



ITEM# UJTA066

A KANEFUSA TANTÔ

SIGNED & DATED, KOTÔ LATE MUROMACHI (KÔJI ERA: DECEMBER 1555)

Swordsmith:	<i>Fujiwara Kanefusa</i> (藤原兼房)
Measurements:	Length: 27.6cm Sori: 0.4cm Moto-haba: 2.46cm Weight: 170g
Jihada:	<i>Well-forged mokume-hada with icy ji-nie, shirake-utsuri and chikei</i>
Hamon:	<i>Splendid gunome-midare leading to hitatura, kinsuji, togari, ashi and tobiyaki</i>
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #2-5:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (koshirae, soroi, kozuka & tsuba certified as Authentic)
Fujishiro rank:	Chûjô-saku (ranked as an above-average swordsmith)
Authentication:	Sayagaki by Nozomi-san (shodô artist)
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description

SOLD

Fujiwara Kanefusa, later known as *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa* was born in 1534 in Gifu as the third son of *Zensai Kanefusa*, and became one of the most distinguished smiths within the great *Oda Nobunaga*'s inner circle, forging at *Azuchi* and later working in *Kiyosu* until his death in 1590. This rare *tantô* is signed and dated to December 1555, when Kanefusa was about twenty-one years old. The *hamon* is bold, dynamic *gunome-midare* with huge islands of *tobiyaki* along with pointed *togari* characteristic of the Mino tradition. Under the light, the experimental spirit of young Kanefusa is palpable. The *koshirae* is refined and understated - black *ishime* on the *saya* with gold *kirimon* on the *hamidashi tsuba* and *kozuka* adding quiet authority. Young fire in a samurai's formal attire!

Moto-kasane: 4.9mm

Omosa: 170g

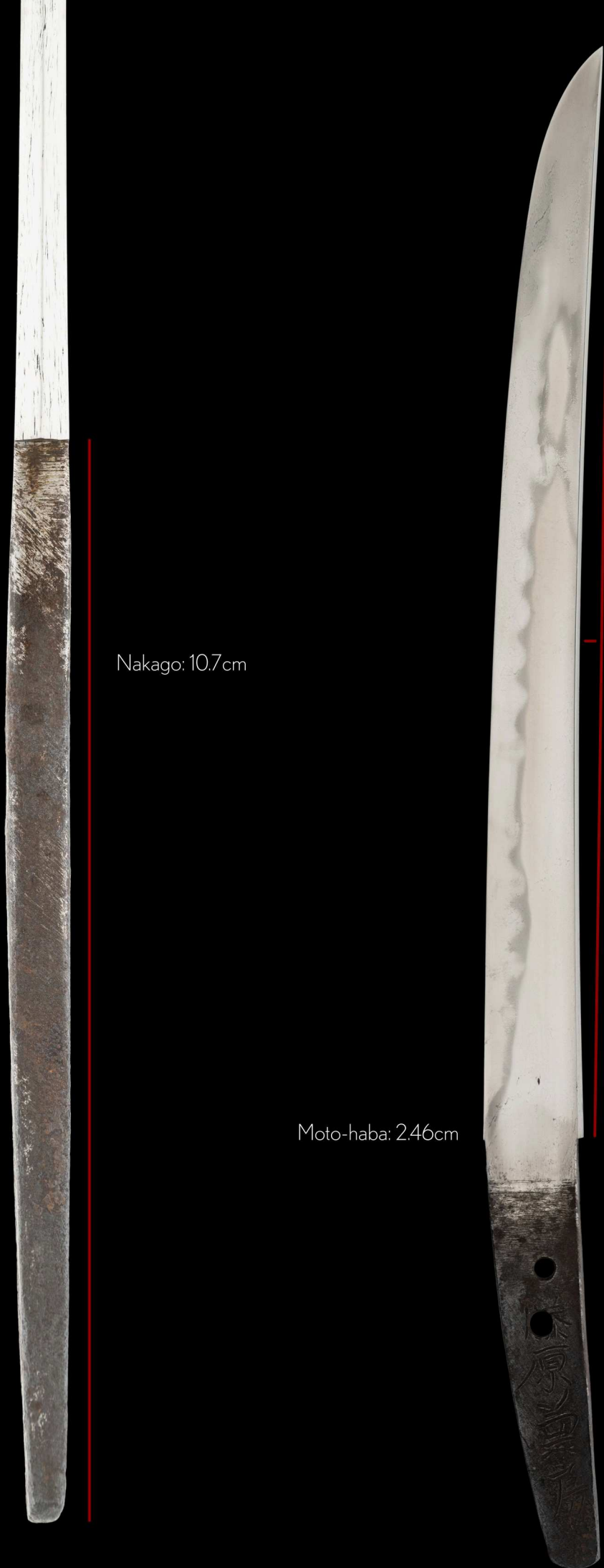
Nakago: 10.7cm

Moto-haba: 2.46cm

Nagasa: 27.6cm

Sori: 0.40cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Fujiwara Kanefusa (藤原兼房), later known as *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa* (若狭守氏房), was born in 1534 in *Gifu* as the third son of *Zensai Kanefusa* (善齋兼房), head of the *Mino Kanefusa* lineage. In his early years he signed his works "*Kanefusa*," before receiving his later court titles and entering the service of *Oda Nobunaga* (織田信長).

He became one of the most distinguished smiths in Nobunaga's inner circle, forging at *Azuchi* and later working in *Kiyosu* until his death in 1590.

Kanefusa's lineage, training and early environment reveal an individuality distinct from the established *Kanefusa* tradition. The vigour and ambition visible in his early blades reflect a craftsman experimenting within the framework of the Mino school, pushing the inherited techniques of his father while searching for a personal voice. This early phase is crucial to understanding the evolution that would eventually lead him to the reputation he achieved as *Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa*.

This rare *tantô* is signed and dated to the first year of *Kôji* era (December 1555), when Kanefusa was approximately twenty-one years old. The *jigane* is tightly forged in *itame* producing an expressive surface where *shirake-utsuri* rises gently through the steel. The *hamon* is bold, dynamic *gunome-midare* with large islands of *tobiyaki* along with pointed *togari* characteristic of the Mino tradition. Long *ashi* reach the cutting edge in a dramatic fashion reinforcing the impression of a young smith testing the limits of his ability.

Under the light, the experimental spirit of young Kanefusa is palpable. It's also a sword that is quite curvy, acting like a mini katana. An NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate rightfully accompanies the blade.

The *koshirae* is refined and understated - rich black *ishime* lacquer on the *saya* with lovely gold *kirimon* crests on the *hamidashi tsuba* rim and *kozuka* adding quiet authority.

Young fire in a samurai's formal attire.





Location: *Mino province*

Family name: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Kanefusa (shodai Ujifusa)*

machi-okuri-nakago (slightly raised tang)

higaki-yasurime (criss-cross file marks)

藤 (Fuji)

原 (wara)

兼 (Kane)

房 (fusa)

Kôji gannen jûnigatsu hi

Dated on a day in the twelfth month in the first year of the *Kôji* era (December 1555).

(Kô) 弘
(ji) 治
(gan) 元
(nen) 年
(jû) 十
(ni) 二
(gatsu) 月
(hi) 日

kurijiri (rounded bottom)





thick signature, full of life!

Wakasa no Kami Ujifusa



The *oshigata* above represents a work from the *Genki* era (1570-1573), the period in which *Kanefusa* – having already adopted the name *Ujifusa* – was at the height of his output due to his close connection with *Oda Nobunaga*. The latter signature appears more stoic in contrast to the spirited vitality of a young 21-year-old swordsmith.

特 保
062024-12

№ 1024384



鑑定書

一短刀 銘

藤原兼房

弘治元年十二月日

長 九寸一分

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

令和七年二月二十一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



北海道 教育委員会
第 39545 号
令和4年11月1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), February 21st

One, Tantô

Mei (signature)
Fujiwara Kanefusa
Kôji gannen jûnigatsu hi

Nagasa (length)
9-sun 1-bu (27.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

長九寸壹分有之
Nagasa 9-sun 1-bu kore ari
Blade length 27.6 cm

令和七乙巳年長月吉日誌之
Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Nagatsuki
kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the ninth month
in the seventh year of Reiwa era, the Year
of the Snake (September 2025)

長九寸壹分有之


令和七乙巳年長月吉日誌之

藤原兼房

藤原兼房
Fujiwara Kanefusa
Fujiwara Kanefusa

弘治元年十二月日

弘治元年十二月日
Kôji gannen jûnigatsu hi
Dated a day in the twelfth month in the
first year of *Kôji* era (December 1555)



In December 1555 (when this sword was dated), Japan was deep in the chaos of the *Sengoku Jidai* - the Warring States period - when regional warlords carved the archipelago into constantly shifting domains. Emperor *Go-Nara* held his throne in *Kyôto*, but the imperial court had become so impoverished that the emperor was reduced to selling his own calligraphy to survive, a powerless figurehead while true authority rested with whoever commanded the strongest army. Just two months earlier, in October, the cunning strategist *Môri Motonari* had achieved a stunning victory at the *Battle of Itsukushima*, luring an army of 20,000 onto a sacred island and annihilating them with just 3,500 troops in a nighttime surprise attack - one of the three greatest ambushes in Japanese military history. This single battle catapulted the *Môri* clan to dominance over western Japan and exemplified the era's brutal reality: intelligence and audacity often trumped sheer numbers.

In Mino province itself - where this *Kanefusa tantô* was forged - the political situation was particularly volatile. The ruthless *Saitô Yoshitatsu* had just seized power from his father, the infamous "Viper of Mino," *Saitô Dôsan*, by murdering his own two younger brothers earlier that year. The father-son conflict would culminate months later in May 1556 at the Battle of *Nagaragawa*, where Yoshitatsu's forces would kill Dôsan and cement control over the province. Meanwhile, in neighbouring *Owari* province, a young upstart named *Oda Nobunaga* was consolidating power and eyeing Mino's fertile lands - within a decade, he would conquer the entire province and launch Japan toward reunification. This was a moment when *rônin* (masterless samurai) wandered the countryside, castle towns bristled with newly-arrived Portuguese firearms (introduced just twelve years earlier in 1543), and swordsmiths like Kanefusa worked day and night forging blades for armies that seemed to multiply by the season. This tantô was born in fire during one of the most violent, dynamic periods in Japanese history.



Oda Nobunaga
(1534-1582)





gomabashi - pair of parallel grooves running partway up the blade resembling chopsticks used for the spiritual Buddhist *goma* fire ritual.



gomabashi



graceful curvature

Long *ashi* extend dramatically to the cutting edge.

tight *itame-hada*

shirake-utsuri

This *tantō* has a ton of character.

Tightly-forged *itame-hada*, *shirake-utsuri*, impressive *ashi* and delightfully curvy too.



A splendid *gunome-midare hamon* with *togari* (peaks).

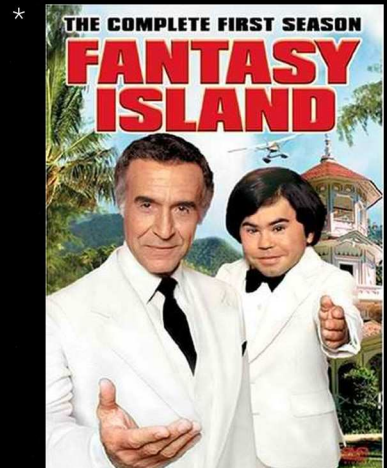


togari

Welcome...to *tobiyaki* island. *



This is a massive island of *tobiyaki* (hardened spot) as it is separate from the hamon itself, wow.



Boss! De plane, De plane!



lcy *ji-nie* shines with confidence.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

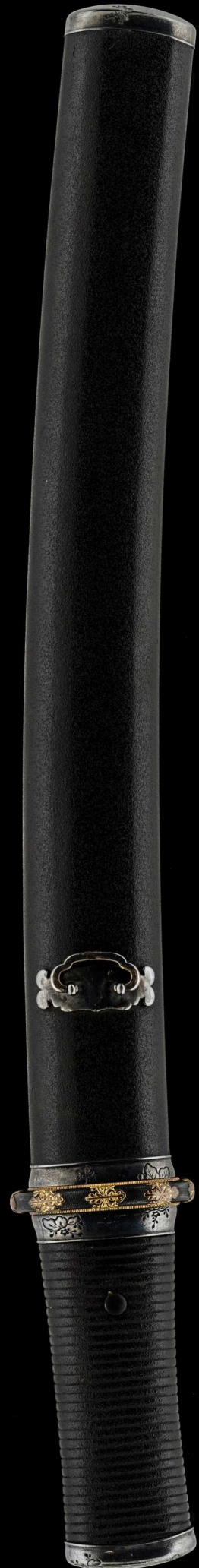


silver *habaki* with
rainfall file marks

Shibuichi ishime-ji kebori tôka-no-zu
sô-kanagu tantô-koshirae
(四分一石目地毛彫桐花図
総金具短刀拵)

*Tantô-koshirae
with a matching set of fittings of
shibuichi with stone-surface texture,
and motif of paulownia flowers
in hairline carvings*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



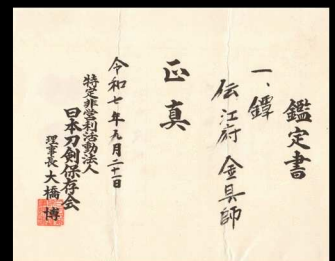
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



This *tsuba* is known as a *hamidashi-tsuba*, a small *tsuba* that projects only slightly beyond the fittings and the rim of the *saya*.

While its compact form carries a ceremonial elegance, it also served a practical purpose: in close-quarters grappling, such a *tsuba* would not catch on armour, allowing the blade to be drawn swiftly.

Fashioned in *shakudô* with a fine *nanako* surface and decorated with *kirimon* (paulownia crests), the highly formal design also balances practical utility. A wonderful example of form meeting function.



(reverse)



Placing the family crests on the rim with gold accents is more formal than centering them on the *tsuba* face.

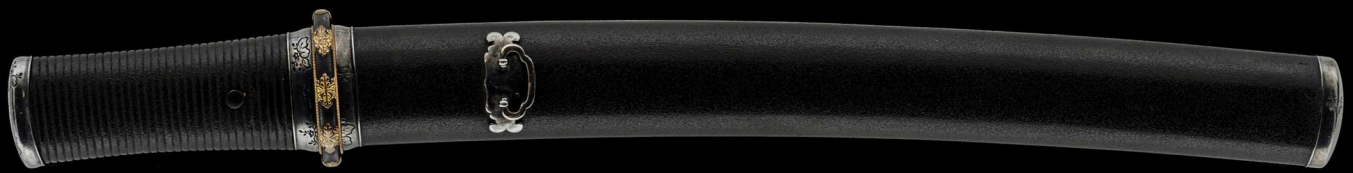


ura-gawara



The *fuchi-kashira*, *kojiri*, *koiguchi*, and *ura-gawara* form a *sô-kanagu* (matching set), all crafted by the same artisan. And comes with a Kanteishô certificate of authenticity by the NTHK-NPO.

Crafted during the late *Edo* period, the fittings are executed on a *shibuichi* ground with fine *kebori* engraving of paulownia blossoms, revealing the refined taste of the original owner.



kashira



kojiri

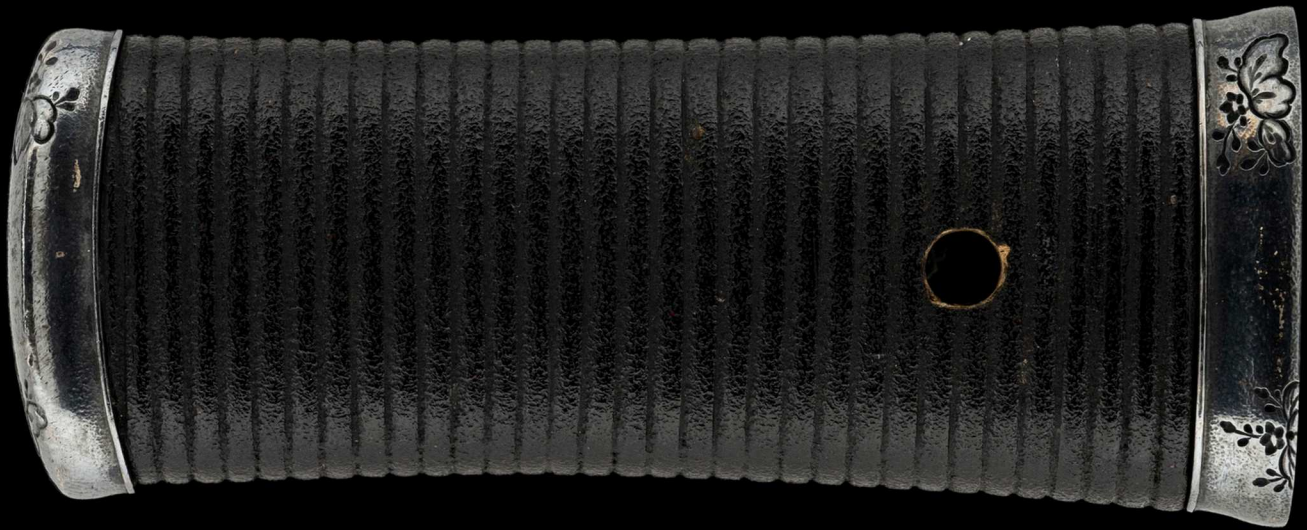


NTHK-NPO Kanteishô

fuchi

koiguchi

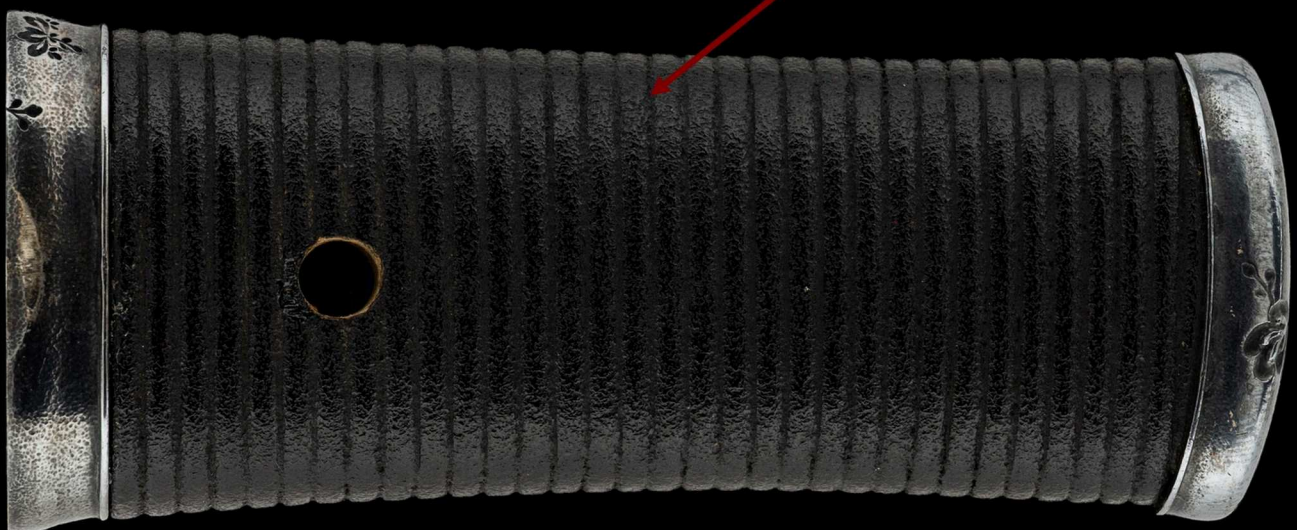




Rather than being wrapped with traditional silk, the *tsuka* (hilt) core has been *carved* in the style of a *katate-maki* wrap and finished with black lacquer.

Together with the paulownia crests on the fittings, the *tsuka* conveys a strong decorative intention and a deliberate sense of formality.

carved ribs





Kozuka (utility knife)

Fastened into a special notch built inside the *saya* (scabbard) and drawn through the slotted space of the *hamidashi tsuba*.

This piece is the work of the *Waki-Gotô* (脇後藤), a branch of the *Gotô* family who served the shogunate for generations, produced in the mid-*Edo* period. Executed on a *shakudô* ground with a finely applied *nanako* surface and adorned with brilliantly gilded *kirimon* (paulownia crests), it is a highly elegant and aristocratic work.



The *kogatana* of the *kozuka* is inscribed with "Raiyoke" ("Lightning Repeller").

From the fifth-generation *Iga no Kami Kinmichi* (伊賀守金道) onward, smiths paired this inscription with the chrysanthemum crest. The tradition stems from a legendary incident: while the Emperor traveled through a thunderstorm, a sword forged by the first-generation *Kinmichi* flew from its scabbard and slashed through the thunderclouds, clearing the sky in an instant. From that moment, blades inscribed "Raiyoke" were treasured as talismans against misfortune!



Chrysanthemum crest

雷 (Rai)

除 (yoke)



Koshirae bag with long life
tortoise shell pattern.





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