



ITEM# UJKA490

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

A NIDAI TADAKUNI KATANA

SIGNED, SHINTÔ EDO PERIOD (ENPÔ ERA: 1673~1681)

Swordsmith:	<i>Hizen-jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni (肥前住播磨守藤原忠国)</i>
Measurements:	Length: 69.6cm (<i>ubu</i>) Sori: 2.0cm Moto-haba: 2.99cm Weight: 655g
Jihada:	<i>Splendid konuka-hada with wonderful ji-nie and plenty of chikei</i>
Hamon:	<i>Brilliant chû-suguha with ko-midare, kinsuji in ko-nie deki</i>
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (<i>sword Especially Worthy of Preservation</i>)
Certificate #2-4:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (<i>koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic</i>)
Fujishiro rank:	Jô-saku (<i>ranked as a superior swordsmith</i>)
Sharpness:	Wazamonô (<i>rated as a maker of sharp swords</i>)
Authentication:	Sayagaki & tsunagi-gaki by Nozomi-san (<i>shodô artist</i>)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo period dragon koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

\$11,500

This is a terrific katana by second generation *Tadakuni*, a *jô-saku* and *wazamono* ranked swordsmith that simply made quality swords for the samurai class. The blade features gorgeous, well-forged *Hizen konuka-hada*, a bright beautiful *suguha hamon* and everything is housed in a handsome late Edo-period dragon-themed koshirae. The *Enpô* era has a reputation for having had some of the finest swords crafted within this time frame and this blade is no exception. Other notable smiths from *Enpô* include *Sukehiro* and *Kotetsu*. If you have not started a Japanese sword collection yet, this curvy katana with loads of certificates is an ideal piece to kick start your *nihontô* journey.

Saki-kasane: 4.0mm[^]
Moto-kasane: 6.4mm

Kissaki: 3.18cm
Saki-haba: 1.89cm

Nagasa: 69.6cm

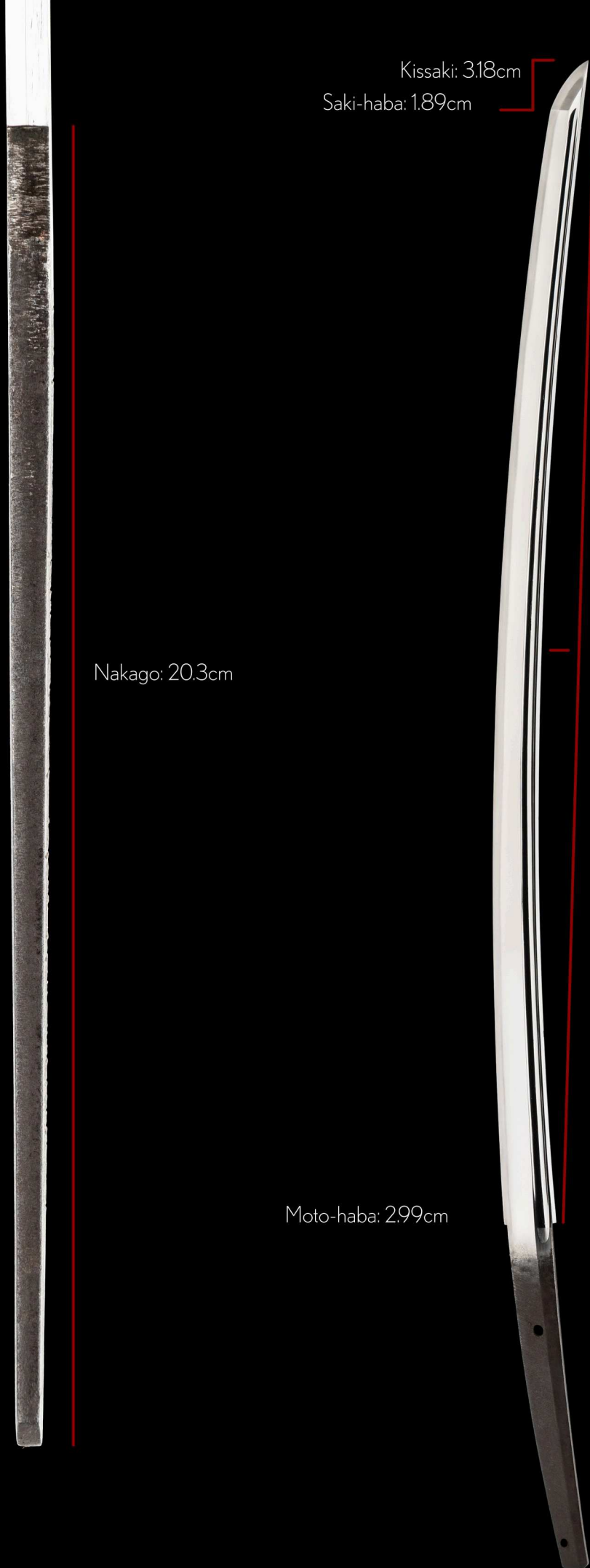
Nakago: 20.3cm

Sori: 2.0cm

Omosa: 655g

Moto-haba: 2.99cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Second-generation *Nidai Harima no Kami Tadakuni* (播磨守忠国) inherited more than just his father's name - he inherited a legacy. His father, the first *Tadakuni*, had established their line as one of the respected smiths serving the *Ogi* branch of the *Nabeshima* clan in *Saga*. With roots reaching back to maestro *Hizen Tadayoshi*, young Tadakuni came of age during the *Enpô* and *Genroku* eras (1673~1704), when the refined *Hizen* aesthetic was being perfected sword after sword.

Nidai Tadakuni blades earned their reputation as prestigious gifts exchanged between domains. The rankings speak for themselves: *wazamono* for cutting ability, *shintô jô-saku* for craftsmanship.

This curvy, elegant katana reflects the splendid quality of swords crafted during the *Enpô* era. It features a well-crafted *bô-hi* (groove) that quickens the katana for any potential duel. The *jigane* has been expertly forged with fine lines of *chikei* resulting in a *ko-itame hada* scattered with minute *ji-nie*. This is the famous *konuka-hada* texture, literally "rice-bran skin," that makes *Hizen* steel shimmer like silk under the light.

The hamon flows with serene confidence: *chû-suguha* mixed with *ko-midare*, the *nioi* rich and deep, with pockets of *ko-nie*. Subtle lines of *kinsuji* emerge in the bright hamon as tiny gifts when admiring the sword under the light. The *nakago* remains *ubu* (unaltered), with a small additional *mekugi-ana* as reinforcement, possibly for a past cutting test(s).

The *koshirae* amplifies the sword's quiet strength through a unified theme of clouds and dragons - classic symbols of power and transcendence. Their swirling forms in understated relief, while the *saya* reveals something special: layers of *aogai-mijin* (powdered mother-of-pearl) applied over a textured *ishime* (stone) ground. It catches the eye like dragon scales catching the light.





WATCH PABLO'S YOUTUBE PRESENTATION OF
UJKA490 - A NIDAI TADAKUNI KATANA

[UNIQUEJAPAN.COM/UJKA490-VIDEO](https://uniquejapan.com/ujka490-video)



Location: *Hizen province*

Title name: *Harima no Kami* (Lord of Harima province)

Family name: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Tadakuni* (second generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

sujikai-yasurime (slanting file marks)

(Hi) 肥

(zan) 前

(jū) 住

(hari) 播

(ma, no) 磨

(Kami) 守

(Fuji) 藤

(wara) 原

(Tada) 忠

(kuni) 國



The tang end (*nakago-jiri*) is shaped in a rounded "*kurijiri*" style, slightly rising toward the cutting edge (*ha*), a traditional form known as *ha-agari kurijiri*.

(*ura*, reverse)



Near the tang end, a small and discreet additional *mekugi-ana* has been made, often referred to as a “reserved” or “subtle” placement.

Such holes were typically added to strengthen the mounting during actual use rather than for display, a feature frequently found on blades intended for *tameshigiri* (test cutting).

Although this sword bears no cutting inscription, the presence of this modest reinforcement suggests that it was forged with genuine practicality in mind – a weapon conceived to perform, not merely to impress.

hikae (spare) *mekugi-ana*

特 選
05202312

No 1022087



鑑定書

一 刀 銘 肥前住播磨守藤原忠國

長 二尺二寸九分

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

令和六年二月二十一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



大阪府 教育委員会
第 47527 号
昭和40年7月14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 6th year of Reiwa (2024), February 21st

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Hizen-jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu (69.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



肥前住播磨守藤原忠国

肥前住播磨守藤原忠国

Hizen jû Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni

Harima no Kami Fujiwara Tadakuni, a resident of Hizen province

貳代作也

貳代作也

Nidai saku nari

Crafted by the second generation

時代延宝頃

時代延宝頃

Jidai Enpô goro

Around Enpô period (1673~1681)

長貳尺二寸九分有之

長貳尺二寸九分有之

Nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 9-bu kore ari

Blade length 69.6 cm

令和七乙巳年神無月吉日誌之

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Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Kannazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu

Written on a lucky day in the tenth month in the seventh year of

Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (October 2025)

The Enpô Era (1673-1681): The Calm Before Cultural Explosion

The *Enpô* era began in September 1673, triggered by a great fire in *Kyôto* and other disasters - the Japanese tradition of changing era names to mark calamitous events and hopefully reverse the bad fortune. The name itself meant "Prolonged Wealth," an optimistic declaration at a moment when prosperity was just beginning to take hold. Japan was 70 years into *Tokugawa* rule. The violence of the *Sengoku-jidai* was a distant memory. The borders had been sealed for over 30 years. The *sankin-kôtai* system was draining *daimyô* resources and keeping them loyal. And for the first time in Japanese history, ordinary townspeople - *chônin* merchants and artisans - had enough wealth to pursue education and culture previously reserved for samurai.

Shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna ruled through most of *Enpô*, but he was weak and indecisive, relying almost entirely on advisors. When he died suddenly in 1680 at age 38, a succession crisis erupted. Should the shogunate pass to imperial blood rather than Tokugawa? One advisor even suggested breaking 200 years of warrior rule and returning power to the emperor's sons. But *Hotta Masatoshi*, *Ietsuna*'s most brilliant councillor, pushed for *Tsunayoshi* - *Ietsuna*'s younger brother and the fourth son of the *Tokugawa Iemitsu*. In 1681, just as *Enpô* ended, *Tsunayoshi* became the fifth shogun. He would preside over the *Genroku* era (1688-1704), the absolute cultural peak of the Edo period.

Swords Forged in Gathering Prosperity

This katana from *Nidai Harima no Kami Tadakuni* was forged during *Enpô*, that transitional moment when Japan's long peace was finally translating into real prosperity. The economy was expanding. Cities were growing. The merchant class was rising. And swordsmiths were responding - not to the demands of constant warfare, but to a new market of wealthy patrons who valued beauty, refinement, and technical perfection. The *Hizen* school where *Tadakuni* worked had roots back to grandmaster *Tadayoshi*, and by *Enpô* they were perfecting that distinctive aesthetic: graceful curvature, bright nie-work, the famous *konukahada* texture that made the steel glow like silk.

Enpô-era blades caught that perfect moment - still crafted with the technical discipline inherited from generations of war, but increasingly focused on aesthetic achievement.



Tokugawa Ietsuna (September 7, 1641 – June 4, 1680)
Fourth shogun of the Tokugawa dynasty of Japan who was in office from 1651 to 1680. He was the eldest son of *Tokugawa Iemitsu*.








The *kissaki* drifts through the shadows -
silent steel lit only by intention...



kinsuji

These beautiful brushed lines of *kinsuji* appear like little gifts from swordsmith Tadakuni. A gentle smile and nod of appreciation is all that is required when admiring the sword under the light.

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the grain structure of the metal. The blade is dark and has a sharp edge. A red arrow points to a specific area on the blade labeled 'ko-nie crystals'.

ko-nie crystals

Hizen-to (swords of Hizen province) enjoy a fine reputation for the pure quality of the *jigane* - after all, it's the foundation that great swords are built upon. Here we see a tightly forged *ko-mokume* that literally shines with gorgeous swirls of *chikei* that leads to *konuka-hada* said to resemble rice grain.

Look closely and you can see a steady stream of *nie* crystals along the *habuchi*, also known as the *nioiguchi*. Therefore, we can refer to the *hamon* as being in *nie-deki*, comprising mostly of tiny *nie* crystals which is consistent with the Hizen tradition.

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, similar to the one above, showing the grain structure. A red arrow points to a specific area on the blade labeled 'chikei'.

chikei

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (temper line). The blade is dark and polished, with a bright, curved line of light reflecting off its surface. A red arrow points from the text 'nijûbu-ba' to a specific area on the hamon where it splits and runs somewhat parallel.

nijûbu-ba

nijûbu-ba

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

Often seen on *kotô* period swords forged in the *Yamato* tradition, Tadakuni was clearly inspired to reproduce this subtle quality.



This image captures the quiet confidence of this katana. A bright and crisp *chû-suguha hamon* that flows with beauty and consistency.

Hallmarks of a well-made sword.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

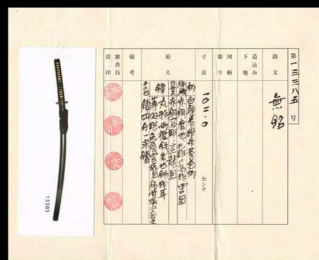


silver *habaki* with
rainfall file marks

*Aogai-mijin-nuri
ishime-ji-fû-nuri-saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(青貝微塵塗黒石目地風塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in black with stone-like texture
and decorated with mother-of-pearl*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity*



肥前住播磨守藤原忠国

肥 (Hi)
前 (zen)
住 (jû)
播 (Hari)
磨 (ma no)
守 (Kami)
藤 (Fuji)
原 (wara)
忠 (Tada)
国 (kuni)



肥前住播磨守藤原忠国

Tsunagi

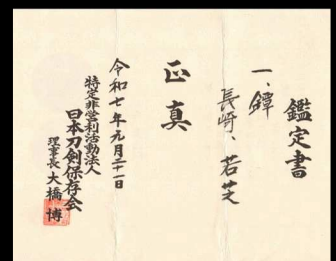
A handcrafted duplicate wooden sword blade that holds together the *koshirae* when the blade is resting in *shirasaya*.



The *tsuba* is a work from the *Jakushi* (若芝) school, active in the late *Edo* period, depicting a dragon among clouds and waves.

The *Jakushi* lineage began when a *samurai* and painter known as *Jakushi* collaborated with the first master, *Kizaemon* (喜左衛門), in designing sword fittings. From this origin grew a distinctive artistic tradition that continued for several generations, producing iron round shape engraved with motifs such as wind, bamboo, landscapes, and dragons in clouds.

Rooted in painting rather than pure metalcraft, *Jakushi* works are distinguished by their compositional balance and atmospheric expression, qualities that give this piece its depth and quiet intensity.



Kiyô san-jin Jakushi
(Jakushi from Nagasaki)



(Jaku) 若

(shi) 芝

崎 (Ki)

陽 (yô)

山 (san)

人 (jin)

You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.
Jon Kabat-Zinn



(reverse)



The *tsuka* is tightly wrapped *hishimaki* style with dark purple silk braids over beautifully aged *samekawa*.

Purple has long been esteemed in Japan's upper ranks as a noble colour and tastefully compliments the *koshirae*.





(Ichi) 一
(ryô) 了
monogram



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho



Fuchi-kashira
depicting clouds

This is the work of *Ichiryô* (一了), a brilliant metal craftsman active in the late *Edo* period. Both pieces depict clouds but through contrasting techniques – the *fuchi* is executed in high relief, giving the motif a sculptural depth, while the *kashira* is engraved in fine *ke-bori* lines, expressing subtle shadows and dimension with elegant simplicity.



The *shakudô menuki* depict a crawling dragon with precisely rendered scales that create lifelike movement. In its claw, the dragon holds a *nyoi-hôju* - the "wish-fulfilling jewel," a sacred orb symbolizing spiritual power, enlightenment, and the granting of wishes. Divine energy commanding natural forces - might paired with spiritual grace.



nyoi-hôju

The ceiling painting of a cloud dragon at Kenchô-ji Temple in Kamakura





Koshirae bag
decorated with a cloud pattern that harmonizes
with the cloud-dragon theme of the *koshirae*.

ARIGATO!

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