service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA506

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

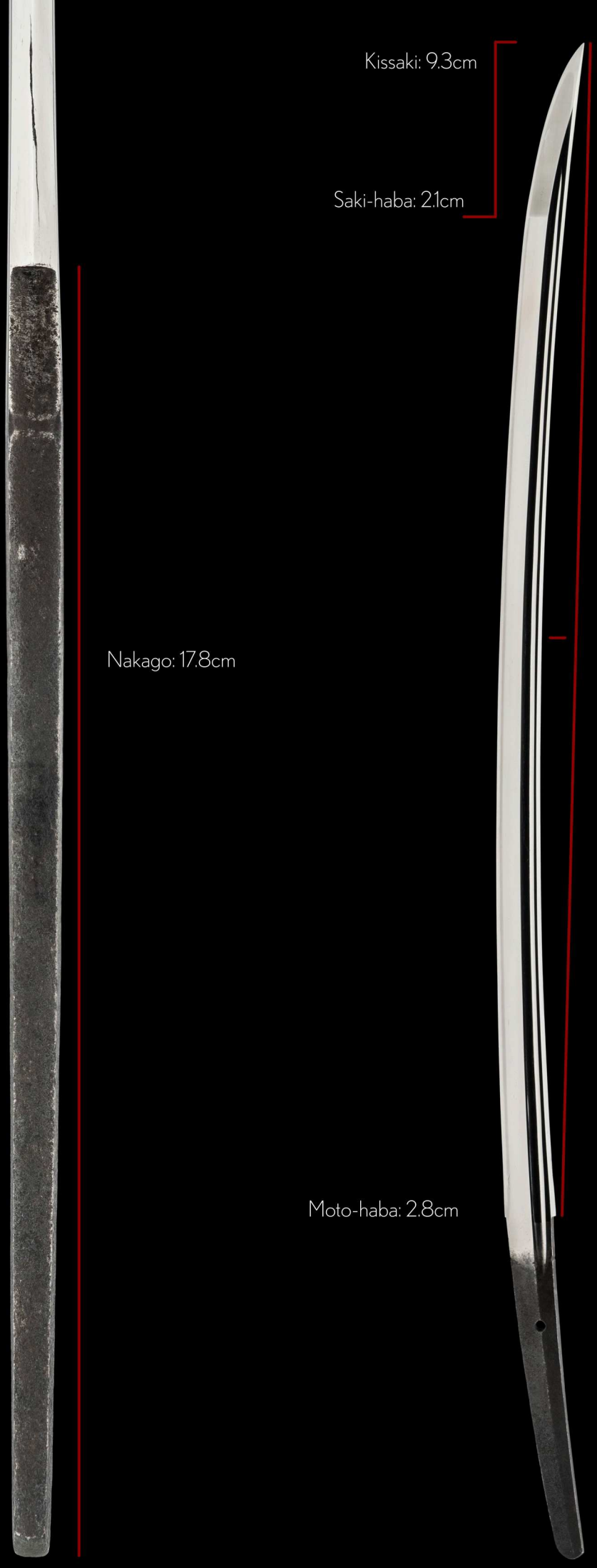
A MASAHIRO KATANA

UNSIGNED, KOTÔ MUROMACHI PERIOD (ÔEI ERA: 1394~1428)

Swordsmith:	***Mihara Masahiro*** (三原正広, *third generation*)
Measurements:	**Length:** 62.8cm (*ô-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.6cm **Moto-haba:** 2.8cm **Kissaki:** 9.3cm(!)
Jihada:	*Well-forged ko-mokume and ô-hada with ji-nie, plentiful chikei and shirake utsuri*
Hamon:	*Bright hoso-suguha with sections of ko-notare, kuichi-gaiba, nezumi-ashi, nioi deki*
Certificate #1:	**NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificate #2:	**NBTHK Hozon** *(a fuchi-kashira Worthy of Preservation)*
Certificates #3-4:	**NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic)*
Authentication:	**Sayagaki & tsunagi-gaki by Nozomi-san (*shodô artist)***
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, kit, printed description

$8,800

Mihara Masahiro was a swordsmith of the *Mihara* school of *Bingo* province. The school was founded by *Masaie*, active from the end of the *Kamakura* period, with this katana attributed to third generation *Masahiro* who flourished during the *Ôei* era. This striking blade with its powerful *ô-kissaki* of 9.3cm, strongly suggests that the piece was originally a *nagamaki* often seen during the *Nanbokuchô* period. The *jihada* is mixed with *ko-mokume* and *ô-hada*, with sparkling *ji-nie* and a standing *shirake-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a precise *hoso-suguha* mixed with *ko-notare*, with tiny *nezumi-ashi* and *kuichi-gaiba*. A wonderful set of late Edo period koshirae features zen-like red and black swirls on its *saya*, a gorgeous set of white heron depicted menuki, a lovely shining moon on the *Okamoto* school tsuba and a delightful *fuchi-kashira* that captures the historical detail of *Yodo Castle*.


Kissaki: 9.3cm
Saki-haba: 2.1cm
Nagasa: 62.8cm
Saki-kasane: 4.3mm
Moto-kasane: 6.6mm
Sori: 1.6cm
Nakago: 17.8cm
Omosa: 535g
Moto-haba: 2.8cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

Mihara Masahiro (三原正広) was a swordsmith of the *Mihara* school of *Bingo* province. The school was founded by *Masaie* (正家), active from the end of the *Kamakura* period. The *Masahiro* line followed in three recorded generations. The first generation, a son of *Masaie*, worked around *Kenmu* era (1334~1338). The second generation was active around *Jôji* era (1362~1368). The third generation worked in the *Ôei* era (1394~1428), and this katana is attributed to him.

Bingo province had long been known as a source of high-quality iron, providing an ideal foundation for forging fine swords. In addition, the many estates in the province held by major temples and shrines from the capital fostered close cultural exchange with the *Kinai* region, particularly *Yamato* province, and this connection, along with the migration of smiths from *Yamato*, left a strong *Yamato* influence on the *Mihara* school's style. Their work is characterized by *suguha* as its base, with a grain pattern often mixed with *masame*.

Mihara work is classed by period. Broadly speaking, blades from the *Kamakura* period to the end of the *Nanbokuchô* and into the very earl Muromachi period can be referred to as *Ko-Mihara*. Swords crafted during the mid to late Muromachi period are *Sue-Mihara*.

The handsome katana is a striking *ô-suriage* blade, unsigned with a *nagasa* of 62.8cm, and a powerful *ô-kissaki* of 9.3cm, strongly suggesting that the piece was originally a *nagamaki* often seen during the *Nanbokuchô* period. Yamato-den swords reward the collector who appreciates the small yet significant details, and this katana is a perfect example. The *jigane* is mixed with *ko-mokume and ô-hada*, with sparkling *ji-nie* and a vibrant *shirake-utsuri*. The *hamon* is a precise *hoso-suguha* mixed with *ko-notare*, with tiny *nezumi-ashi* and even *kuichi-gaiba* can be spotted. The *bôshi* is *tsuki-age*, returning deeply in *ko-maru*. Naturally, this sword comes with NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certification.

A wonderful set of late Edo period *koshirae* featuring zen-like red and black swirls on its *saya* paired with a *tsuka* of dark chocolate brown *tsuka-ito* over black-lacquered *samekawa*, allows the gorgeous set of white heron depicted *menuki* to shine through. Speaking of shining, the gorgeous moon on the *sukidashi-bori tsuba* by the *Okamoto* school is such a marvellous focal point, complimented with a Hozon certified *shibuichi fuchi-kashira* from the *Mito* school that captures the historical impressiveness of *Yodo Castle* in life-like detail.

All told, this is an excellent, historically-rich katana with a veritable samurai spirit which one can be proud to collect.





Location: *Bingo province*
School name: *Ko-Mihara school*
Swordsmith: *Masahiro* (third generation)

ô-suriage nakago (shortened tang)
katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

(*ura*, reverse)

Lovely shape to the ***nakago***, some curvature runs through it.

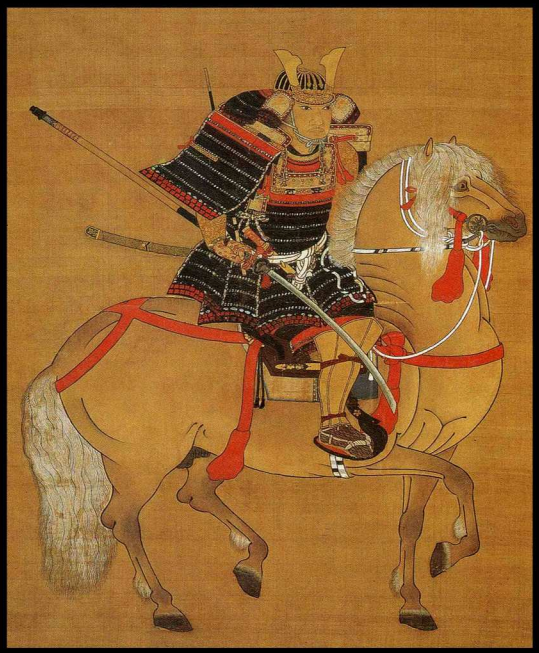
Ha-agari kurijiri - a form in which the rounded tip of the nakago rises toward the cutting-edge.



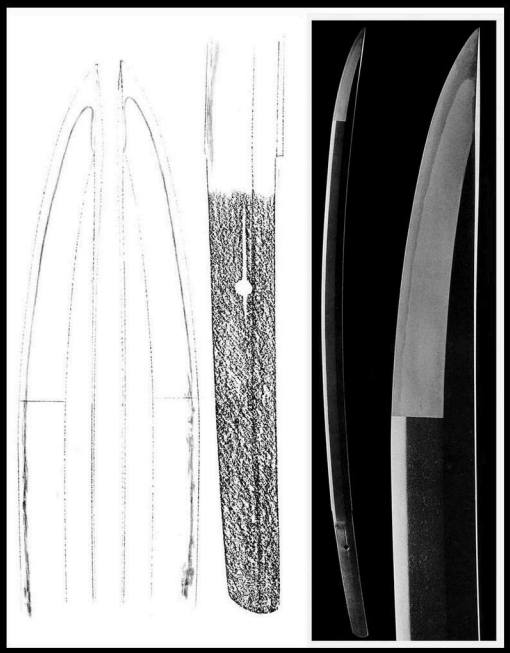
Nagamaki developed as a way to make the *ô-dachi* easier to wield. In the *Kamakura* period, warriors favoured long blades exceeding *3-shaku* (roughly 90cm) as a display of martial prowess, but these proved too heavy and hard to manage. To address this, the hilt was extended and bound tightly with cord or leather, and this arrangement eventually became standardized into an independent style, a blade forged from the outset with an elongated, *tsuka-maki*-wrapped hilt, which came to be known as *nagamaki*. It emerged in the *Nanbokuchô* period (mid-1300s) and saw widespread use from the *Muromachi* through the *Sengoku* and *Momoyama* periods. This sword is certified Tokubetsu Hozon to the *Ôei* era (1394~1428), which aligns with this time frame.

Compared to the *ô-dachi*, the *nagamaki* blade generally has a wider *mihaba* and thicker *kasane*, with an *ô-kissaki*. Its curvature tends toward *torii-zori* (centered in the middle of the blade) rather than the *saki-zori* seen in *naginata*.

After the *Edo* shogunate prohibited private ownership of blades over *3-shaku*, many *nagamaki* were shortened and converted into *uchigatana* or *wakizashi*, a process called *nagamaki-naoshi*. These reworked blades earned such a reputation for their quality that the saying "*there is no dull blade among nagamaki-naoshi*" arose.



A samurai with his trusted nagamaki



Nagamaki-naoshi, Ko-Mihara (Jûyô Tôken)



特保
07202503

№ 1024780



鑑定書

一、刀　無銘（三原正広・応永頃）

長　二尺〇七分強

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

令和七年五月二十八日

公益財團法人 日本美術刀剣保存協會

兵庫県　教育委員会
第　53567　号
昭和43年3月7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 7th year of Reiwa (2025), May 28th

One, Katana

Mumei (unsigned)
Mihara Masahiro, Ôei-goro

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 0-sun 7-bu kyô (62.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



古三原正広
Ko-Mihara Masahiro
Ko-Mihara Masahiro

大磨上無銘也
Ô-suriage mumei nari
Ô-suriage, unsigned

時代応永頃
Jidai Ôei-goro
Crafted circa the Ôei era (1394~1428)

刃長貳尺〇七分強有之
Hachô 2-shaku 0 7-bu kyô kore ari
Blade length 62.8 cm

令和八丙午年長月吉日誌之
Reiwa hachi hinoe-uma doshi Nagatsuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the ninth month of the eighth year of the Reiwa era, the Year of the Horse (September 2026)



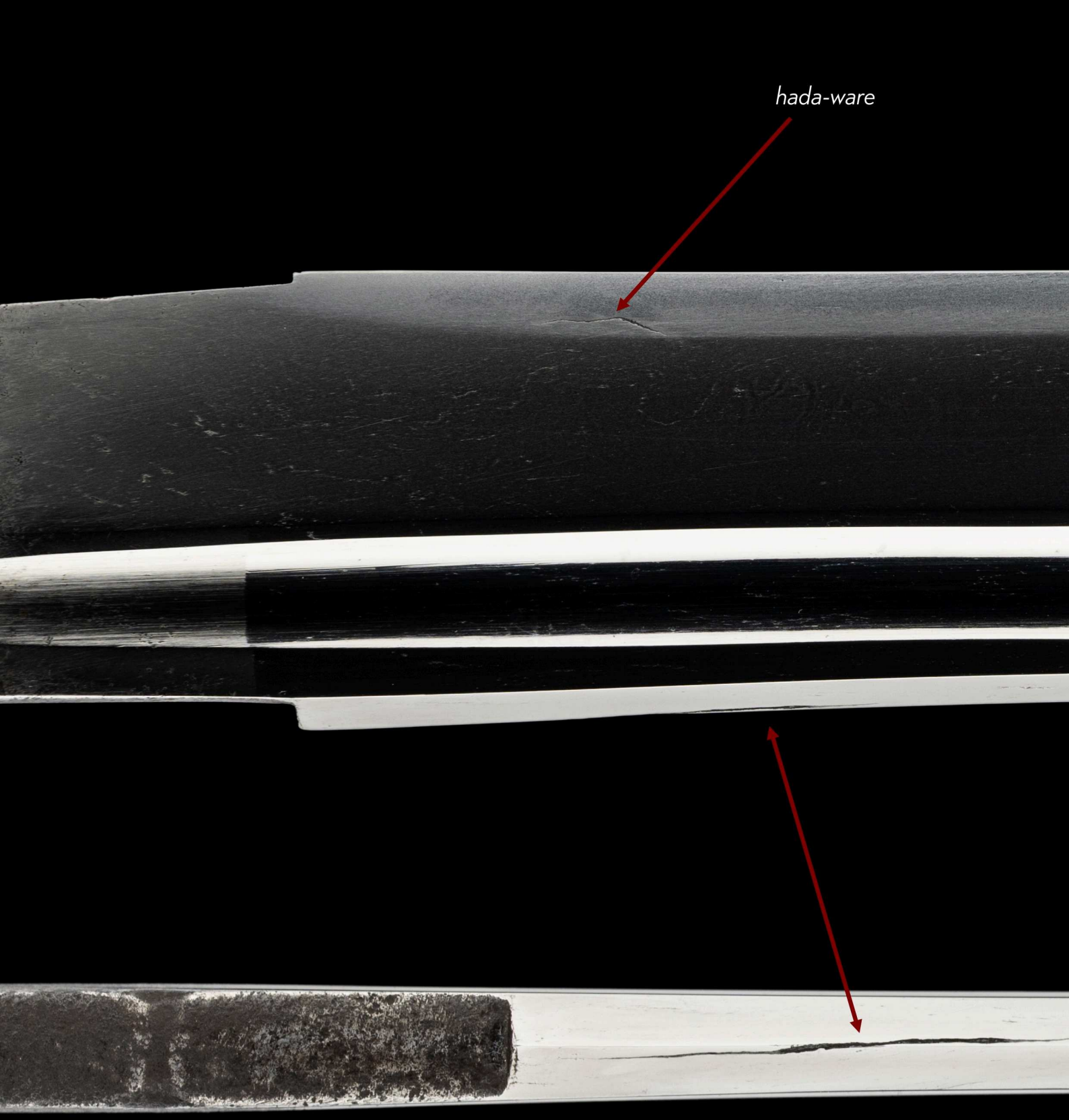


Hi (groove)

A ***hi*** (pronounced "hee") is a groove engraved on the ***shinogi-ji***, the surface between the ***mune*** (spine) and the ***shinogi*** (ridge line) or the ***hira-ji*** (area between the ***hamon*** and ***shinogi***).



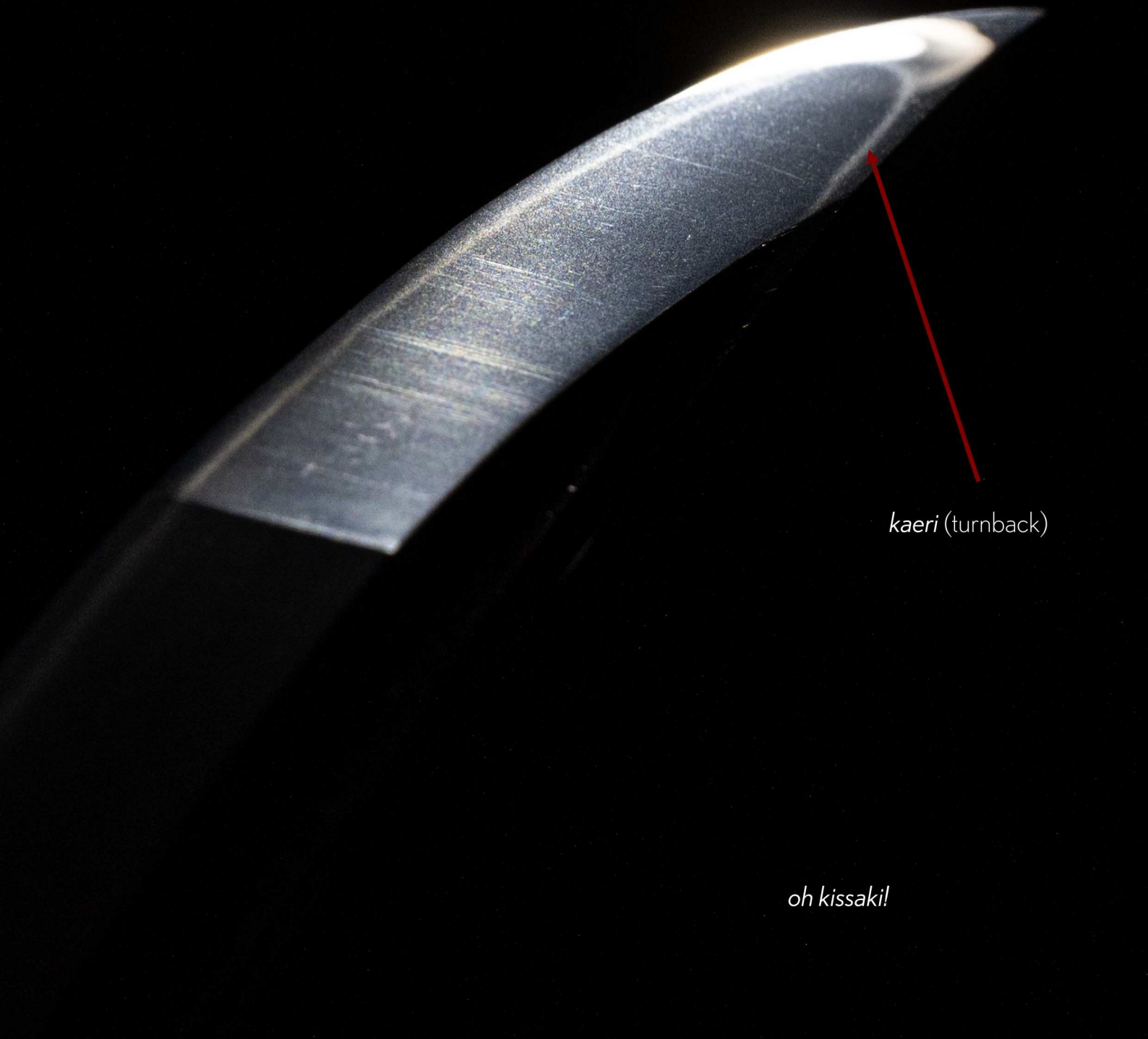
A groove helps to make a sword lighter and aids in the cutting performance by taking on i-beam construction properties of absorbing energy.



On the lower section of the blade there is ***hada-ware*** (opening in the folds), visible both in the ***ji*** (body) and on the ***mune*** (spine). These are stable and run parallel to the grain, which is far less serious than if they ran across it. In a sword some 600 years old, such blemishes are not unusual. The blade remains strong, and its achievement of **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon**, speaks to both its quality and its state of preservation. Plus it gives the sword some character!

A most impressive 9.3cm ***o-kissaki*** absolutely rules this sword.

Note the clean line of the bôshi, settling with a ***ko-maru kaer***i, an elegantly arching turn back towards the ***mune*** (spine).



oh kissaki!



Gorgeous ***hoso-suguha*** (narrow straight ***hamon***), classically seen on sword from the deep kotô period.



A good hamon is consistent, no matter the shape. Here we have what is clearly a fine sword, clean and consistent. The crystals are in what is referred to as ***nioi-deki***, where individual particles are not easily seen, thus appear like a beam of light from the Milky Way galaxy.



The hamon has a slight vibration in the form of ***ko-notare***, tiny waves.

Yamato-den - it's all in the details.

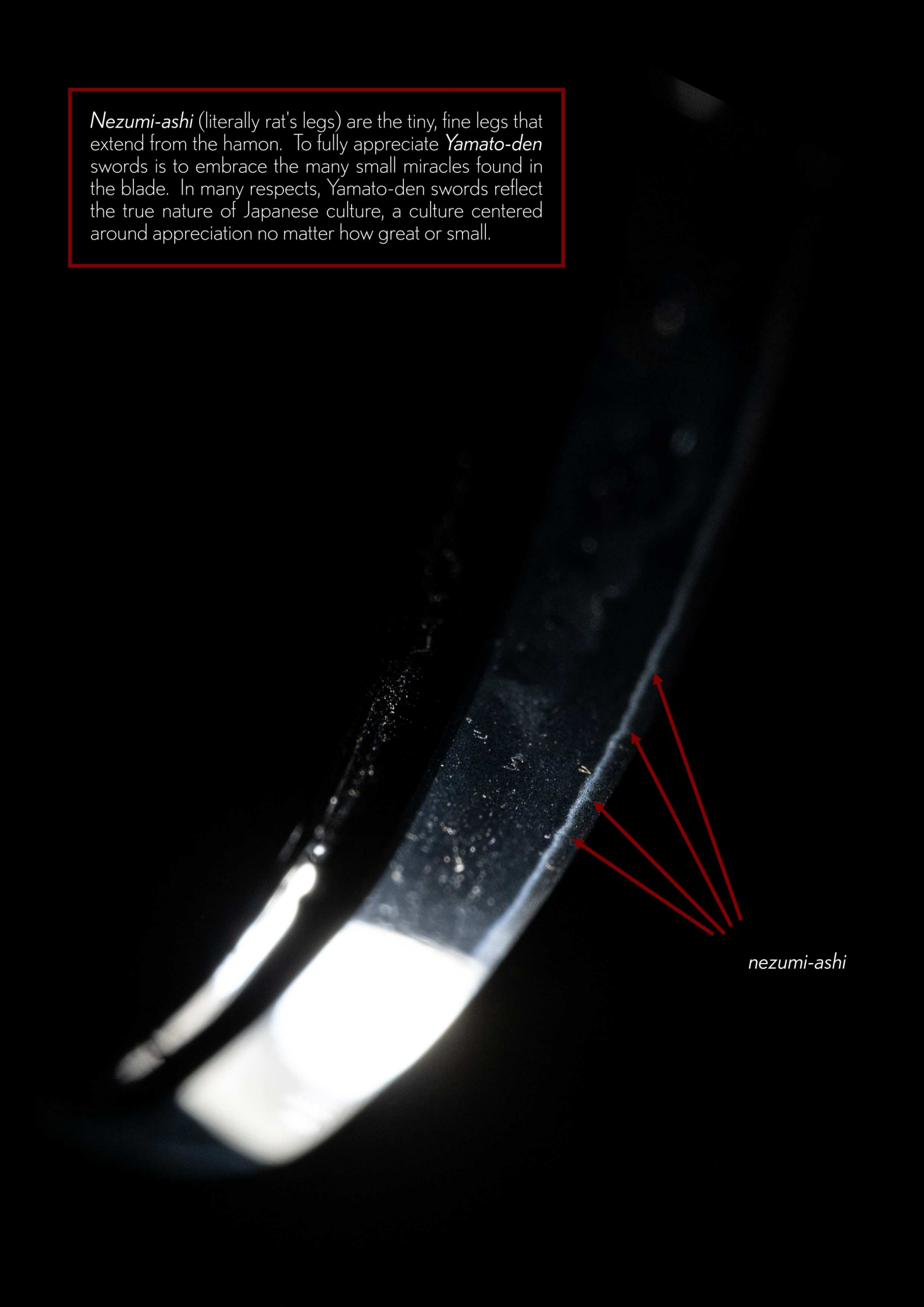


Ko-Mihara school swords show a mix of ***ko-mokume*** and ***o-hada*** (large burl grain) as seen here. There is also a light ***shirake-utsuri*** reflected in the blade that contrasts beautifully against the darkish tone of the ***jigane***.



Kuichigai-ba is the area of the ***hamon*** where the ***nioguchi*** splits over a noticeable distance. In this example, the ***kuichigai-ba*** is subtle, but it's there, a key trait of swords from the ***Ko-Mihara*** school.

Nezumi-ashi (literally rat's legs) are the tiny, fine legs that extend from the hamon. To fully appreciate *Yamato-den* swords is to embrace the many small miracles found in the blade. In many respects, Yamato-den swords reflect the true nature of Japanese culture, a culture centered around appreciation no matter how great or small.




A time to reflect.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



silver-plated ***habaki*** with
criss-cross ***higaki*** file marks

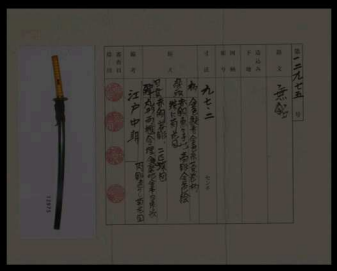


Shu-kuro-urushi
kawarinuri saya
uchigatana-koshirae
(朱黒塗変り塗鞘打刀拵)

Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in red and black
with unique texture

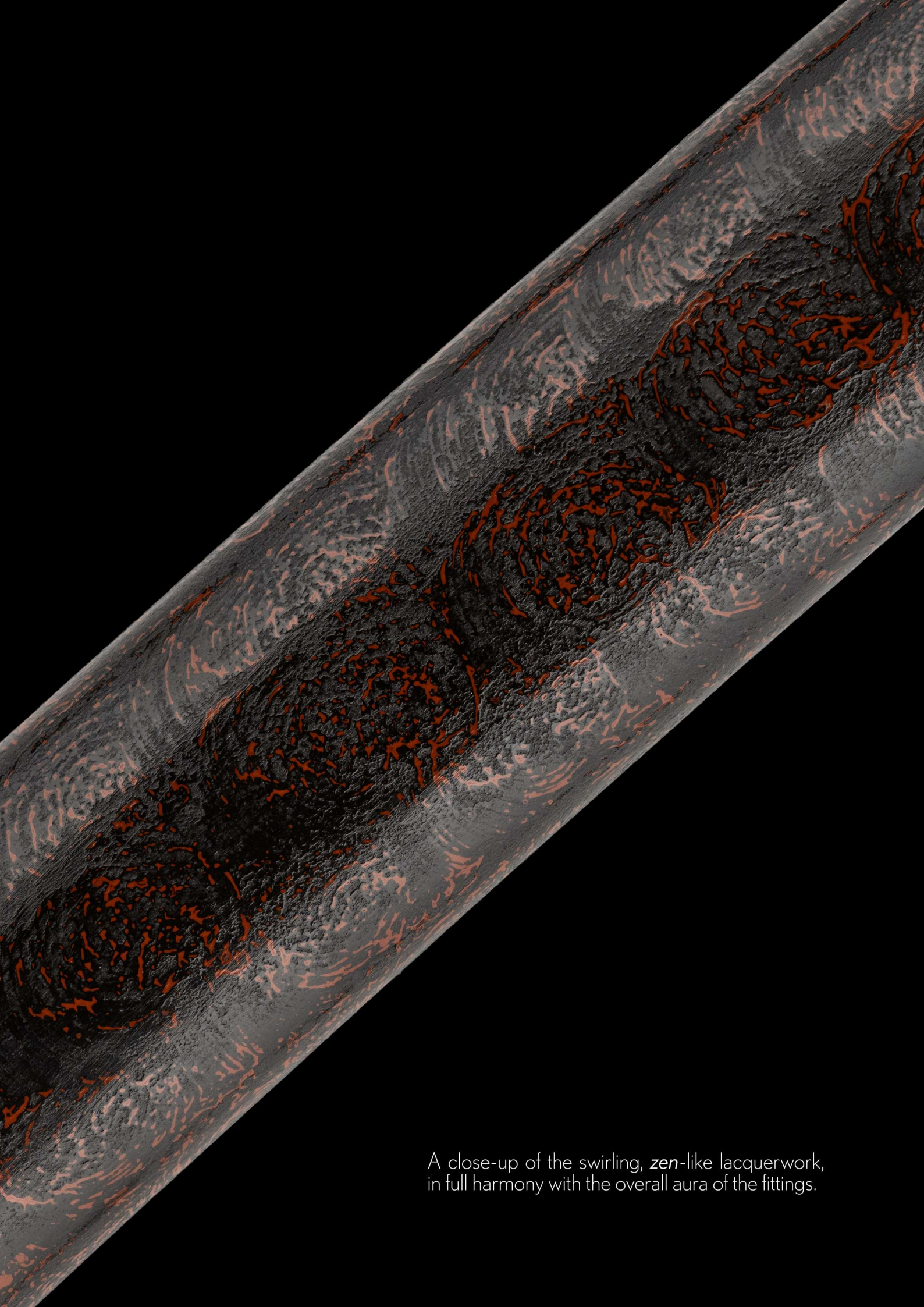
Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)

* Certificate arrives later this month of October.



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity





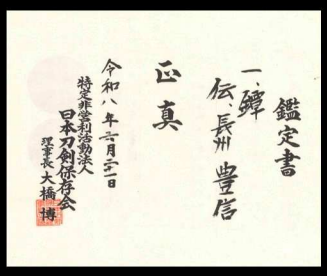
A close-up of the swirling, ***zen***-like lacquerwork,
in full harmony with the overall aura of the fittings.

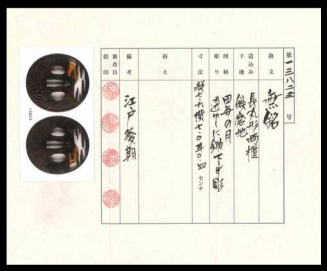


This wonderful *tsuba* has been attributed to the hand of *Toyonobu* (豊信), 7th generation metalsmith of the *Okamoto* school. He was active in the late *Edo* period, around the *Ansei* era (1854-1860).

Chôshû, alongside *Mito*, was a major center of metalworking, and the domain's industrial policy particularly encouraged *tsuba* production. The province was home to several prominent lineages, including the *Kawaji*, *Okamoto*, *Nakai*, and *Okada* schools.

This polished iron *tsuba* combines *sukisage-bori* (aka *sukidashi-bori*), literally means 'dug away' carving and openwork to depict a quintessentially Japanese scene. This design is known as *tagoto-no-tsuki* ("the moon in every rice paddy"), a motif referring to the sight of the moon reflected in flooded paddies at planting time. The name comes from the charming effect of the moon seeming to reflect over and over again within each paddy as one walks along the footpaths between them.


鑑定書
一、鐔
伝、長州 豊信
正真
令和八年六月二日
特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋 博



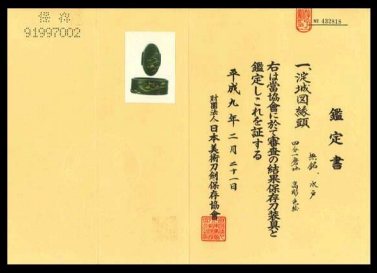
(reverse)



Tagoto-no-tsuki, photo taken in *Nagano* prefecture







NBTHK Hozon Certificate



Fuchi-kashira
depicting *Yodo* Castle

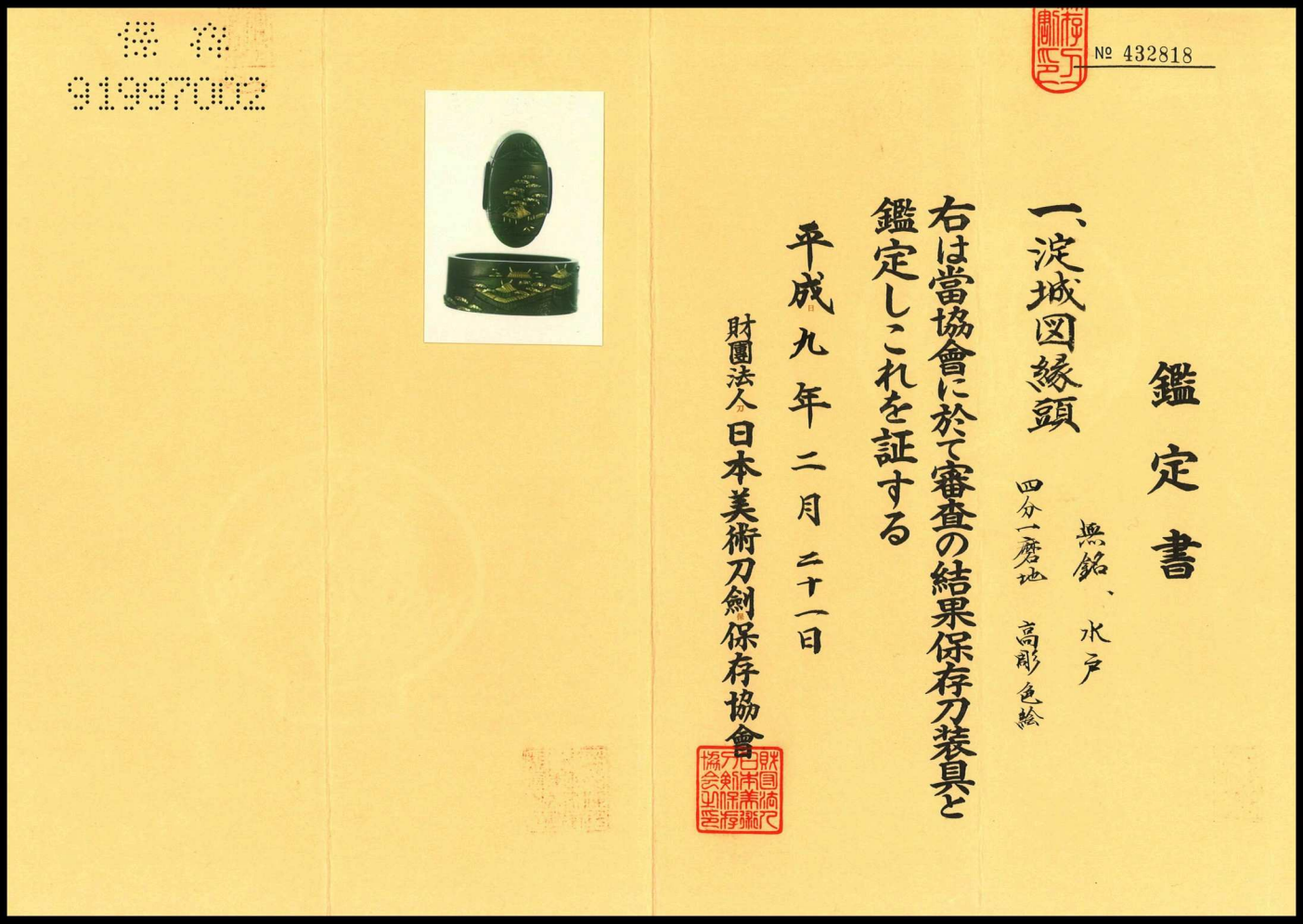
This lovely ***fuchi-kashira*** is a work of the ***Mito*** school. Metalworking in ***Mito*** is said to have begun when the ***Satake*** clan invited craftsmen from ***Kyôto***, among them ***Akashi Yodayû***, said to have come from the ***Shôami*** school. When the ***Satake*** clan was transferred to ***Akita*** in the seventh year of the ***Keichô*** era (1602), most of these metalworkers relocated with them, but some remained in ***Mito*** and continued producing fittings, giving rise to what is known as ***Mito*** school.

The piece is worked in ***shibuichi***, with relief decorated with gold to depict ***Yodo-jô*** (Yodo castle) - located in ***Yodo***, ***Kuze*** District, ***Yamashiro*** province (now ***Yodo Honmachi, Fushimi-ku, Kyôto***). Today, only the stone walls and part of the moat of the main castle remain. During the Edo period , the castle was occupied by the ***Matsudaira***, the ***Toda***, the ***Inaba*** and other feudal clans. The castle's setting at the confluence of the ***Uji***, ***Kizu*** and ***Katsura*** rivers, which earned it the reputation of a citadel surrounded by water. The ***fuchi-kashira*** is skillfully rendered in deep high-relief carving, coupled with brilliant gold inlay. NBTHK Hozon certified.

This castle was built to protect *Kyôto*, replacing the abandoned *Fushimi Castle*. In 1623, *Matsudaira Sadatsuna* became the first lord of the castle. Materials from Fushimi Castle were reused and the castle tower from *Nijô Castle* was moved to the site, but since the size did not match the castle tower base of *Yodo Castle*, double turrets were placed on the four corners and connected with *Tamon-yagura* and *Tamon-bei*. Part of it was burned down in the Battle of *Toba-Fushimi* at the end of the *Edo* period. It was abandoned in the *Meiji* period, and today only the moat and stone walls around the main castle remain.

The stone wall remains of Yodo Castle, Kyôto
The Kansai Guide (the-kansai-guide.com)





NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

A *fuchi-kashira* designated as *Worthy of Conservation*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 9th year of Heisei (1997), February 21st

One, Fuchigashira

Depicting Yodo Castle

Mumei (unsigned)
Mito school

Polished shibuichi, relief with color accents

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



The *tsuka* (hilt) is wrapped in *hishi-maki* in dark chocolate brown *tsuka-ito* over black-lacquered *samekawa*, which sets off the menuki in a marvellous manner.





The *menuki* are in *tanzaku-gata* (shaped like a narrow poetry card) and depict white herons both in full flight and standing calmly amid reeds and lotus by the water's edge.

Prized for its pure white plumage, the white heron is often paired with lotus, reeds, and/or the moon in depictions of waterside scenery, a favoured motif in classical *waka* poetry (thus the *tanzaku* form) and *ukiyo-e* art, evoking the quiet beauty of Japan's landscapes.



無 (Mu)
銘 (mei)
三 (Mi)
原 (hara)
正 (Masa)
広 (hiro)



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



Koshirae bag
decorated with a cloud pattern


Let it shine.

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

Arigato!

Thank you for downloading this pdf description.

All available swords are offered on a "first-serious-hold-request", first served basis. Please visit https://uniquejapan.com/enquire or email me (service@uniquejapan.com) straight away with questions and further photos and/or advice regarding any sword of interest.

Swords can be paid over a few months if required. We can discuss payment plans as certain pieces require a more sizeable investment.

Each sword can be legally owned and exported outside of Japan. All swords have certification papers (origami) such as from the NBTHK and/or the NTHK-NPO.

I completely respect that purchasing a sword remotely requires trust. You're relying on photographs and descriptions for something deeply important. It's my promise to answer every question thoroughly. I want you to feel absolutely confident that the sword you choose is meant for your family to cherish and preserve.

All swords from Unique Japan are guaranteed authentic and come with a **3-day worry-free inspection period** upon arrival to your home.

Descriptions and availability are subject to change without notice.

For further information:

Five Steps to Owning a Japanese Sword
www.uniquejapan.com/resource

We look forward to hearing from you. We have service offices in Tokyo and near London, England.

Thank you,



Pablo Kuntz
Founder, Unique Japan

service@uniquejapan.com
+44 7954 102 277 (mobile on 'signal & whatsapp' / british time)

Unique Japan, Fine Art Dealer
Antiques license issued by Meguro City
Tokyo, Japan (No.303291102398)

Unique Japan is the trading name of **Marchforth International Limited**.