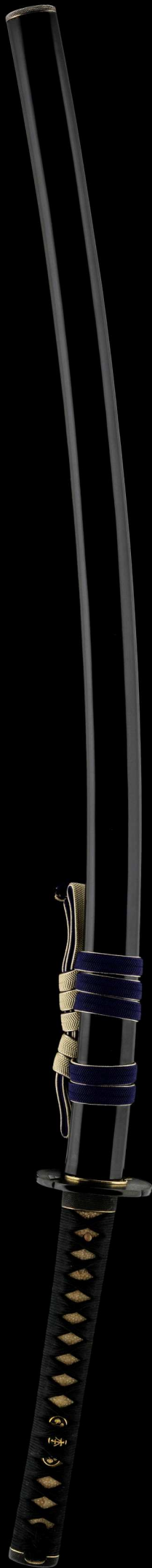


gold *habaki* with
horizontal file marks that suit
the *jihada* of the sword.

*Kuro-roiro-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂色塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Middle Edo period
(1780~1868)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



This proud late Edo-period *tsuba* was crafted in a *mokkô* (quatrefoil) shape, made of *shakudô* with a uniquely textured surface. The design prominently features the crest of the *Go-Hôjô* clan, the "*uroko*" (scale pattern), a symbol strongly associated with one of the most powerful warrior families of the *Sengoku-jidai*, late Muromachi period.



reverse



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

Background of the Odawara Campaign and the Hôjô Clan

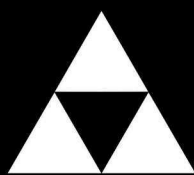
By the late 16th century, the *Go-Hôjô* clan had risen to dominate the *Kantô* region. From their stronghold at *Odawara* Castle, successive generations expanded their influence across *Sagami*, *Musashi*, and much of eastern Japan. Under *Hôjô Ujinao* (北条氏直), the clan commanded one of the largest territories of the *Sengoku* (late Muromachi) era, supported by *well-organized* land surveys and taxation systems.

Odawara Castle itself, with its massive *sôgamae* (total enclosure), was considered impregnable – the ultimate symbol of *Hôjô* resilience. However, in 1590, *Toyotomi Hideyoshi* (豊臣秀吉) launched the Odawara Campaign, the final step toward unifying Japan. Mobilizing more than 200,000 warriors from across the country, *Hideyoshi* encircled *Odawara* and systematically cut off the *Hôjô*'s network of castles.

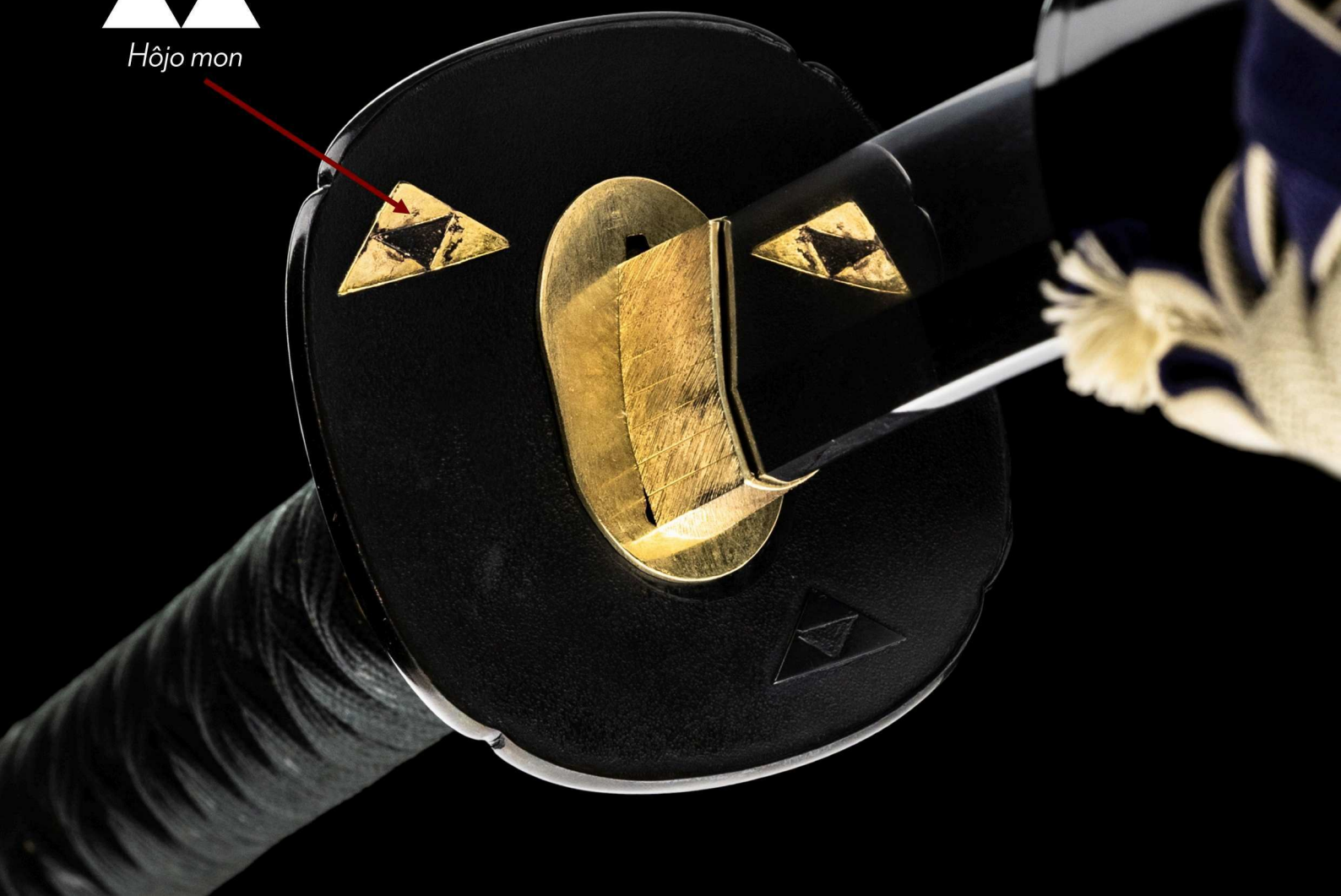
The *tsuba* bearing the crest of the *Hôjô* recalls not only the clan's century-long ascendancy but also its last great act of defiance, holding out within the walls of Odawara Castle against overwhelming odds.



Hôjô Ujinao
(1562~1591)



Hôjo mon





While *Odawara* endured a long siege, its satellite fortresses fell one after another. Among the generals pressing the attack was *Honda Tadakatsu* (本多忠勝), famed retainer of *Tokugawa Iyasu*.

Renowned as a warrior “without equal in East or West,” *Tadakatsu* led assaults on key strongholds such as *Tamanawa* and *Iwatsuki*, hastening the collapse of *Hôjô* resistance. His presence at *Odawara* underlined the *Tokugawa* clan’s crucial role in *Hideyoshi*’s great coalition.

After months of encirclement, starvation, and isolation, *Hôjô Ujinao* finally surrendered. The fall of the *Hôjô* brought an end to a century of regional power in *Kantô*. In turn, *Tokugawa Iyasu* was granted the *Hôjô* lands, relocated to *Edo* – a move that laid the foundation for the *Tokugawa shogunate* and established over two centuries of relative peace.

The pairing of the *Hôjô* crest on the *tsuba* with the *Honda* mon on the *menuki* transforms this *koshirae* into a historical recount of once bitter enemies, into two emblems that now coexist, embodying the transition from the turbulence of the *Sengoku* period into nearly 300 years of *Edo* period peace.



Honda Tadakatsu
(1548~1610)



Tsuka (hilt) follows a classic and formal style, covered with white *same* (ray skin) and wrapped with black silk braids.



These impressive *menuki* feature two complimentary *mon* (crests), both belonging to the *Honda daimyô* family.

One is the *Tachi Aoi* crest, derived from the hollyhock emblem of the Tokugawa clan. The other is the *Hon no ji* (*Hon* character) crest, particularly associated with the famed *Honda Tadakatsu* (本多忠勝).



Tachi Aoi



Hon no ji

Honda Tadakatsu was celebrated as one of the "Four Greatest Warriors of Tokugawa," a loyal retainer of Tokugawa Ieyasu (徳川家康) and a distinguished warrior who contributed greatly to the founding of the Tokugawa shogunate. Due to his achievements, he was one of the very few outside the Tokugawa clan permitted to wear the *Aoi-mon*.



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



Fuchi-kashira
in pure *nanako* ground

In bold contrast to the *tsuba* adorned with the crest of the *Hôjô clan* and the *menuki* bearing the crests of the *Honda family*, the *fuchi-kashira* is completed in pure *shakudô* with a refined *nanako* ground. Note that each of these *nanako* dimples are hand-punched, such incredible symmetry! The *fuchi-kashira* offers a quiet confidence, contrasting against the symbolic weight of the other fittings. This *fuchi-kashira* has been attributed to the prestigious *Ômori* school from the late *Edo* period.



Koshirae bag with long life tortoise shell pattern.

