



ITEM# UJTA052

A SHÔDAI KANEMITSU TANTÔ

SIGNED & DATED, NAMBOKUCHÔ PERIOD (KÔAN ERA: 1361~1362)

- Swordsmith:** *Bishû Osafune Kanemitsu (shôdai, first generation)*
Dated: *A day in the month of March during Kôan era 1361~ 1362*
Measurements: **Length:** 23.3cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 0.5cm **Moto-haba:** 2.21cm
Jihada: *Beautifully forged ko-itame & ko-mokume, plentiful chikei, soft in appearance*
Hamon: *Kataochi-gunome, ko-gunome with rôsôku (candle) bôshi*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (*Sword Especially Worthy of Preservation*)
Certificate #2: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (*Koshirae Especially Worthy of Preservation*)
Fujishiro rank: **Saijô-saku** (*ranked as a grandmaster & jûyô bunkazai swordsmith*)
Published: *Catalogued in the book of Tamura Family Treasures*
Included: *Shirasaya, Edo aikuchi koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, booklet, description*

SOLD

It is our great pleasure to introduce an exceptional *tantô* by *shôdai Kanemitsu* - one of Japan's finest swordsmiths who worked during the heart of the warring Nambokuchô period. Featuring exquisitely crafted steel with plentiful *chikei* and Kanemitsu's trademark sawtooth *kataochi-gunome* hamon and engraved *kurikara* & *bonji horimono* this blade instantly transports the holder to the mid-1300s to when it was forged. Lifting the *tantô* to even greater collectability heights is its stunning *aikuchi koshirae* crafted by *Ikeda Takatoshi* during the late Edo period. With gorgeous painted wisteria artwork, it is a faithful replica of an *aikuchi koshirae* that was once the property of *Ashikaga Yoshiaki* - the 15th and final *shôgun* of the *Muromachi* period. This *tantô* is pure class.

Moto-kasane: 5.1mm

Omosa: 115g

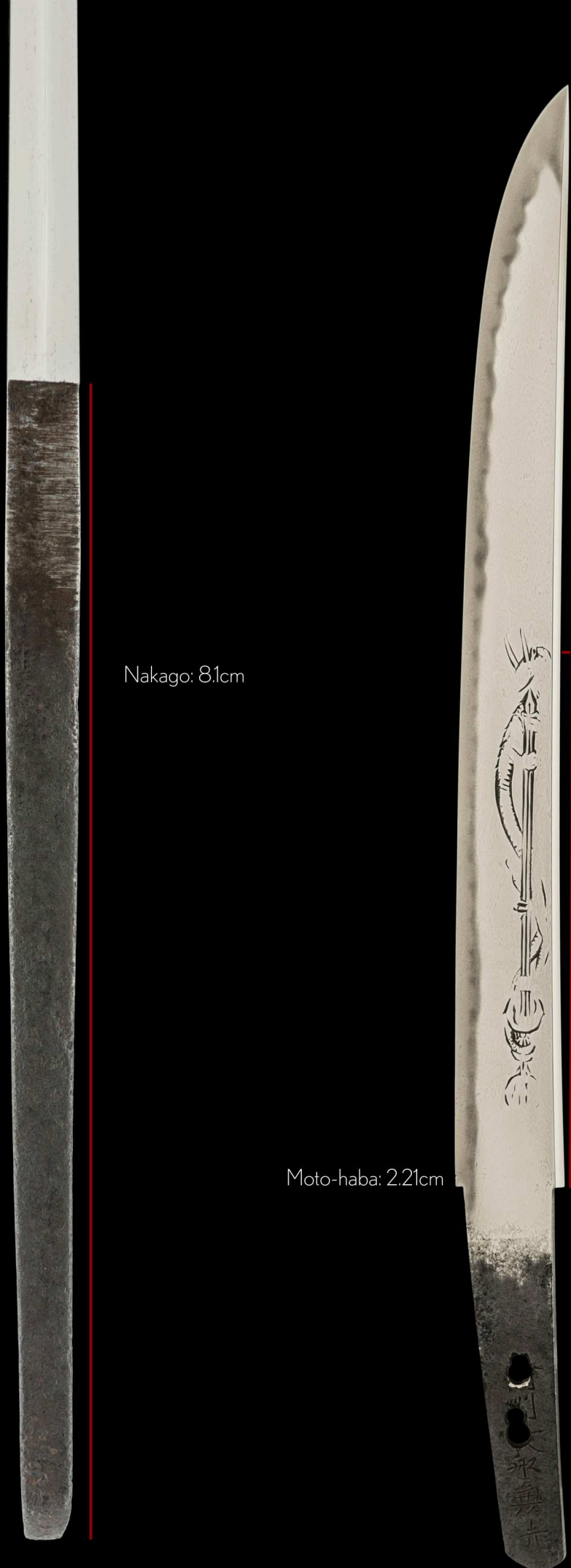
Nakago: 8.1cm

Moto-haba: 2.21cm

Nagasa: 23.3cm

Sori: 0.50cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Born in 1278, grandmaster swordsmith Kanemitsu was the son of *Osafune Kagemitsu* and is said to be one of the *Ten Students of Masamune*.

A theory exists stating that there were two generations Kanemitsu. As there are dated works from the second year of *Genkô* (1322) and the seventh year of *Ôan* (1374) this would suggest a career of about 42 years. This long period is likely the main reason for the two-generations theory but it was not uncommon for a smith to have worked for 40 or more years.

This tantô was crafted during the *Kôan* era, towards the end of Kanemitsu's illustrious career. The blade is classic Kanemitsu with a subdued *kataochi-gunome hamon* and striking horimono work that speaks to its 14th century origin. As this is dated work, it is of historical importance.

Kanemitsu founded the Bizen Kanemitsu school that crafted swords in both *Bizen* and *Sôshû* traditions. Notable students of this school are *Tomomitsu* (who also did fine engraving work), *Yoshimitsu*, *Yoshikage*, *Hidemitsu*, *Masamitsu*, *Toshimitsu* and *Shigemitsu*.





Location: *Bisshû Province*

Village: *Osafune*

Swordsmith: *Kanemitsu* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

katte-sagari-yasurime (right slanting file marks)

備 (Bi)

州 (shû)

長 (Osa)

船 (fune)

兼 (Kane)

光 (mitsu)



This character '*Kane*' has been re-chiseled, likely during the Kotô period (pre-1600).

A plausible reason was to preserve the *mei* (signature) as it was beginning to fade.

This signature is consistent with the way in which Kanemitsu signed during his final working years (*Enbun* era onwards).

Kôan nen sangatsu hi

This tanto was dated on a day in the third month during the *Kôan* era (March 1361 or 1362).

(Kô) 康
(an) 安
(nen) 年
(san) 三
(gatsu) 月
(hi) 日



Had this character survived, we would know if it was made in the first or second year of *Kôan* era (only two years in this era, 1361 and 1362).

特 保
01201912



No 1012817

鑑定書

一短刀 銘

園州園船園光(兼の字を改鑿)
康園□年三月日

長七寸六分強

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀劍と
鑑定しこれを証する

令和二年二月十九日

公益財団法人日本美術刀劍保存協會



東京都 教育委員会
第 177828 号
昭和48年5月10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 2nd year of Reiwa (2020), February 19th

One, Tantô

Mei (signature)

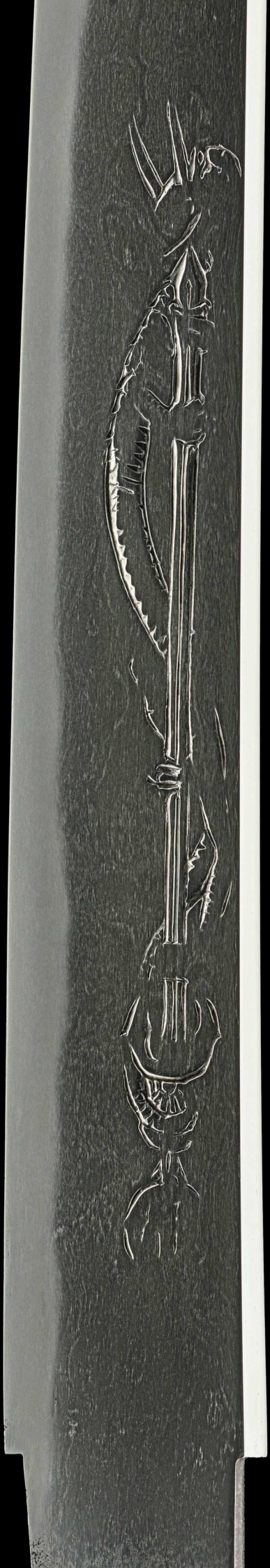
Bishû Osafune Kanemitsu (Kane no ji o kaizan)

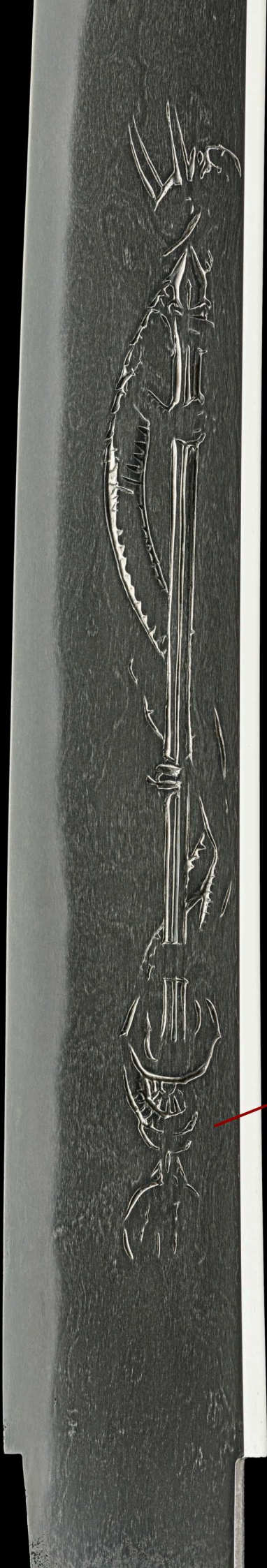
Kôan □ nen sangatsu hi

Nagasa (length)

7-sun 6-bu kyô (23.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





This *horimono* (engraving) is called *Kenmaki-ryu*. It was created by Kanemitsu himself.

It depicts a dragon winding around a sword. According to legend, the guardian deity *Fudo-Myou* once had to fight a deity from another religion, the dragon king *Kurikara*.

He changed himself into a flaming sword but *Kurikara* did the same and the fighting went on without a victor.

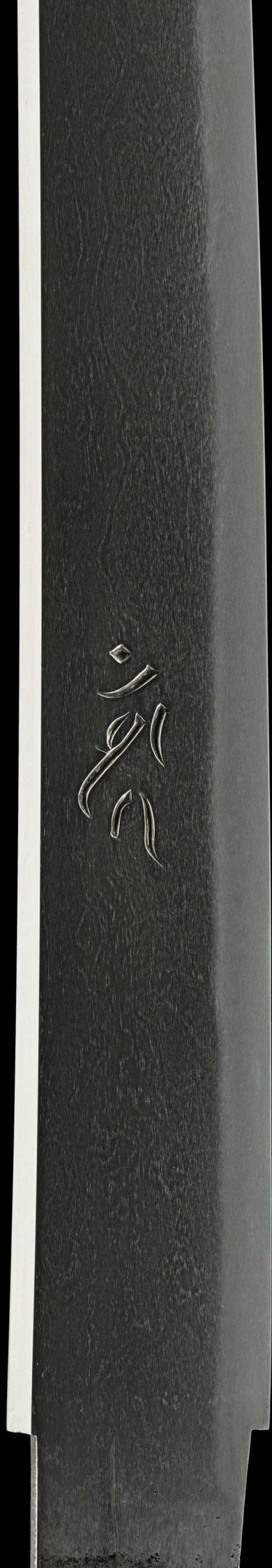
In a manner of ingenuity, *Fudô-Myôô* transformed into the dragon *Kurikara*, wound himself around the opponent's sword and devoured him from atop.

Hence, the dragon *Kurikara* wrapped around a sword is, in fact, another representation of *Fudô-Myôô*.



Vajra in Sanskrit is a symbolic ritual object that symbolizes both the properties of a *diamond* (indestructibility) and a *thunderbolt* (irresistible force).

The vajra is used symbolically by the Dharma traditions of Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, often to represent firmness of spirit and spiritual power.



Bonji (Sanskrit character) of *Fudô-Myôô*

Guardian deity primarily revered in *Vajrayana* Buddhism or in Japan respectively in the *Shingo*, *Tendai*, *Yen*, and *Nichiren* sects.

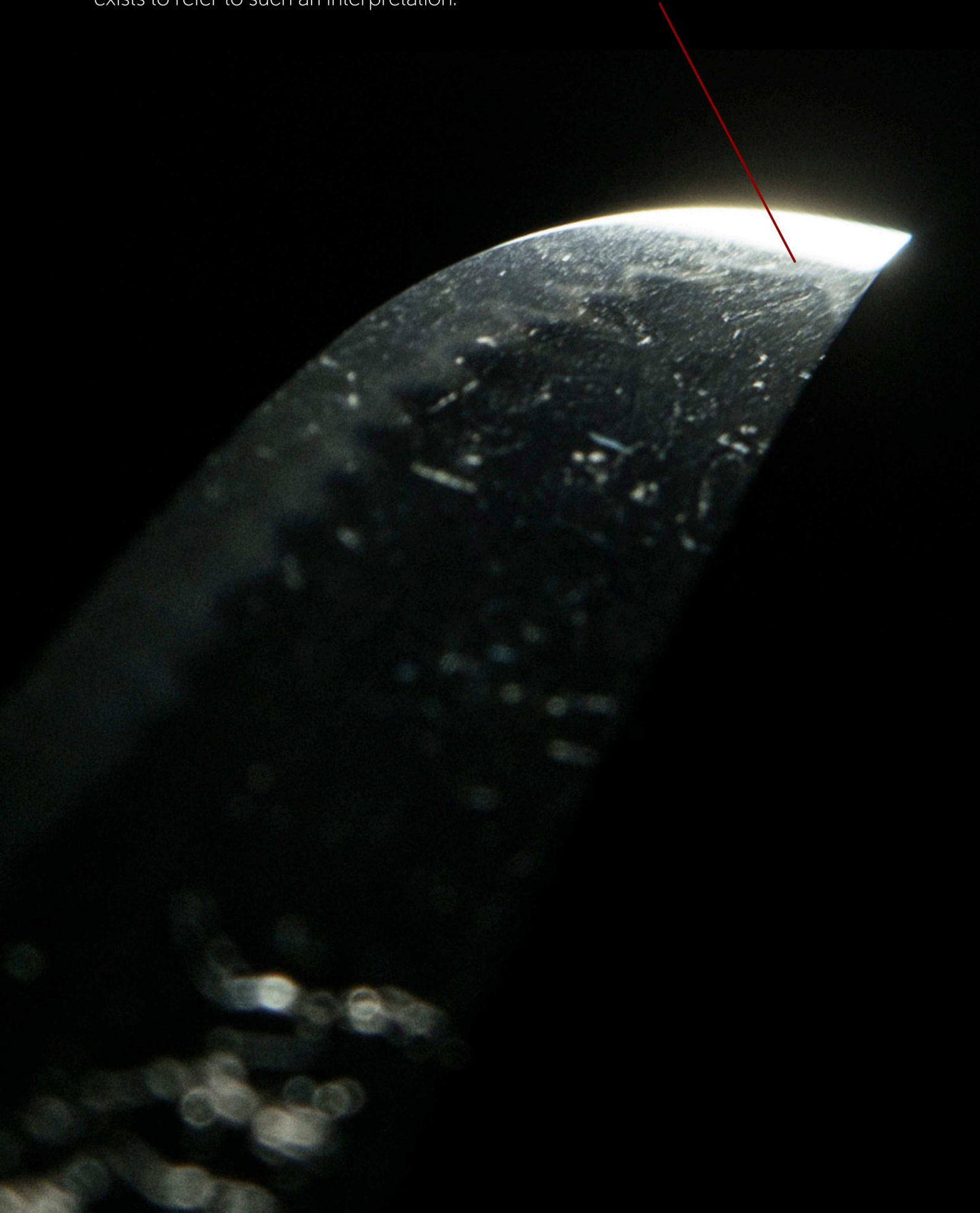
He is usually depicted in a fierce manner, holding a *sankozuka-ken* or *kurikara*, a sword with a dragon coiled around it in the one hand, and a *kensaku* (絹索) rope in the other hand.

Fudô-Myôô brings spiritual protection to the blade and its caretaker.



Bonji of Fudô-Myôô

The *bôshi* (hamon in the tip of sword) is a pointed *midare-komi* that reminds one of a candle (*rôsoku*), therefore the name *rôsoku-bôshi* exists to refer to such an interpretation.



The magnificently forged *jigane* (steel) looks soft and appears wet - qualities that made Kanemitsu a grandmaster swordsmith.



In later works of Kanemitsu's illustrious career, the hamon is a little more subdued - a less bright *nioguchi* which blends in with the *jigane*.

This tantô reflects such characteristics.



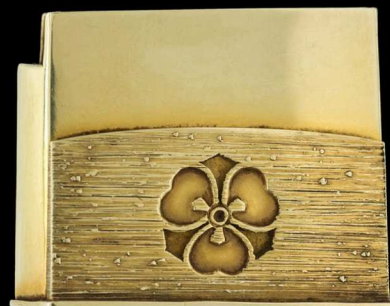
mokume-hada
(burl grain)

glorious formations of *chikei*





Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



gold *habaki* with
oxalis (kind of clover) crest
& horizontal file marks

Takatoshi kore o horu

The habaki was engraved/carved by *Takatoshi*

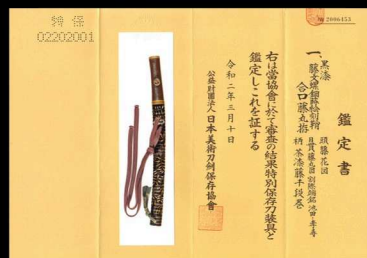
(Taka) 孝
(toshi) 寿
(horu) 彫
(kore) 之



Signed habaki are extremely rare.
It speaks to the importance of this tanto koshirae project.

*Kuro-urushi fujimon
raden-makie kizami-saya
aikuchi-fujimaru-koshirae*
(黒漆藤紋螺鈿時絵刻鞘合口藤丸拵)

*Aikuchi-fujimaru-koshirae with
ribbed saya lacquered in black
with wisteria design decorated in
raden-makie lacquerwork*



NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
Certificate of Authenticity

02202001



右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀装具と
鑑定しこれを証する
令和二年三月十日
公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



一、黒漆
藤文螺鈿時絵刻鞘
合口藤丸拵
頭藤花図
具貴藤丸図割際端銘池田孝寿
柄茶漆藤千段巻

鑑定書

2006453

NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 2nd year of Reiwa (2020), March 10th

One,

Aikuchi-fujimaru-koshirae with ribbed saya lacquered in black with wisteria design decorated in raden-makie lacquerwork

Wisteria motif on kashira, menuki of fujimaru design with split signature of Ikeda Takatoshi on the edge, hilt wrapped sendan style with brown-lacquered braids

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai (NBTHK)



This absolutely stunning set of *aikuchi koshirae* was commissioned to master *kinkô* artist *Ikeda Takatoshi* circa the early 1800s by the *Tamura daimyô* family.

It is a faithful replica of a koshirae that *shôgun Ashikaga Yoshiaki* once carried for a tantô by *shôdai Kanemitsu*. The attention to detail in the making of this aikuchi koshirae is extraordinary with no expense spared.

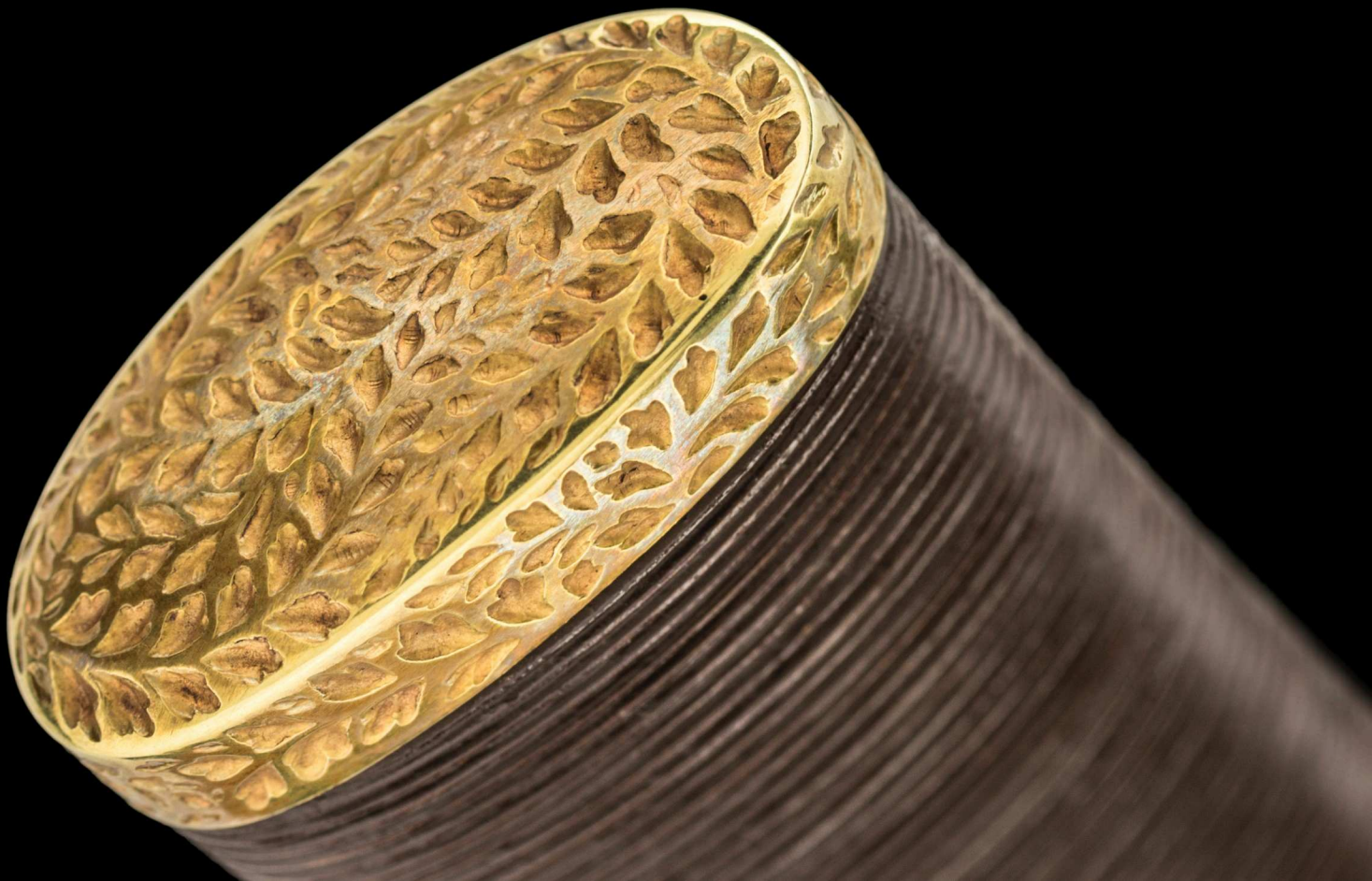




Ashikaga Flower Park, Tochigi prefecture

With its lush, warm beauty, *fujihana* (wisteria flower) represents love, fertility, beauty, creativity, and long life. It also symbolizes patience, persistence and honour.

The flower can live for more than 100 years, so it's often regarded as a symbol of everlasting wisdom. The long, climbing vines are symbolic for the search of new knowledge. A symbol of longevity and endurance, wisteria has been admired in Japan for centuries.



頭金ムク
藤石目
Kashira kin-muku
Fuji-ishime

pure gold kashira
stone-surface ground
with wisteria design

目貫金
Menuki kin

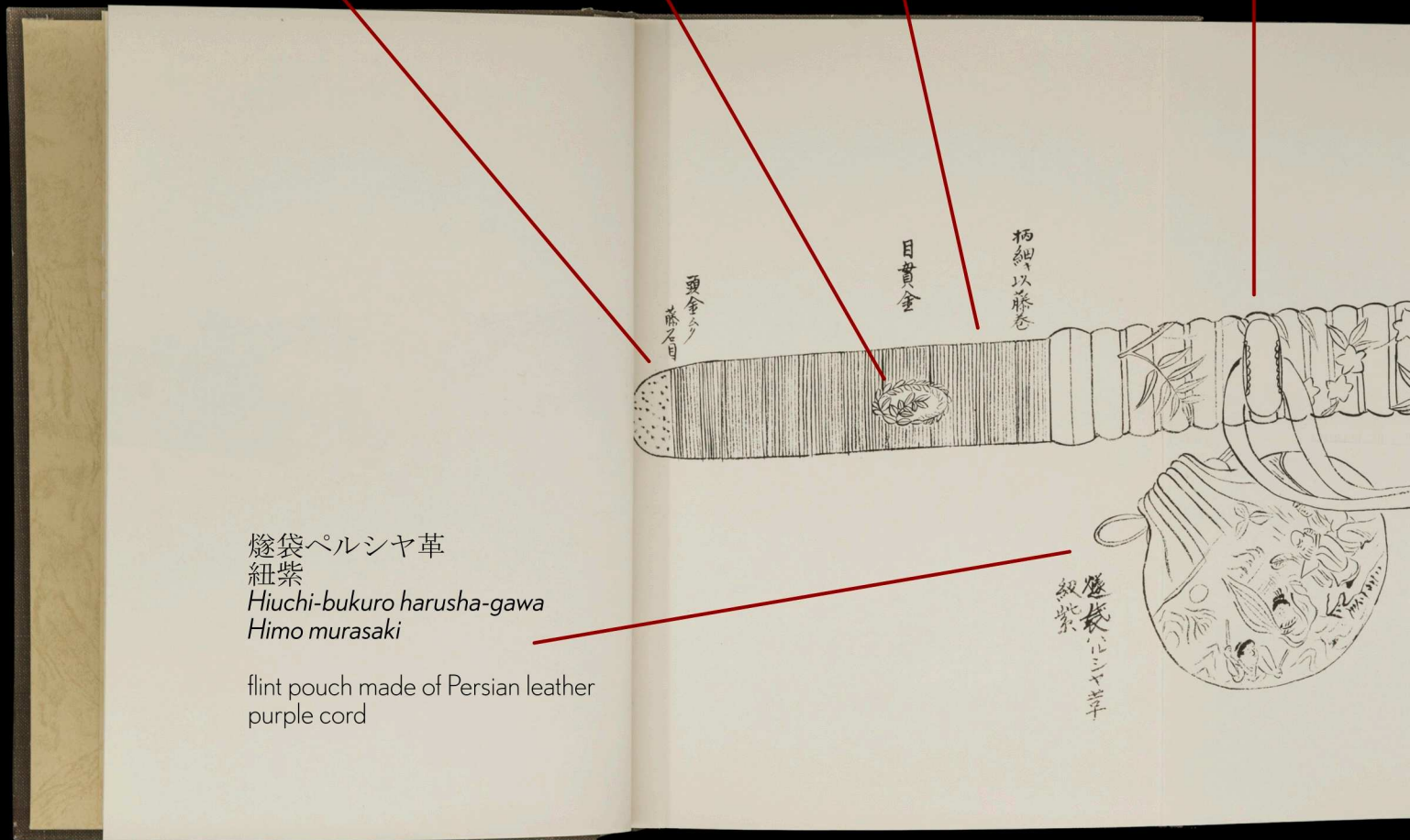
gold menuki

柄細キ以藤卷
Tsuka hosoki fujimaki o motte

Hilt wrapped in thin fujimaki style

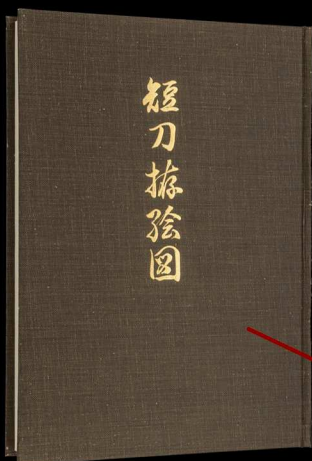
栗形銀
Kurikata gin

silver kurikata



燧袋ペルシヤ革
紐紫
Hiuchi-bukuro harusha-gawa
Himo murasaki

flint pouch made of Persian leather
purple cord



This is a drawing of the original *aikuchi koshirae* that *shôgun Ashikaga Yoshiaki* owned that housed a tantô by *Kanemitsu* dated July 1357.

Both this original *koshirae* and tantô were lost, hence the desire by the Tamura family to help recreate history. This drawing was published in 1978 featuring artwork of notable tantô *koshirae*.

Tantô Koshirae Ezu (短刀拵絵図)
Artwork of tantô-koshirae
(book included with sale of tantô)

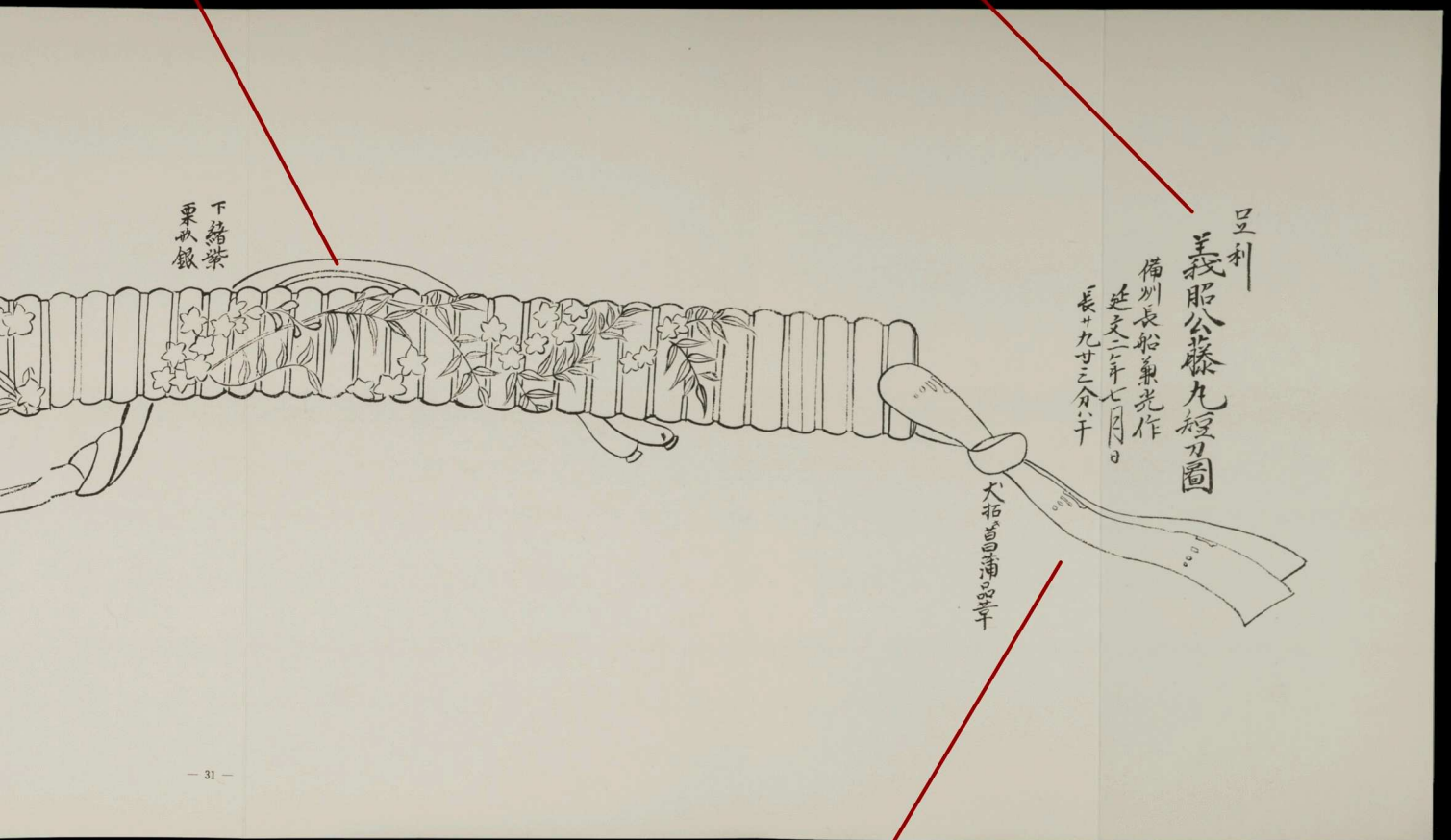
足利義昭公藤丸短刀圖
備州長船兼光作
延文二年七月日
長サ九寸三分半

Ashikaga Yoshiaki Kô Fujimaru Tantô no zu
Bisshû Osafune Kanemitsu saku
Enbun ninen nanagatsu hi
Nagasa 9-sun 3-bu han

下緒紫
Sageo murasaki

purple sageo

Artwork of Ashikaga Yoshiaki's Fujimaru Tantô
Tantô crafted by *Osafune Kanemitsu* from Bisshû Province
On a day in the 7th month in the 2nd year of Enbun era (July 1357)
Blade length ~28.2cm



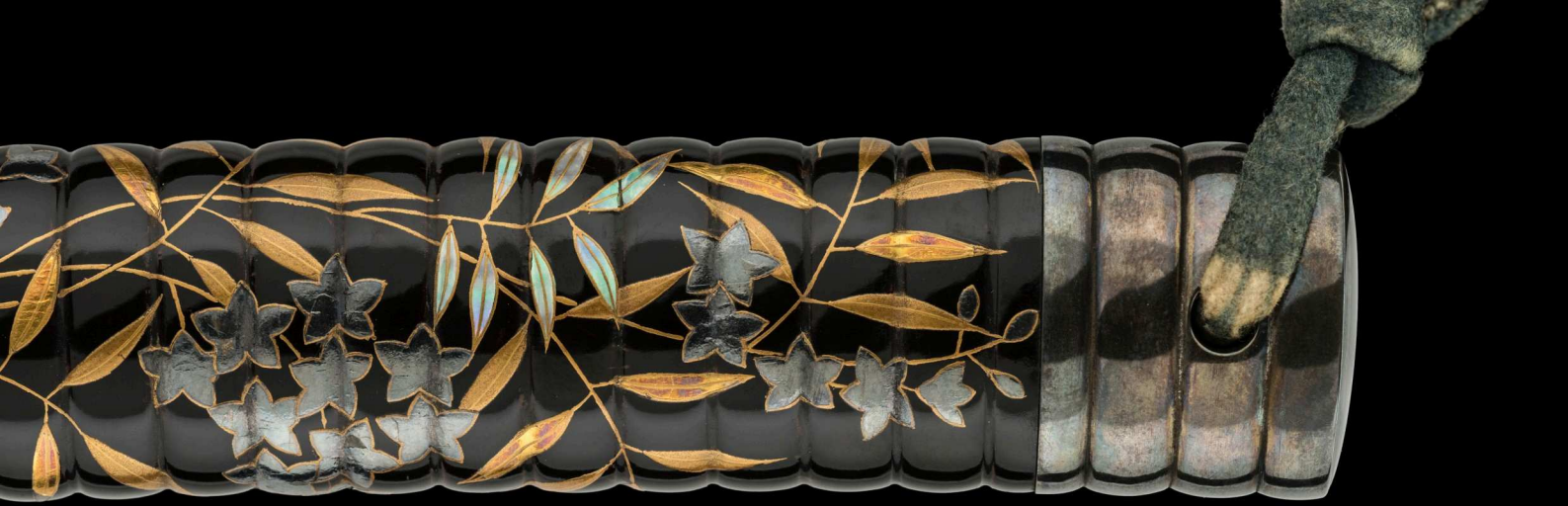
- 31 -

犬招キ菖蒲品革
Izu-maneki shôbu-shinagawa

Kojiri decoration made of wolf leather
with iris motif



Ashikaga Yoshiaki
15th and final shōgun of the Ashikaga shōgunate
Reigned 1568 to 1573



omote (front)





ura (back)





The *tsuka* (hilt) is wrapped in rattan (palm wicker) and lacquered for preservation.



Ikeda Takatoshi was a member of the *Ôtsuki* school and sensei for arguably the greatest *kinkô* (goldsmith) during the late Edo period, *Kanô Natsuo*.





(Taka) 孝
(toshi) 寿

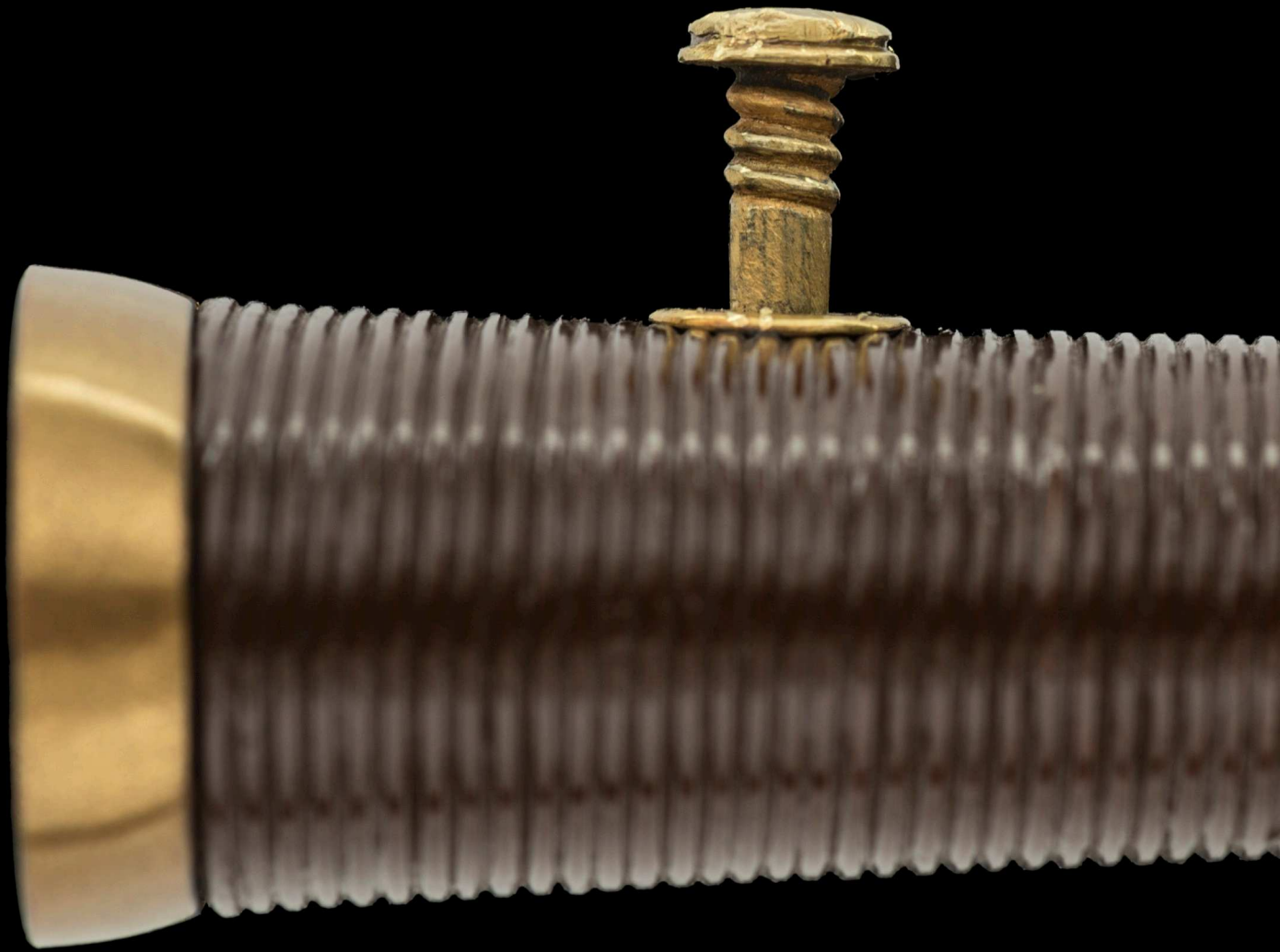


池 (Ike)
田 (da)

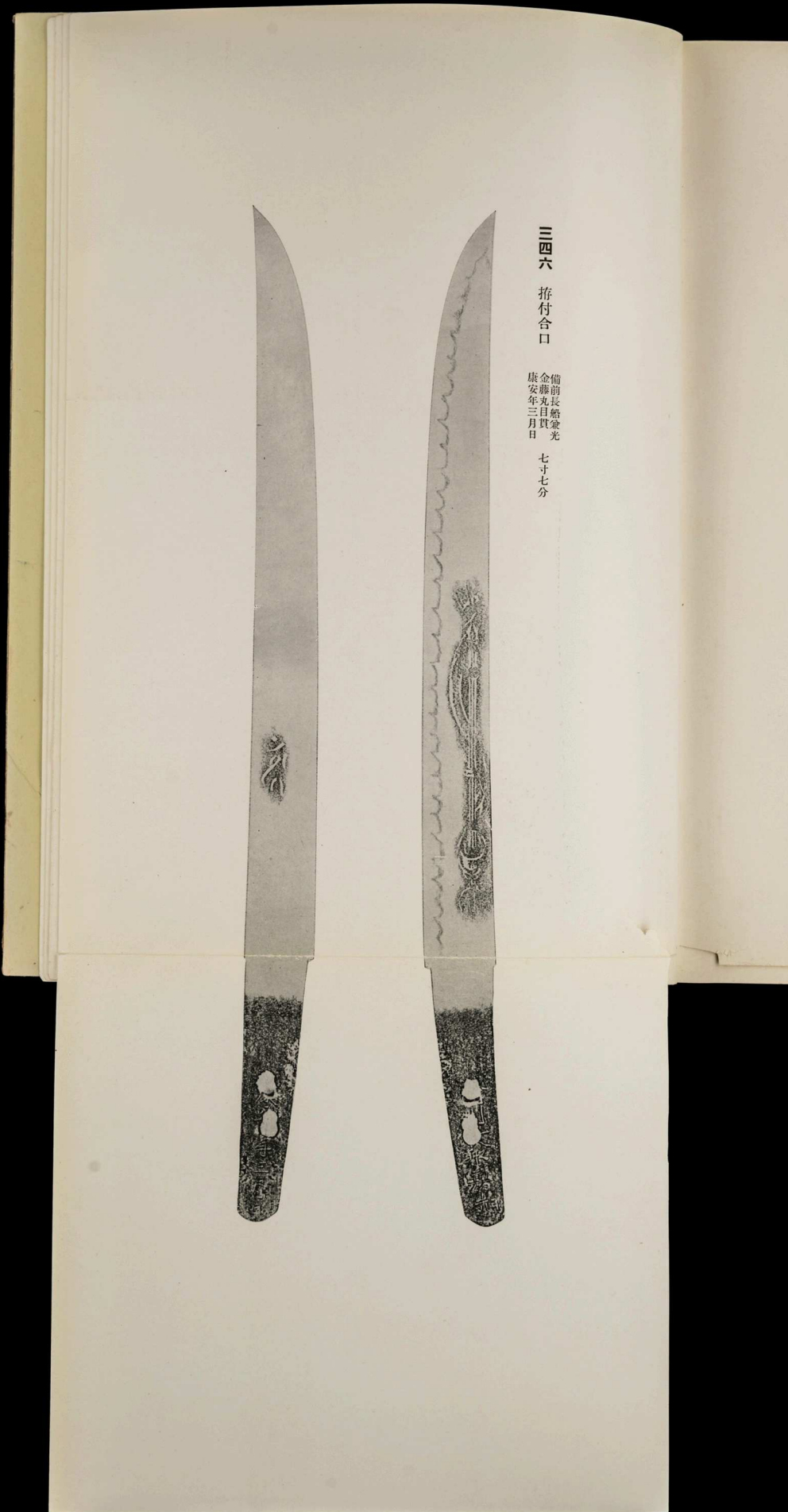


Kashira (pommel)

gold, wisteria design



A metal screw *mekugi* secures the *nakago* to the *tsuka* (hilt).



Tamura Family Treasures
(book included with sword)

This Kanemitsu tantô is featured in a catalogue of *Tamura Family Treasures* published in 1936. The Tamura samurai clan ruled *Ichinoseki* domain in *Mutsu* province during the Edo period's *Tokugawa shôgunate*. The family was closely related to the *Date* clan in *Sendai*.



Pure class.