



ITEM# UJTA032

A RAI KUNITOSHI TANTÔ

SIGNED, KAMAKURA PERIOD (SHOÔ ERA, 1288~1292)

Swordsmith:	<i>Rai Kunitoshi</i> (three-character signature)
Measurements:	Length: 24.1cm (<i>uchizori</i> shape with <i>ubu</i> , <i>furisode-nakago</i>)
Jihada:	<i>Nagare-hada</i> with <i>o-hada</i> , <i>ji-nie</i> and <i>nie-utsuri</i>
Hamon:	Tight <i>hoso-suguha</i> with bright <i>nioguchi</i>
Certificate #1:	29th NBTHK Jûyô Tôken (a sword designated as <i>Profound and Important</i>)
Certificate #2:	NTHK-NPO Yûshutô (a sword designated as <i>Masterwork and published</i>)
Fujishiro:	<i>Saijô-saku</i> (ranked as a grandmaster swordsmith)
Sayagaki:	<i>Kunzan</i> (Honma Junji) dated May 1982
Included:	Shirasaya, storage box, fabric bags, stand, kit, description

SOLD

This remarkable *tantô* by *Rai Kunitoshi* is a masterpiece from one of Japan's greatest ever swordsmiths. It was made during the heart of the *Kamakura Period*, the golden age of sword-making. A sword that would have surely been passed down through the very highest levels of *daimyô* aristocracy for generations. Ranked *saijô-saku* (grandmaster), there are four swords (out of just 110) protected as *Kokuhô* (Japanese National Treasures) that were crafted by *Rai Kunitoshi*, two of which are *tantos*. This elegant sword carries a distinct similarity to them. The blade features a gorgeous *uchi-zori* (inward curvature), characteristic of the period, and *Rai Kunitoshi's* iconic three-character signature on a beautifully curved *furisode-nakago*. The *hamon* is a tight *hoso-suguha* with *nie-utsuri* that beams along the *ji-nie* surface. The sword was certified as NBTHK Jûyô Token at the 29th session in 1982 and has *sayagaki* by former NBTHK chairman *Honma Junji* (*Kunzan sensei*) from the same year. This *tantô* was polished by renowned sword polisher *Sasaki Takushi* in 2016.

Moto-kasane: 5mm



Nakago: 11.3cm

Saki-haba: 1.6cm

Moto-haba: 2.0cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Nagasa: 24.1cm

Sori: 0cm

Nakago-sori: 0.3cm



This blade features *uchi-zori*, meaning "inward curvature". The sword curves very slightly toward the cutting edge.

It is a unique construction characteristic of tanto produced in the Kamakura period, circa 1185~1333.

played in exhibitions, you should try to take note of the shape. Also, whenever you see good photography of swords, look carefully at both the curvature of the blade and the nakago, or tang. The curvature of the blade continues through the nakago. However, please take into consideration that nakago from seven to eight hundred years ago have inevitably aged somewhat, and that there are differences in nakago shape according to province and school. Unfortunately, it was not possible to supply examples of every single type in this book.

The first tanto were produced by Rai Kunitoshi and the Rai school (Rai Kunitoshi was a smith active in the later mid-Kamakura period into the Nanboku-cho period in the Yamashiro province of Japan, or modern-day Kyoto prefecture). The Awataguchi school of Kyoto and the smith Kagemitsu of Osafune (in Bizen province, modern-day Okayama prefecture) were also producing tanto around this time. However, there are not many extant examples. As noted above, the word “tanto” is a modern term. During the Edo period these blades were referred to as “ko-wakizashi” (short wakizashi).

There are many tanto with a standard length of 8 sun 5 bu (25.7 cm). They now exhibit take-no-ko-zori (bamboo-shoot curvature)—i.e., the back side of the blade curves toward the cutting edge, and the point section is not very full—but at the time of production they may have had some curvature. Not many tanto from around this era remain, as generally before the Muromachi period one would have had to be of a fairly high social standing in order to be able to wear a tanto. Consequently, these blades would have been specially ordered. This is evident in the quality of the workmanship. For this reason, we can assume that there were many good-quality tanto in this period.

It is assumed that during the Kamakura period tachi were worn suspended from the waist. However, it seems that in battle they were worn thrust through the sash. To sum up, naturally warriors would have had to wear blades like o-wakizashi, but without extant fittings (scabbard, hilt, etc.) or data, the evidence as to how they were worn is unclear and unreliable.

Although it is thought that tanto (then called ko-wakizashi) may have been worn in peacetime, it is safe to assume that this was a privilege of the highly ranked. During this time, people of lower standing also wore blades that were thrust through the sash like a wakizashi so they could be drawn immediately. However, it is very unlikely that these blades were of good quality.

The Nanboku-cho Period: 1331–1392

(For additional examples of blades from this period, please refer to figs. 159–161 in appendix 1.)

Tachi of this period were usually long and broad, with shallow curva-

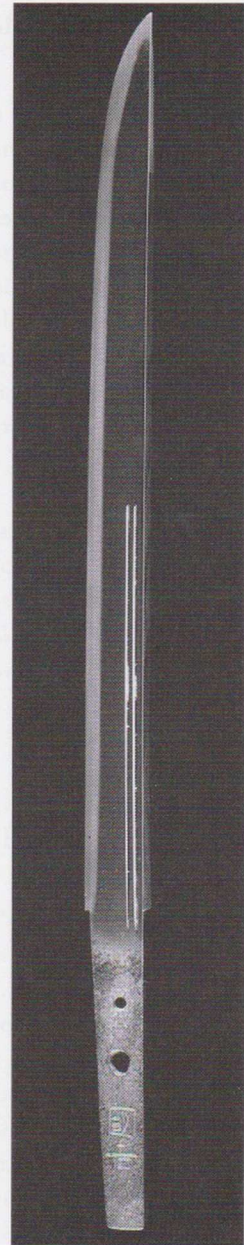


Fig. 24
短刀 銘 国吉
(栗田口)
Kamakura-period tanto.
Mei (inscription): *Kuniyoshi*
(Awataguchi). Length:
1 shaku 1 bu (30.6 cm).

Note that the blade of this tanto has some curvature, but the nakago is almost straight.

From the book:
Facts and Fundamentals of Japanese Swords
by Nobuo Nakahara with translation by Paul Martin

This passage states that Rai Kunitoshi was among the very first swordsmiths to forge tantô. It also illustrates the rarity, quality and overall prestige of such tantô.



The character Rai 来 means "come".

This relates to the founder (Kuniyoshi) coming from overseas (Korea) to Japan. As there are no extant works by Rai Kuniyoshi, Rai Kuniyuki is considered the founder.

Rai Kunitoshi is thought to be the grandson of Kuniyuki.

This tanto was crafted circa the *Shou era* (1288-1293), during the heart of the Kamakura period.

Rai

Kuni

toshi



重要第七三七號

指定書

短刀 銘 来国俊

一口

長三四・二程 内及リ

形状 平造 三ッ棟 内及リ
鍛 板目流れ 大肌 三ッ交 地沸つく
刃文 直可し 小沸つき 匂口 明るい
帽子 小丸 二重刃 三ッ程 がある
彫物 表裏に 刀樋
茎 生ぶ 鏡目 切リ
目釘孔 二

右者當協會に於て審査の結果
重要刀剣に指定する

昭和五十七年十二月八日

財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協会

会長 富士川金二



Juyo Certificate No. 7207
Shiteisho (指定書)

Certificate of Designation
Tanto, mei: Rai Kunitoshi (来国俊)

Measurements:
nagasa 24.1 cm, uchizori

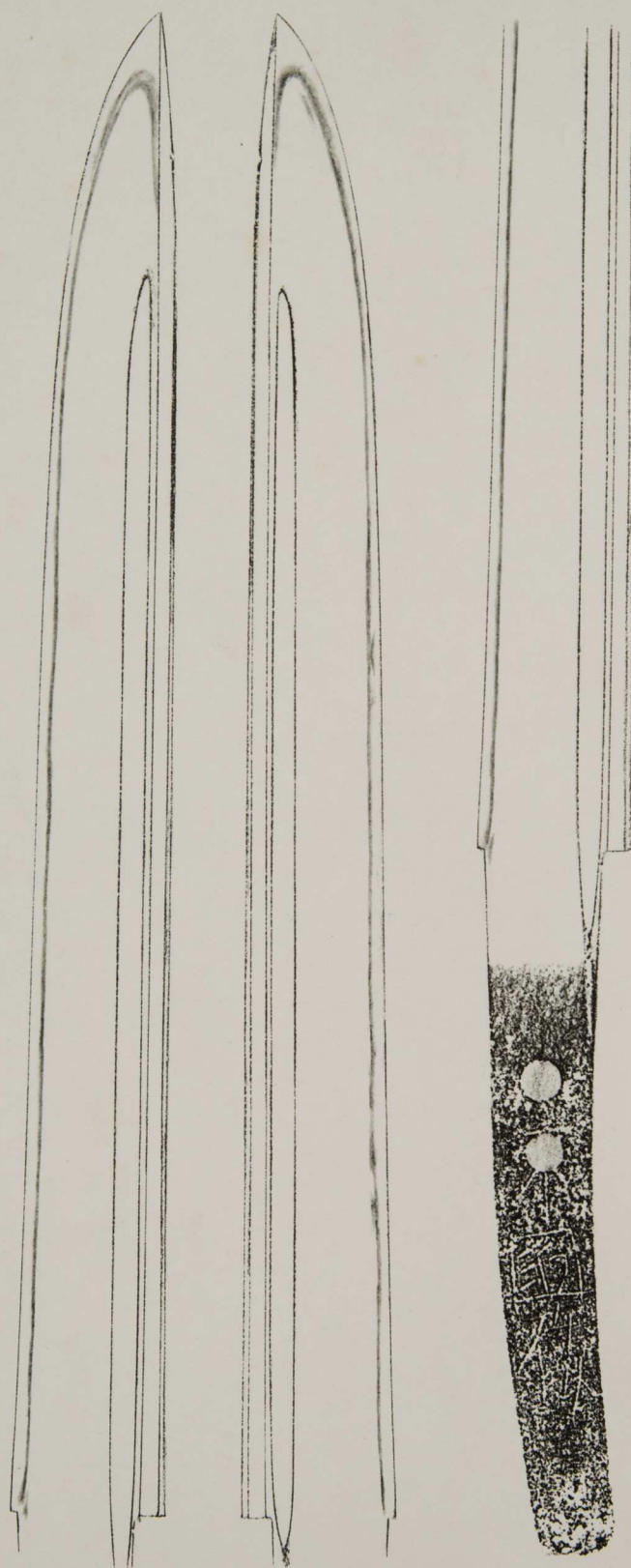
Description:
Keijo: hira-zukuri, mitsu-mune, uchizori
Kitae: itame-nagare that is mixed with some o-hada and that features ji-nie
Hamon: tight suguha in ko-nie-deki with a bright nioiguchi
Boshi: ko-maru and some nijuba
Horimono: on both sides a katana-ji
Nakago: ubu, kiri-yasurime, two mekugi-ana

According to the result of the shinsa committee of our society we judged this work as authentic and rate it as juyo-token.

December 8, 1982

[Foundation] Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai, NBTHK
[President] Fujikawa Kinji (富士川金二)

短刀 米国俊



NBTHK Juyo Token (white paper, oshigata)

Designated as Juyo-Token
(a profound and important sword)
at the 29th Juyo shinsa held on
December 8, 1982

tanto, mei:
Rai Kunitoshi (来国俊)

Measurements
nagasa 24.1 cm
uchizori
motohaba 2.1 cm
nakago-nagasa 11.3 cm
nakago-sori 0.3 cm

Shizuoka Prefecture, Nagata Yoshitatsu
(永田良達)

昭和五十七年十二月八日指定
第二十九回 重要刀剣
静岡縣 永田良達
短刀 銘 来国俊
一口
法量 長さ三・四、一厘 内反り 元幅二、一厘 茎長さ二・三厘 茎反り〇、三厘
形状 平造、三ツ棟、内反り尋常。 鍔 板目流れ、大肌ころ交じり、地沸つき、沸映り立つ。 刃文 直刃じり、
小沸つき、匂口明るい。 帽子 小丸、二重刃ころがあり一段と沸が強い。 彫物 表裏に刀種。 茎 生ぶ、
先栗尻、鍔目切り、目釘孔一、表に三字銘がある。
説明 来国俊の生ぶ在銘の短刀である。内反り尋常の上品な産で、鍔は板目に流れ肌交じり沸映り立ち、刃文は小沸出来
の直刃で匂口がよく締って明るく、帽子は小丸を福よく焼き、二重刃ころがあり、来国俊の特色をよく示した作である。

Description:

Keijo: hira-zukuri, mitsu-mune, uchizori, standard tanto dimensions

Kitae: itame-nagare that is mixed with some o-hada and that features ji-nie and a nie-utsuri

Hamon: tight suguha in ko-nie-deki with a bright nioiguchi

Boshi: ko-maru-kaeri with some nijuba and more nie than in the hamon

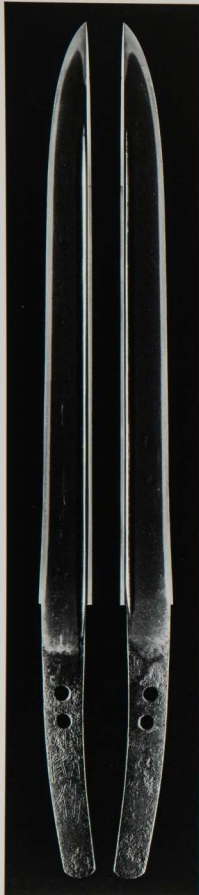
Horimono: on both sides a katana-hi

Nakago: ubu, kurijiri, kiri-yasurime, two mekugi-ana, the omote side bears a sanji-mei

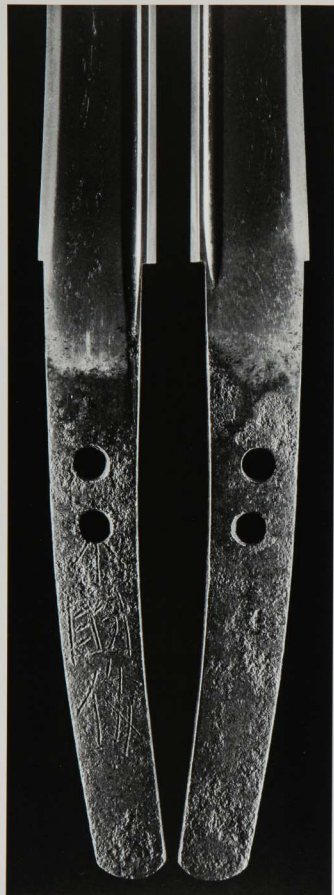
Remarks:

This is an *ubu* signed tanto by Rai Kunitoshi. It is with the *uchizori* and its standard tanto dimensions of a highly elegant shape. The *kitae* is an *itame* that is mixed with *nagare* and that features a *nie-utsuri* and the hamon is a *suguha* in *ko-nie-deki* with a very tight and bright *nioiguchi*.

The *boshi* shows an elegantly hardened *ko-maru-kaeri* and some *nijuba* and thus we see very well all the characteristic features of Rai Kunitoshi.



5



二 短刀 銘 未国俊

山城国 正応頃

法量 長さ 八寸二分、反り無し
 造り込み 平造り、真樫 元幅 二センチ、先幅 一・六センチ、元重ね 五ミリ
 鍛 小坂目に少し疵交じり、地沸よくつき、沸映り立つ
 刃文 細直刃小沸よくつきやえる
 銚子 直に小丸長めに返る
 彫物 表裏に刀樋を区下に掻き流し
 中心 生ぶで区送り、振袖中心となり、粟尻 目釘穴 二個
 鐘目 切り

4

This tanto was published in the inaugural NTHK-NPO Yushuto Catalogue in 2015.

Tanto: *Rai Kunitoshi*

Yamashiro no Kuni, Shouou era (1288-1292)

Houryou (measurements)

Nagasa (length): 8-sun 2-bu (~24.1cm)

Motohaba: 2cm / Sakihaba: 1.6cm

Motokasane: 5mm

Tsukurikomi (style of forging): *Hirazukuri*

Kitae (forge): *Ko-itame Masa Majiri Jinie Yokutsuki Nie Utsuritatsu*

Wood grain pattern with straight grain pattern, gorgeous jinie, and nie is vivid

Hamon (temper line): *Hoso Suguha Konie Yokutsuki Saeru*

Sharp straight temper line with good small nie

Boshi (temper line at tip): *Suguni Komaru Nagame ni Kaeru*

Straight, small round shape, and curled back

Horimono (engraving): *Omote Ura ni Hi wo Kakinagashi*

Groove on both sides, the edge of grooves sharpen.

Chushin (nakago): *Ubu de Chushin Kurijiri Mekugi ana ni ko*

Original shape nakago, kurijiri shape, and two holes

Yasurime (file mark): *Kiri*

Ridged style

The *boshi* (hamon in the tip), curls back (*ko-maru*).
Note the impressive cluster of nie-crystals.



The sword is forged with a flowing *nagare-hada* and *o-itame-hada*.




utsuri (shadow hamon)



This tang carries an elegant curvature, known as a *furisode-nakago*, which refers to a long-sleeved kimono. This type of nakago is said to look like the way these long sleeves gently drape on a woman. A curved nakago is another important characteristic of tanto from the Kamakura period.






Mitsu (three) *mune* (spine/ridge) is a relatively rare construction whereby the spine has three surfaces.

It is generally found in the blades of smiths working in the *Sôshû tradition* as well as tanto of the Yamashiro school of the Koto period.

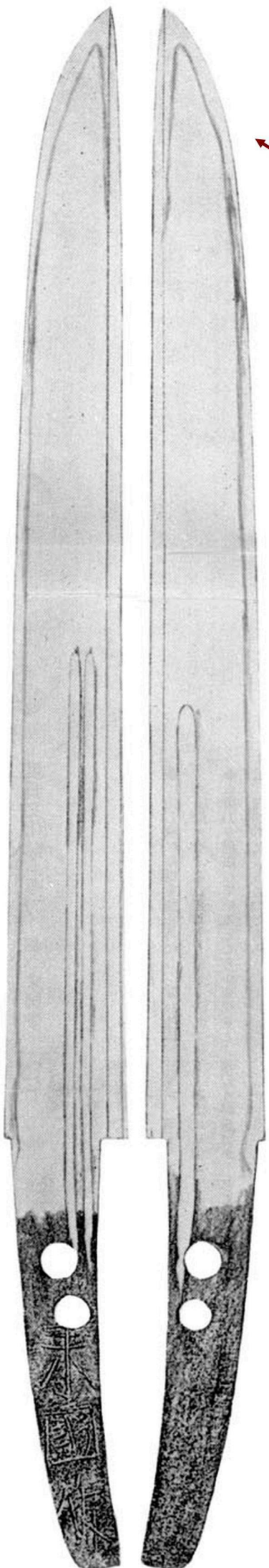
Note the powerful thickness of the *nakago* (tang).



A tight and bright *nioiguchi* - crystals that make up the *suguha* (straight) hamon.



Out of the 110 swords that are designated Japanese national treasures, four of them are by Rai Kunitoshi that includes one tanto that has remarkable similarity to this sword.



A Rai Kunitoshi Tantô
National Treasure (Kokuhô)

Length: ~24.5cm
Uchizori

A side by side comparison
of a certified National
Treasure tantô by Rai
Kunitoshi (left) and the Rai
Kunitoshi being offered by
Unique Japan (right).

The similarities are clear to
be seen - the curved
furisode nakago, two holes
in nakago, grooves on both
swords and the inward
uchizori curvature.

The lengths of the two
swords are nearly identical:
24.1cm and 24.5cm



ujta032
Rai Kunitoshi Tantô

Length: 24.1cm
Uchizori



Rai Kunitoshi (swordsmith)

Blade length: ~ 24.1cm

Sayagaki written by *Kunzan* (Mr. Honma Junji)

Dated in May of the Year of the Dog (1982)
+ kao (personal seal)

来國俊

Rai Kunitoshi

刃長七寸九分半

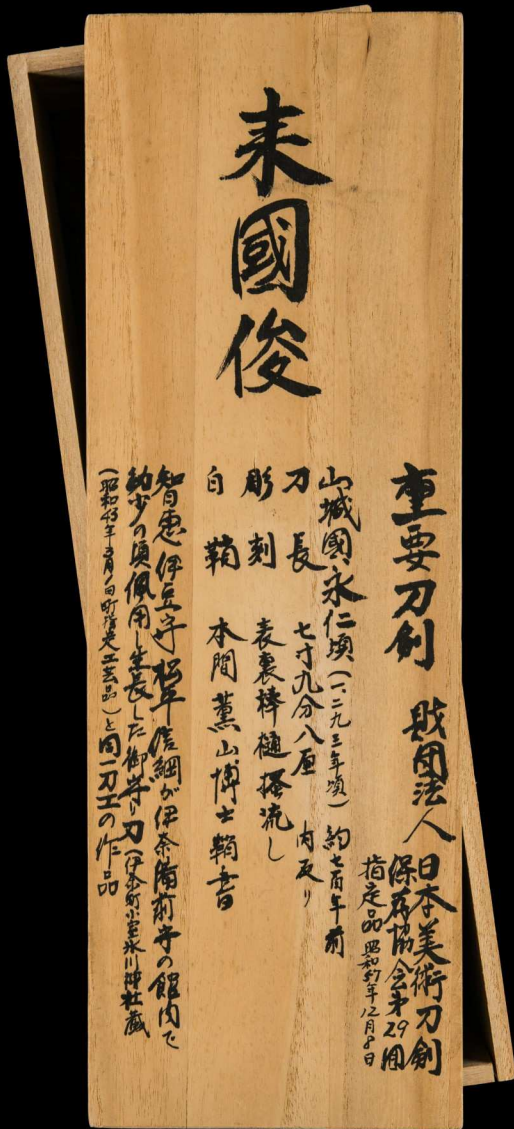
Hachō 7-sun 9-bu han

壬戌年

Mizunoe-inu satsuki

薰山誌「花押」

Kunzan shirusu + kaō



Hakogaki (writing on box)

Rai Kunitoshi

Jûyô-tôken Zaidan-hojin
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai 29-kai shitei-hin
Showa 57-nen 12-gatsu 8-nichi

Yamashiro no Kuni, Einin goro (1,294 goro) yaku
nanahyakunen mae

Hacho: 7-sun 9-bu 8-rin

Chokoku
hyori bohi kaki-nagashi

Shirasaya
Honma Kunzan hakase sayagaki

Chie Izu no Kami Matsudaira Nobutsuna ga Ina Bizen no
Kami no kannai de yo sho no goro haiyo-shi seicho-shita o-
mamorigatana (Inamachi Kumuro Hikawa-jinja zo, Showa
43-nen 3-gatsu 1-nichi machi-shitei kôgei-hin) to doitsu toko
no sakuhin.

Rai Kunitoshi

Jûyô-tôken, designated by the NBTHK at the 29th jûyô-shinsa held on December 8, 1982.

Yamashiro province, around Einin (~ 1293), circa 700 years ago

Blade length:
24.1 cm

Engraving:
on both sides a bôhi that runs with kaki-nagashi into the tang

Shirasaya:
sayagaki by Dr. Honma Kunzan

This blade was made by the same smith who made the *o-mamorigatana* (talisman/protective sword) worn by *Chie Izu ni Kami Matsudaira Nobutsuna* (1596-1662) when he was young and stayed at the residence of *Ina Bizen no Kami Tadatsugu* (1550-1610), which is owned by the *Hikawa-jinja in Komuro, Inamachi*, and was designated by the town in March 1, 1968 as an important craftwork.



Koshirae bag