



ITEM# UJKA495

SOLD

A SUKESADA KATANA

SIGNED & DATED, SUE-KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI (TENBUN ERA: AUG 1555)

Swordsmith:	<i>Bizen no kuni jû Osafune Sukesada saku</i> (備前国住長船祐定作)
Measurements:	Length: 70.3cm (<i>ubu</i>) Sori: 2.0cm Moto-haba: 3.01cm Weight: 800g
Jihada:	Well-forged itame-hada with mokume-hada with midare-utsuri and chikei
Hamon:	Fine mixture of gunome-chôji-midare with suguha, sunagashi, kinsuji and yô
Certificate #1-2:	NBTHK Hozon (sword and koshirae Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #3:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic)
Authentication:	Sayagaki by Nozomi-san (shodô artist)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

This blade was crafted by *Osafune Sukesada* of Bizen, a region that led the nation in both quality and quantity of production. It is said that as much as seventy percent of all surviving masterwork blades originated from Bizen. This curvy katana has been dated to August 1555, toward the end of the *Muromachi* period, well into the turmoil of the violent *Sengoku jidai*. This sword retains its *ubu-nakago* and a length exceeding 70 cm and a healthy weight of 800g. The *hamon* is a *gunome-chôji-midare* with a bright *nioiguchi*, accompanied by *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and falling leaves of *yô*. Its brilliant Edo-period koshirae features a *saya* lacquered in black with a lovely 'wrinkled' *shibo-gawa* finish, fitted with a matching set of fittings, while the *tsuka* is wrapped in the classic manner over white *samekawa* with a superb black-lacquered leather, a colour scheme that reads as formal yet represents lavish workmanship for its period. The *tsuba* is decorated with twin dragons and the menuki depict a set of well-crafted *shishi*. Both the blade and koshirae come with NBTHK Hozon Certificates. This is a fine samurai sword that will fairly soon celebrate its 500th birthday.



Saki-kasane: 4.6mm

Moto-kasane: 6.3mm

Kissaki: 3.8cm

Saki-haba: 2.13cm

Nagasa: 70.3cm

Nakago: 20.0cm

Sori: 2.0cm

Omosa: 800g

nice weight

Moto-haba: 3.01cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



This blade was crafted by *Osafune Sukesada* (長船祐定), one of the most celebrated names in the Bizen tradition and among the most recognised signatures in all of Japanese swordsmithing.

Sukesada hailed from *Bizen* province, a region renowned since ancient times as a kingdom of the sword, blessed with abundant iron resources and a tradition of forging that produced more fine blades than anywhere else in Japan. It is said that as much as seventy percent of all surviving masterwork blades originated from Bizen, and among its schools the Osafune school was so highly regarded that the term "*Osafune-mono*" became synonymous with quality. It is worth noting that "Sukesada" functioned less as the name of a single individual than as a prestigious brand name passed down within the school, with as many as sixty different smiths signing their work with it across the generations.

This katana has been dated to August 1555, toward the end of the Muromachi period and well into the turmoil of the *Sengoku jidai*. With *daimyô* across the country locked in constant struggle for supremacy, demand for battle-ready swords had reached unprecedented heights, and it was against this backdrop that the name *Sukesada* came into full command.

Although a *kotô* blade, this sword retains its *ubu-nakago* and a length exceeding 70 cm. It shows deep sori with a tendency toward *koshi-zori*, and a *chû-kissaki* with a slightly elongated point. The forging is a vigorous *itame* with pronounced flowing grain, mixed with clear *mokume-hada*, and displays *midare-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a *gunome-chôji-midare* with sections of gunome-midare and suguha, a bright *nioiguchi*, accompanied throughout by *sunagashi*, *kinsuji* and falling leaves of *yô*. The blade is accompanied by an NBTHK Hozon Certificate.

The Edo period koshirae features a saya lacquered in black with a lovely wrinkled *shibo-gawa* finish, fitted throughout with a matching set of fittings, while the tsuka is wrapped in the classic manner over white *samekawa* with superb black-lacquered leather, a colour scheme that reads as formal yet represents lavish workmanship for its period. The tsuba is decorated with twin dragons and the *menuki* depict *shishi*, both among the most popular motifs of the time and further testament to its authenticity as a period piece. The koshirae too is accompanied by an NBTHK Hozon Certificate.



Tenbun nijûyonen hachigatsu kichijitsu

Dated on a lucky day in the eighth month in the 24th year of Tenbun era (August 1555)

Kanji used to represent the number four

In Japan, the number four tends to be avoided. Four is pronounced "*shi*," the same as the word for death, and is therefore considered inauspicious.

For this reason, instead of writing the character for four, the practice here is to write two twos in succession to represent it. This attention to good fortune, extended even to a small detail like this, reflects a distinctly Japanese sensibility. When your life depends on your sword, you leave nothing to chance.

四

four

二 二

two twos

(Ten) 天

(bun) 文

(nijû) 廿

(yo) 二

(nen) 年

(hachi) 八

(gatsu) 月

(kichi) 吉

(jitsu) 日

Ha-agari kurijiri - a form in which the rounded tip of the nakago rises toward the cutting-edge.



Location: *Bizen province*

Family name: *Ôsafune*

Swordsmith: *Sukesada*

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

備 (Bi)

前 (zen, no)

國 (kuni)

住 (jû)

長 (Osa)

船 (fune)

祐 (Suke)

定 (sada)

作 (saku)

07202503



No 3037240

鑑定書

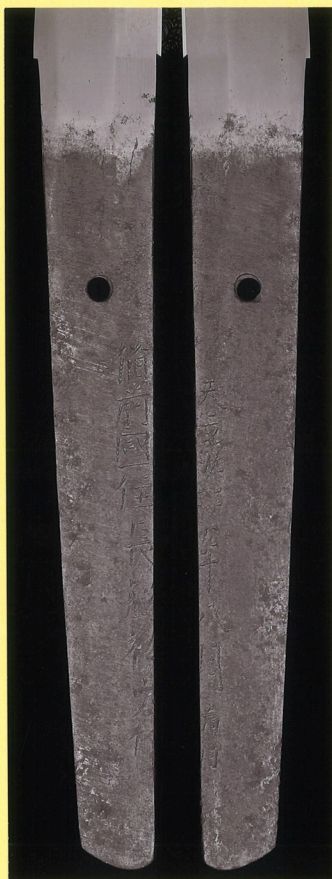
一刀銘

備前国住長船祐定作
天文廿二年八月吉日

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

令和七年五月二十八日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



兵庫県 教育委員会
第 97815 号
昭和58年11月27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 7th year of Reiwa (2025), May 28th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

*Bizen no kuni jû Osafune Sukesada saku
Tenbun nijûyonen hachigatsu kichijitsu*

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu (70.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



備前国住長船祐定

Bizen no kuni jû Osafune Sukesada

Osafune Sukesada, a resident of Bizen province

天文廿二年八月吉日

Tenbun nijûyonen hachigatsu kichijitsu

On a lucky day in the eighth month in the 24th year of the Tenbun era
(August 1555)

刃長貳尺参寸二分有之

Hachô 2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu kore ari

Blade length 70.3 cm

令和八丙午年水無月吉日誌之

Reiwa hachi hinoe-uma doshi Minazuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu

Written on a lucky day in the sixth month of the eighth year of the
Reiwa era, the Year of the Horse (June 2026)

The final years of Tenbun era, at the height of the Sengoku turmoil



Battle of Miyajima in 1555

The year 1555, in which this blade was forged, fell at the height of the *Sengoku* period's turmoil.

Since the outbreak of the *Ōnin War*, Japan had spent nearly a century locked in an age of constant conflict among rival warlords. The authority of the *Muromachi* shogunate had long since become nominal, and *daimyō* across the country fought continuously to expand their domains on the strength of their own arms alone. The blade was forged in the twenty fourth year of *Tenbun* era, precisely the period when this *Sengoku* momentum reached its peak. That October saw the *Battle of Miyajima*, in which *Mōri Motonari* defeated *Sue Harukata* at *Itsukushima*, a turning point that reshaped the balance of power across the *Chūgoku* region. This blade was forged in the shadow of that battle.

This unending warfare drove demand for swords to unprecedented heights. From mass produced *kazu-uchimono* to individually commissioned blades for high ranking warriors, smiths across the country worked without rest to meet demand at every level. Among them, the *Osafune* school of *Bizen* commanded particular trust from *Sengoku daimyō*, owing to its combination of high output and consistent quality.

The warlords who defined this era included *Mōri Motonari*, who was steadily consolidating his power in this period; *Hōjō Ujiyasu*, who held sway in the eastern provinces; *Takeda Shingen* of *Kai*; and *Uesugi Kenshin* of *Echigo*. Each of these men poured resources into building armies prepared for real combat, and it was smiths such as those of *Bizen*, supplying dependable fighting swords in quantity, who helped make that possible.



Mōri Motonari



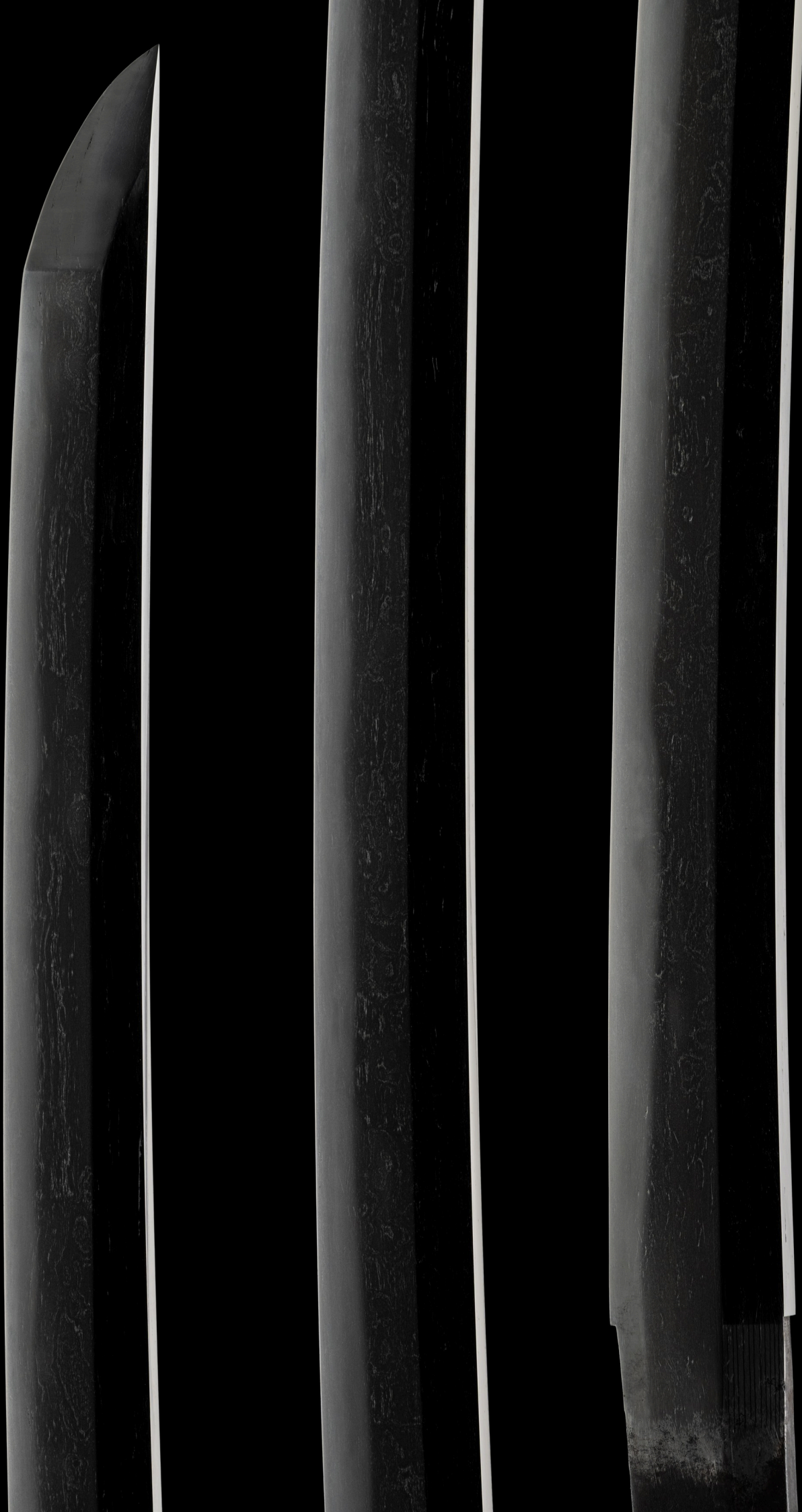
Hōjō Ujiyasu



Takeda Shingen



Uesugi Kenshin





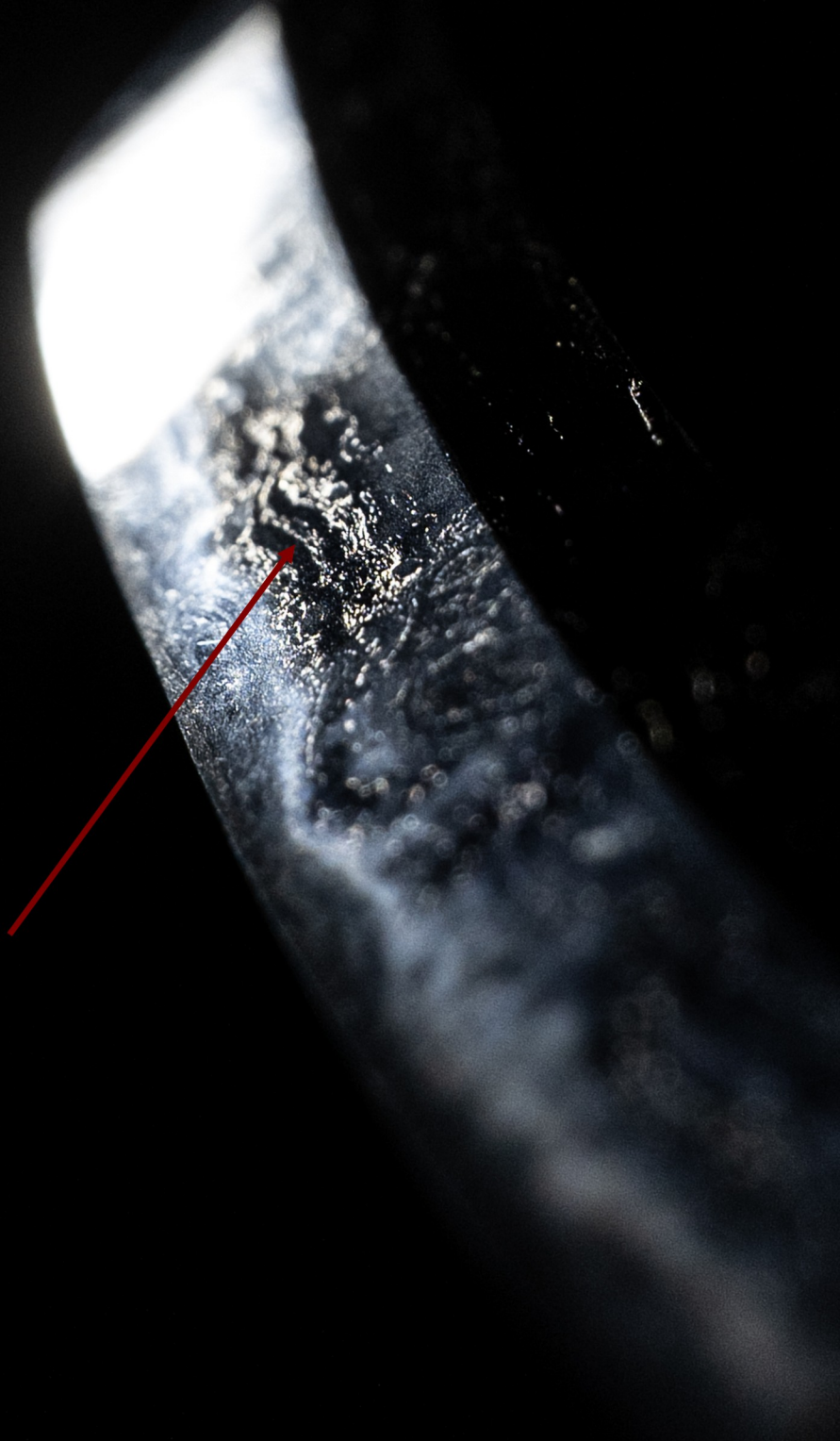
A textbook example of *mokume-hada*, folded to resemble the rounded grain of wood.

mokume-hada

A close-up photograph of a metal blade, likely a Japanese sword, showing a mokume-hada pattern. The pattern consists of wavy, rounded lines that resemble the grain of wood. The blade is dark, possibly black or dark grey, with some lighter, metallic areas visible. Two red arrows point from the text 'mokume-hada' to the patterned area on the blade.



This section displays classic *Bizen gunome-chôji-midare* where the temper line (*hamon*) resembles a cluster clove blossom buds.



Thick, dark channels of *chikei*
weave through the *jigane*, steel.

mokume-hada

itame-hada

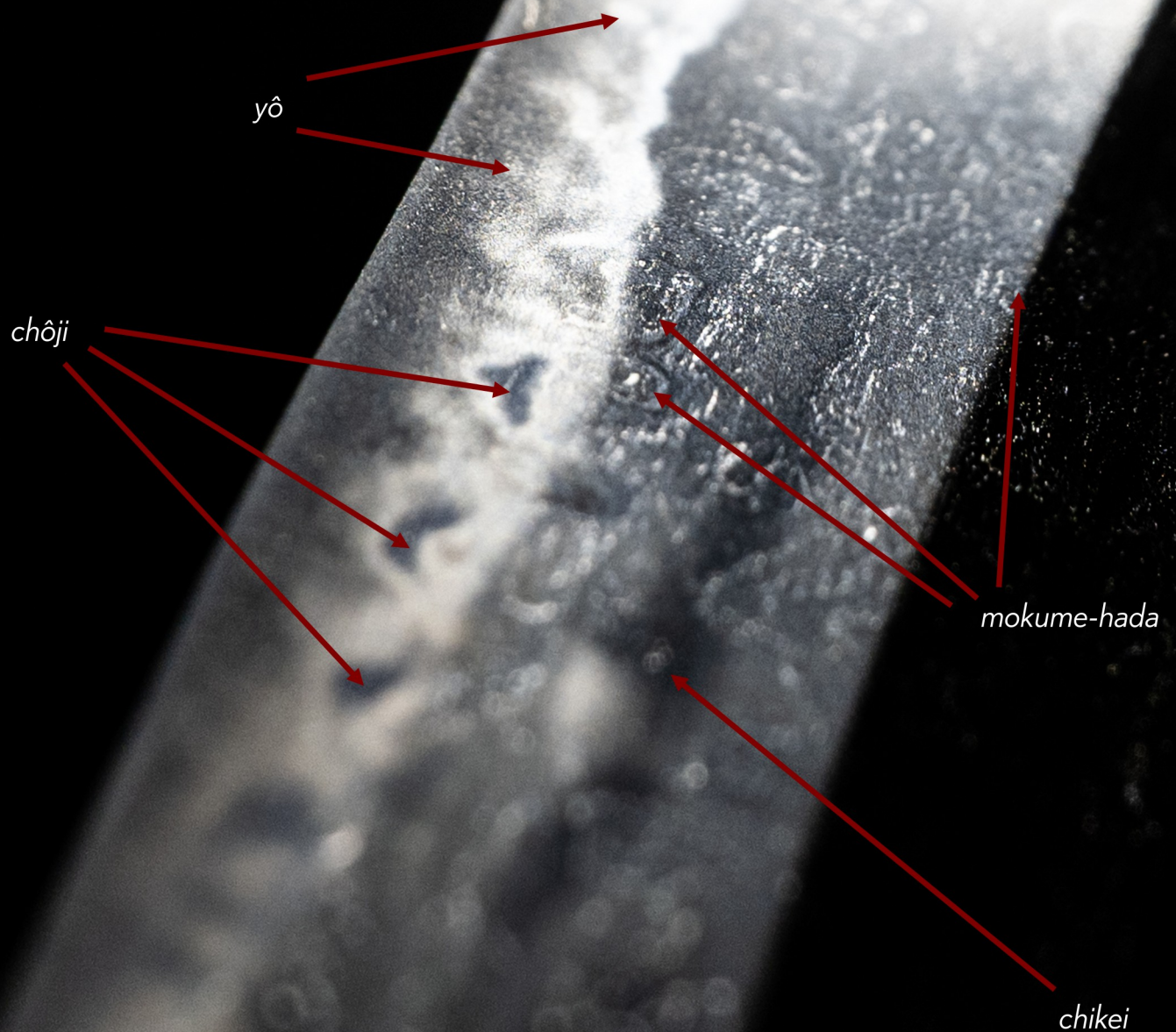
Itame-hada is where the grain pattern is more oval-shaped.

An island of *mokume-hada*



In this close-up view we can see the *chôji* clove blossoms and clear *mokume-hada* in the jihada. Captured also is *yô* that are 'leaves' of nie in the hardened area of the sword called the *yakiba*.

Welcome to the brilliant world to Japanese swords. ;)



A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a Japanese katana, showing the midare-utsuri pattern. The blade is dark and polished, with a visible hamon (ridgeline) running along its length. The midare-utsuri pattern consists of irregular, smoky, and misty reflections that appear above the hamon. Two red arrows point from the text label 'midare-utsuri' to specific areas of the pattern on the upper blade. Another two red arrows point from the text label 'midare-utsuri' to specific areas of the pattern on the lower blade. The background is dark and out of focus.

midare-utsuri

midare-utsuri

Literally meaning "reflection", *utsuri* is a beautiful, rather magical, misty reflection appearing in the *ji* (body of sword) above the *hamon*.

It is much loved and appreciated feature of swords, particular those made in the Bizen tradition in the Koto period. The type of *utsuri* is called *midare-utsuri* - a smokey pattern that billows towards the *shinogi* (ridge line).

Straight to the point.



suguha

Here the *hamon* is more straight, referred to as *suguha*.



Sunagashi is captured nicely here. The word means '*streams of sand*' or '*flowing sand*', which is an accumulation of *nie* crystals that resemble the marks left behind by a broom sweeping over sand.

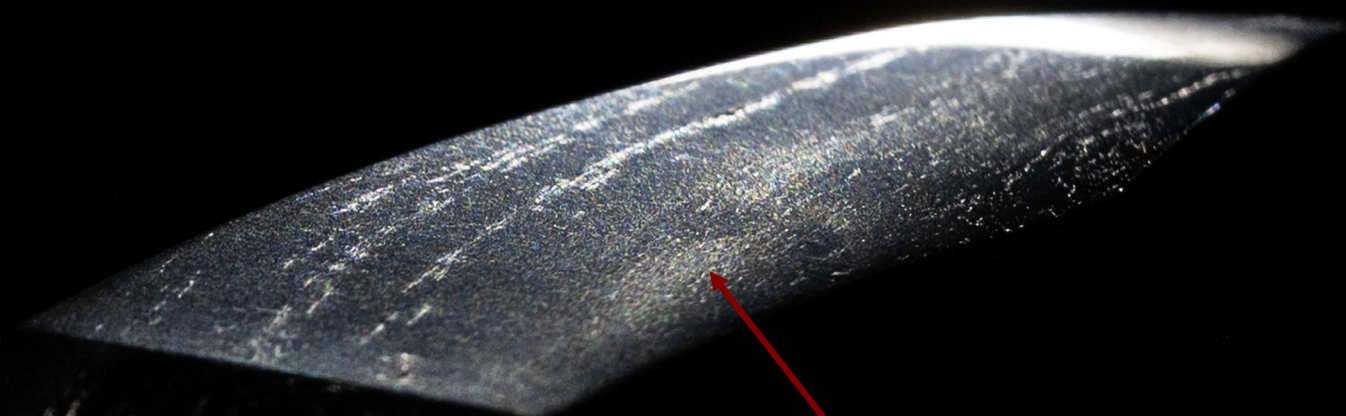
midare-utsuri

gunome-midare

Here the *hamon* demonstrates a more irregular wave pattern that does not include clove blossoms (*chôji*), therefore it is referred to as *gunome-midare*.



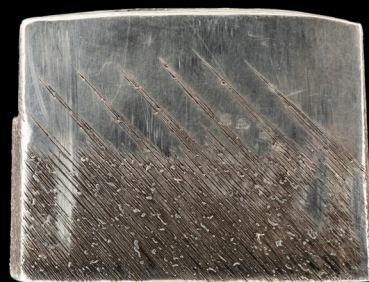
Ground Control to Major Tom...



midare-utsuri



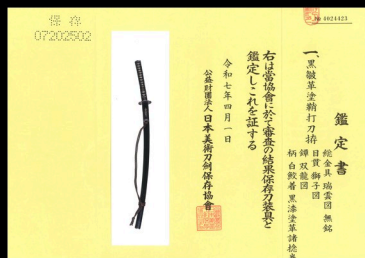
Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



silver *habaki* with
diagonal file marks
depicting falling rain

*Kuro-shibokawa-nuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒皺革塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in black
with unique texture like
wrinkled leather*



*NBTHK Hozon Certificate
Certificate of Authenticity*



kojiri

kurikata

A wonderful matching koshirae set of fittings with a pattern of *zuun* (auspicious clouds).

koiguchi

fuchi

kashira



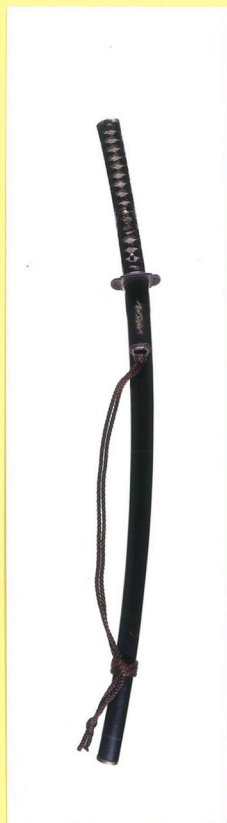
Zuiun (auspicious clouds) is a traditional motif that abstracts the "lucky clouds" said to appear as an omen of good fortune to come. Long used in *kimono*, Buddhist art, and other crafts, the motif carries wishes for rising fortune and abundance.

Zuiun is also frequently paired with *dragons* in decorative design. On this piece, the dragon adorning the *saya*, the fittings rendered with *zuiun*, and the very texture of the *saya*'s lacquer, likely finished with the *zuiun* motif in mind, together read almost like a single unified painting.



保 存
07202502

№ 4024423



公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協会



令和七年四月一日

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀装具と
鑑定しこれを証する

鑑定書

一、黒皺革塗鞘打刀拵

総金具瑞雲図 無銘
目貫獅子図
鐔 双龍図
柄 白鯨着黒漆塗革諸捻卷

NBTHK Hozon Certificate of Designation

A koshirae designated as *Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 7th year of Reiwa (2025), April 1st

One,

*Uchigatana-koshirae laquered in black with unique texture
resembling wrinkled leather*

Sô-kanagu: matching set of fittings depicting auspicious clouds, unsigned

Menuki: depicting shishi

Tsuba: depicting paired dragons

*Tsuka: white samekawa wrapped with black-lacquered leather in
Morohineri-maki style*

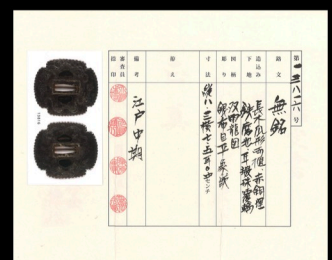
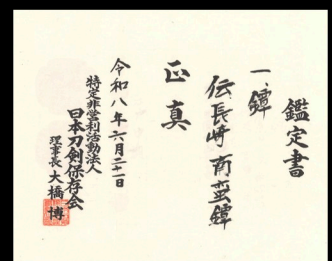
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



This *tsuba* is known as a *Nanban-tsuba*. The type originated as an imitation of foreign tsuba brought to Japan aboard Dutch ships, produced by metalworkers in *Hirado, Nagasaki*. *Nanban tsuba* are typically large in size and decorated with silver *nunome zôgan*, a technique used to render motifs and patterns onto the iron surface.

This *tsuba* is no exception, bearing a design of a rain dragon executed in silver *nunome zôgan* on an iron ground. It was likely dazzling in appearance when first made, but with the silver now worn away and the iron showing the corrosion that comes with age, it has taken on a subdued, weathered charm befitting its years. This is *wabi-sabi* in its truest sense, the beauty found in impermanence, in things that are imperfect and worn by time. The area surrounding the *nakago-ana* is known as the *seppa-dai*, and here its distinctly squared shape is a further hallmark by which a *Nanban tsuba* can be identified.

Time has done its work. And the result is magnificent.



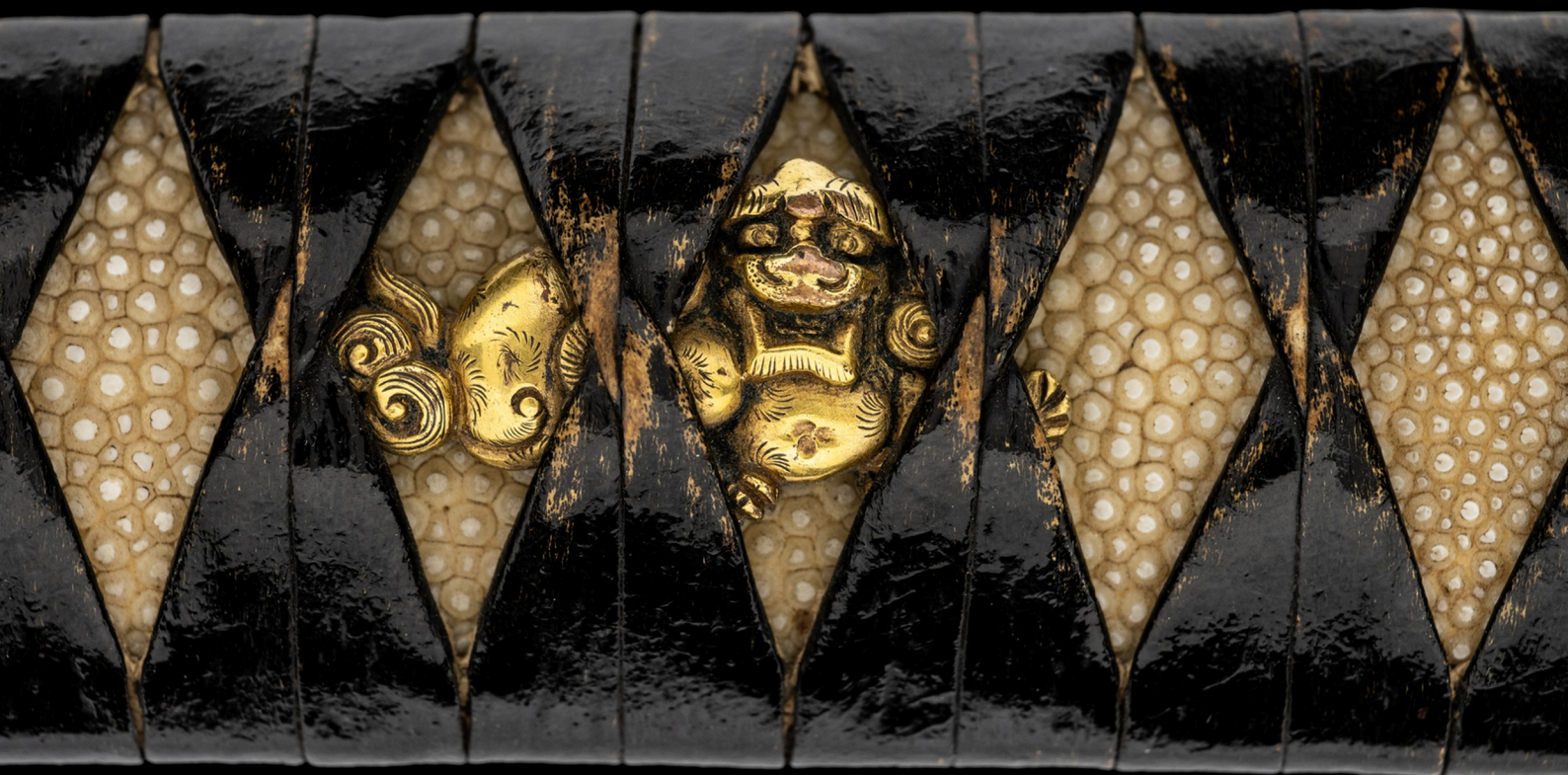
(reverse)



mimi (rim)



Rather than the silk more commonly seen, the *tsuka* (hilt) is wrapped in leather lacquered in black. The fading of this lacquer alone gives it a strong sense of age.

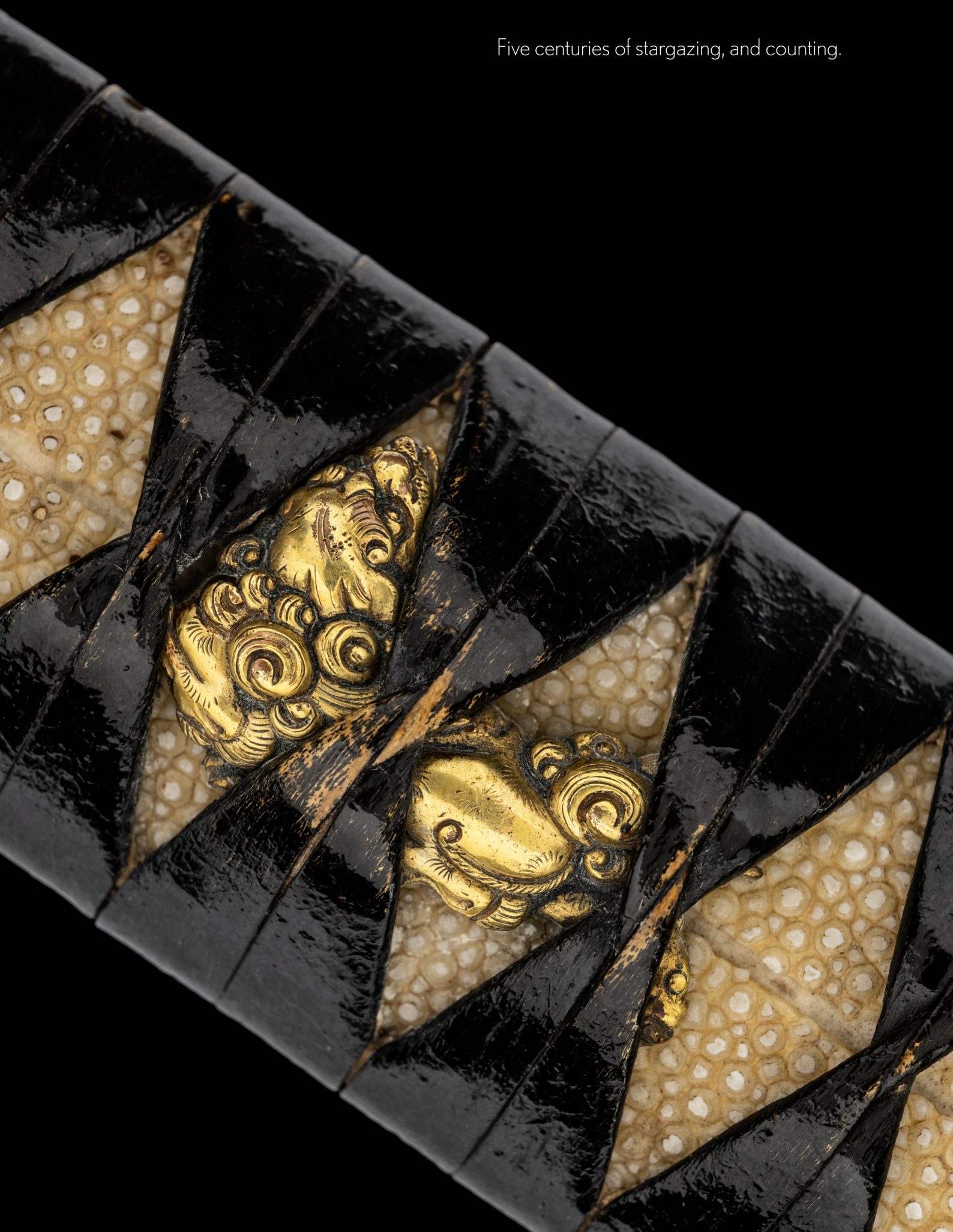


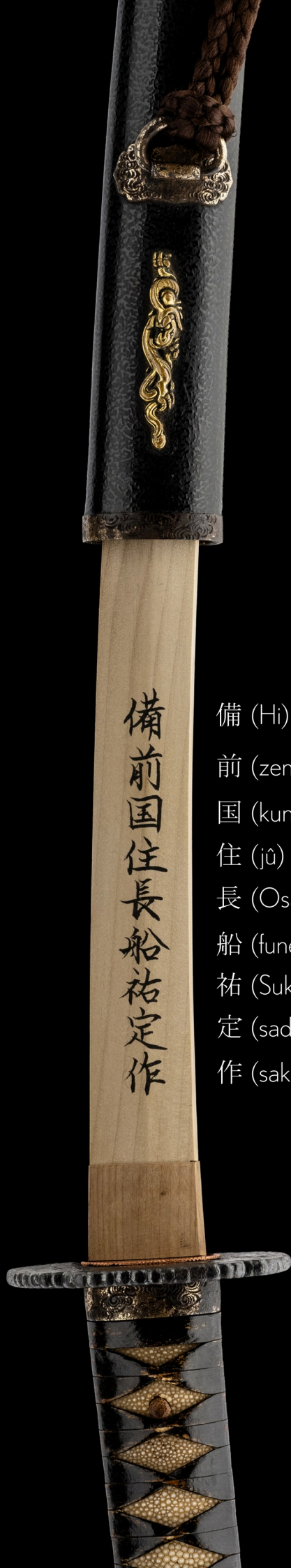
The *menuki* depict a *shisa lion*, though the front-facing design is unusual and immediately commanding. Even hidden beneath the *tsuka-ito*, their presence is strongly felt.

The curled mane of the lion is carved in remarkably fine detail, a clear testament to the craft of the Edo period. When you grip this *tsuka*, you are holding history in your hands.



Five centuries of stargazing, and counting.





備前国住長船祐定作

備 (Hi)
前 (zen, no)
国 (kuni)
住 (jû)
長 (Osa)
船 (fune)
祐 (Suke)
定 (sada)
作 (saku)

Tsunagi

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



備前国住長船祐定作



Congratulations Matt.

Warm regards,
Pablo