

ujwa256
A Tadahiro Wakizashi
 with body cutting test

Length: 54.8cm
 NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
 & NTHK-NPO certificates



Saki-kasane: 3.4mm

Moto-kasane: 6.3mm

Omosa: 500g

Kissaki: 3.52cm

Saki-haba: 2.08cm

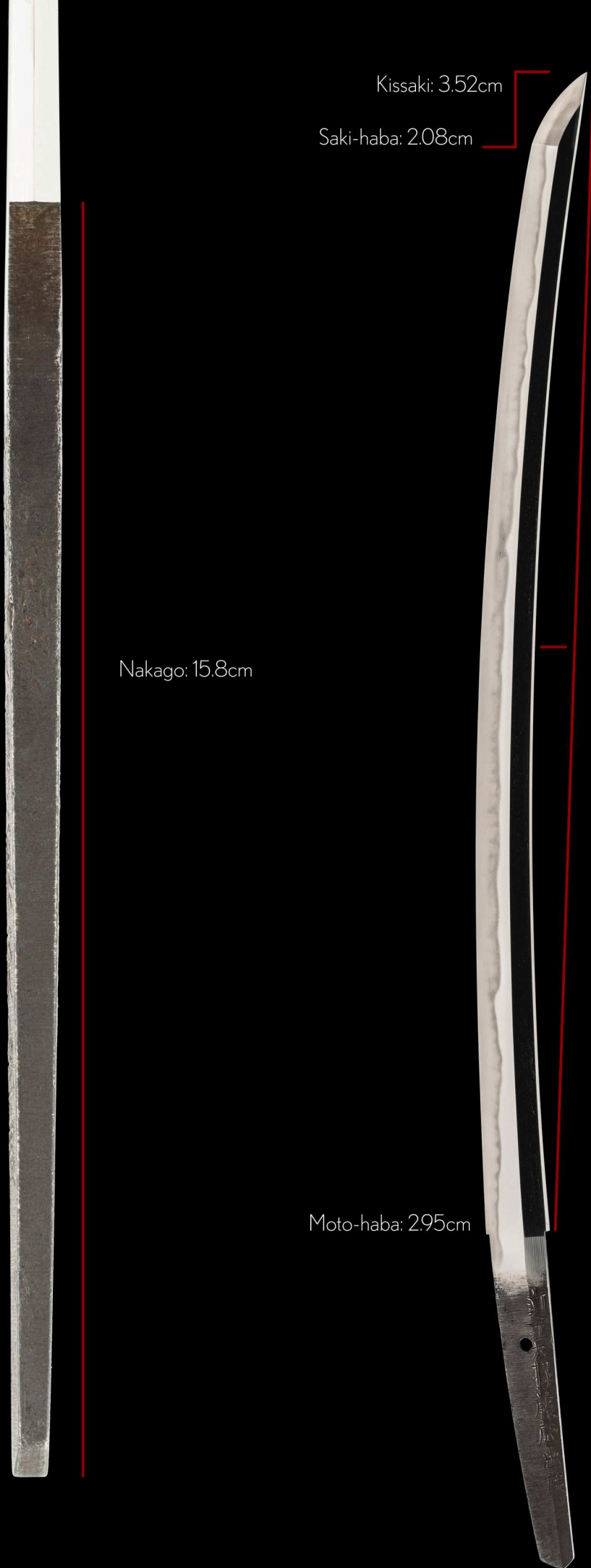
Nakago: 15.8cm

Moto-haba: 2.95cm

Nagasa: 54.8cm

Sori: 1.67cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



Born *Hashimoto Heishiro* in *Saga, Hizen* province in 1614, renowned swordsmith second generation (nidai) Tadahiro began working with his father, maestro *shodai* (first generation) Tadayoshi at the tender age of ten.

Guided by his father and other great smiths such as shodai *Masahiro* and *Yoshinobu*, Tadahiro took over leadership of the school at the age of nineteen when his father died in 1632.

Tadahiro then changed his name from *Hashimoto Heishiro* to *Hashimoto Shinsaemon*. Curiously, it is understood that his new name appears on a family document pledging to the shogunate that the Hashimoto family would not sell swords for export to foreign countries.

As head of the Tadayoshi school, second generation Tadahiro always signed his name Tadahiro and never Tadayoshi. In July of 1641, only nine years after taking over the Tadayoshi School, he was given the honorific title of *Omi Daijō*. He was only 28.

Nidai Tadahiro died at the age of 81 in the sixth year of Genroku era or 1693. His works span an incredible 60 years. The sheer quantity and quality of his work makes him one of the most prized artisans, legendary among Hizen smiths. He is ranked *jōjō-saku*, a highly superior smith.

This long wakizashi features a rare *tameshigiri* cutting test in which two testers were involved, severing through the clavicle and chest of a convicted criminal and into the mound below.

The *hamon* (temper line) on the blade is a delightful *gunome choji-midare* and is housed a fabulous Edo period koshirae that will light up any room. Sayagaki authentication by Dr. Satō Kanzan accompanies this unique piece of history.





Location: *Hizen province*

Title: *Ômi Daijô* (Lord of Ômi province)

Family name: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Tadahiro* (second generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)

sujikai-yasurime (diagonal file marks)

近 (Ô)

江 (mi)

大 (Dai)

掾 (jô)

藤 (Fuji)

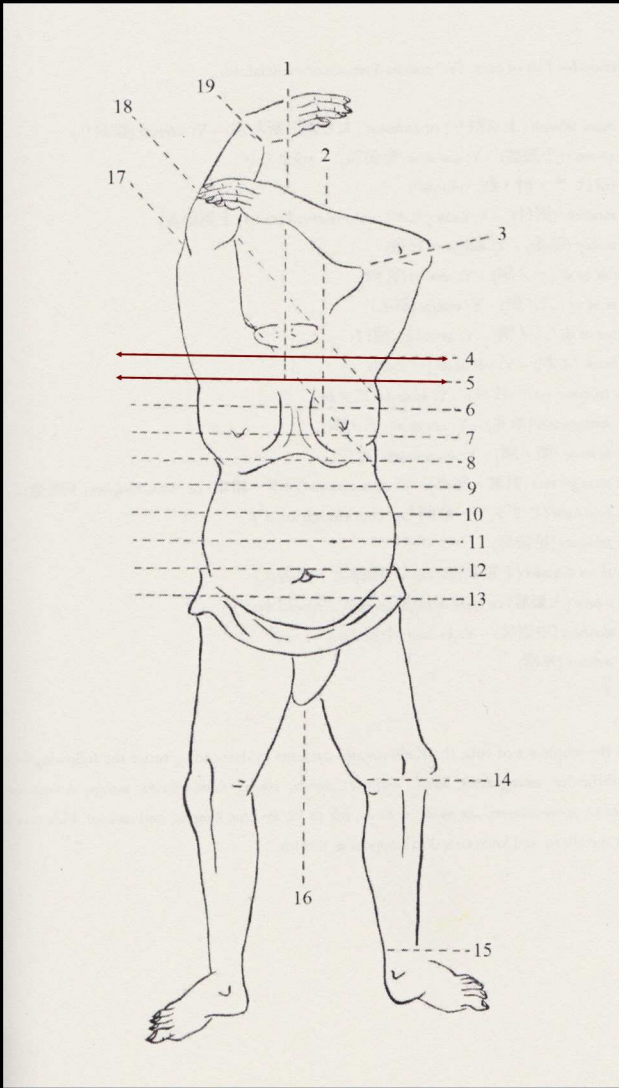
原 (wara)

忠 (Tada)

廣 (hiro)

Suritsuke wakige Nezu Saburôbei tenite dodan ni itaru Ukai Jûrôemon

Sword testers *Nezu Saburôbei* and *Ukai Jûrôemon* tested this blade severing [in one stroke] both through the clavicle and the chest of a human body into the mound below.



(waki) 脇	摺 (Suri)
(ge) 毛	付 (tsuke)
(U) 鶺鴒	
(kai) 飼	根 (Ne)
(jû) 十	津 (zu)
(rô) 郎	三 (Sabu)
(') 右	郎 (rô)
(e) 衛	兵 (be)
(mon) 門	衛 (i)
(te) 手	
(ni) 二	
(te) テ	
(do) 土	
(dan) 壇	
(ni) 二	
(itaru) 至	



Markus Sesko

TAMESHIGIRI
THE HISTORY AND
DEVELOPMENT OF
JAPANESE SWORD TESTING

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2.3.5 Tameshigiri students of the Yamano family

One of the best students of Kanjūrō Hisahide was Ukai Jūrō'emon Yoshizane (鵜飼十郎右衛門義真). We know that he was hired by the fourth Tokugawa-*shōgun* Ietsuna (徳川家綱, 1641-1680) in Kanbun four (1664) to serve as *kachi* (徒士), a lower-ranking foot soldier, in the *samurai* unit of Ōkubo Hikobei (大久保彦兵衛). Five years later he succeeded as head of the Ukai family and was thus promoted to the rank of *kobushin* (小普請, a *samurai* with an income of 3,000 *koku* and below). In Enpō five (延宝, 1677) he was posted to the fire protection unit of the second enceinte of Edo Castle, and in Genroku five (1692) to the additional guard unit of the second enceinte. This was the time when he started his *tameshigiri* training with Hisahide and it turned out that he was very talented. As a result, he successively had the honour to test swords and *yari* of *rōjū* elders, and as he did well he was eventually hired as a sword tester by the *bakufu* on the 25th day of the third month of Genroku six (1693). This, and his high skill, brought him in the position to test many treasure swords over the years. It is also said that he always covered the signature with a piece of paper because he feared that knowing the name of the swordsmith might influence his cuts. And it is also recorded that he had a large plum tree in his garden, at the roots of which he dug out a big hole where he poured the bloody washing water. Well, I have mentioned that in those days *tameshigiri* on corpses on one's own property was not then prohibited, but if this transmission is true it suggests that Ukai performed tests on living convicted felons because cutting dead bodies does not produce such a mess to require a big hole directly at the spot for cleaning up. Anyway, Ukai fell ill and retired from his *tameshigiri* post on the second day of the third month of Genroku 13 (1700). It is said that during his nine years of official testing, i.e. from Genroku five when he tested the sword of the *rōjū* onwards, he used 1,505 bodies which calculates to about one test every other day. Ukai Jūrō'emon Shigezane died on the 25th day of the second month of Hōei seven (宝永, 1710).

Another student of Yamano Hisahide was Nezu Saburōbei Mitsumasa (根津三郎兵衛光政). Mitsumasa was a *rōnin* who had the luck of getting an employment from the *bakufu*. There exists a very detailed four-volume *tameshigiri biden-sho* (秘伝書, secret initiation script) written by Mitsumasa which is preserved in the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum (静嘉堂文庫), but swords bearing his *tameshi-mei* are rare. We know one by the swordsmith Izumo no Kami Yoshitake (出雲守吉武, see picture 19) and one by Yamashiro no Kami Kunikiyo (山城守国清). Incidentally, Mitsumasa must have trained several students because the term “Nezu-ryū of *tameshigiri*” (根津流) appears in several documents.



Picture 19: *katana, mei* “Izumo no Kami Fujiwara Yoshitake” (出雲守藤原吉武) – “Hōei hinoto i sangatsu nijūgonichi ryōguruma dōtanbarai Nezu Saburōbei Mitsumasa + *kaō*” (宝永丁亥三月廿五日・両車土段払・根津三郎兵衛光政, “Nezu Sabu-rōbei Mitsumasa cut through the hips [with this blade] on the 25th day of the third month of the year of the boar of the Hōei era [1707]”).

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No 1015425



公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協会

令和三年五月二十四日



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

一脇指 銘

近江大掾藤原忠広
摺付脇毛根津三郎兵衛手ニテ土壇ニ至
鵜飼十郎右衛門

長一尺八寸一分弱

鑑定書

兵庫県 教育委員会
第 151 号
昭和26年7月27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 3rd year of Reiwa (2021), May 24th

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)

Ômi DaijÔ Fujiwara Tadahiro

Suritsuke wakige Nezu Saburôbei tenite dodan ni itaru

Ukai Jûrô'emon

Nagasa (length)

1-shaku 8-sun 1-bu jaku (54.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



肥前国近江大掾藤原忠廣

Hizen no Kuni Ōmi Daijō Fujiwara Tadahiro

Ōmi Daijō Fujiwara Tadahiro from Hizen province

摺付脇毛根津鵜飼某々兩人截断切付銘丁子乱見事也

Suritsuke wakige Nezu Ukai daresore ryōnin setsudan

kiritsuke-mei chōji-midare migoto nari

[This blade was] tested by Nezu and Ukai severing through the clavicle and the chest and has great *chōji-midare hamon*

刃長壹尺八寸壹分有之

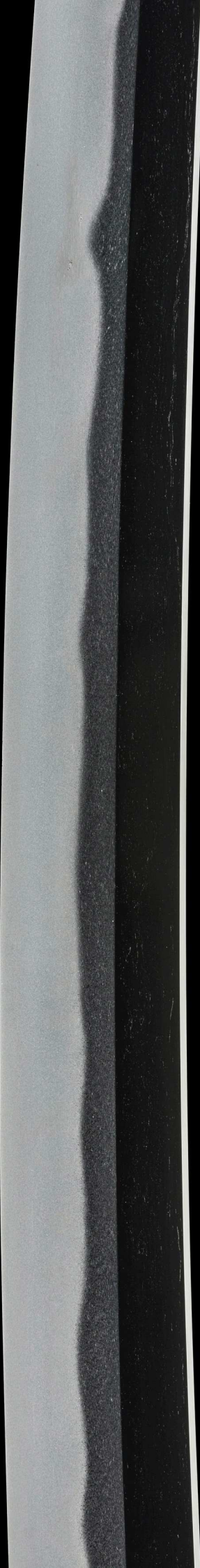
Hachō 1-shaku 8-sun 1-bu kore ari

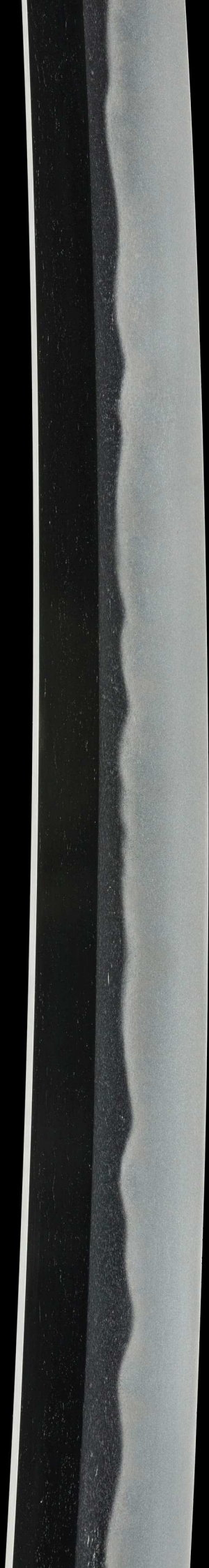
Blade length ~ 54.8 cm

昭和辛亥年夏日寒山誌「花押」

Shōwa kanoto-idoshi natsubi Kanzan shirusu + kō

Written by Kanzan [Satō Kan'ichi] in a summer day of the year of the boar of Shōwa era (1971) + monogram





Gorgeous view of the *konuka-hada*.


The steel on well-crafted swords have a 'wet' appearance as we see here.





An absolutely brilliant
gunome chôji-midare hamon
illuminates the blade.

The majority of swords
crafted by nidai Tadahiro
feature a straight (*suguha*)
hamon making this piece a
veritable treat for the eyes.

A close-up photograph of two curved blades, likely from a Japanese sword, set against a dark background. The blades are illuminated from the side, highlighting their curved shape and a textured surface. The texture consists of fine, parallel ridges that give the blades a rough, almost crystalline appearance. The lighting creates a strong contrast between the bright highlights on the blades and the deep shadows in the background.

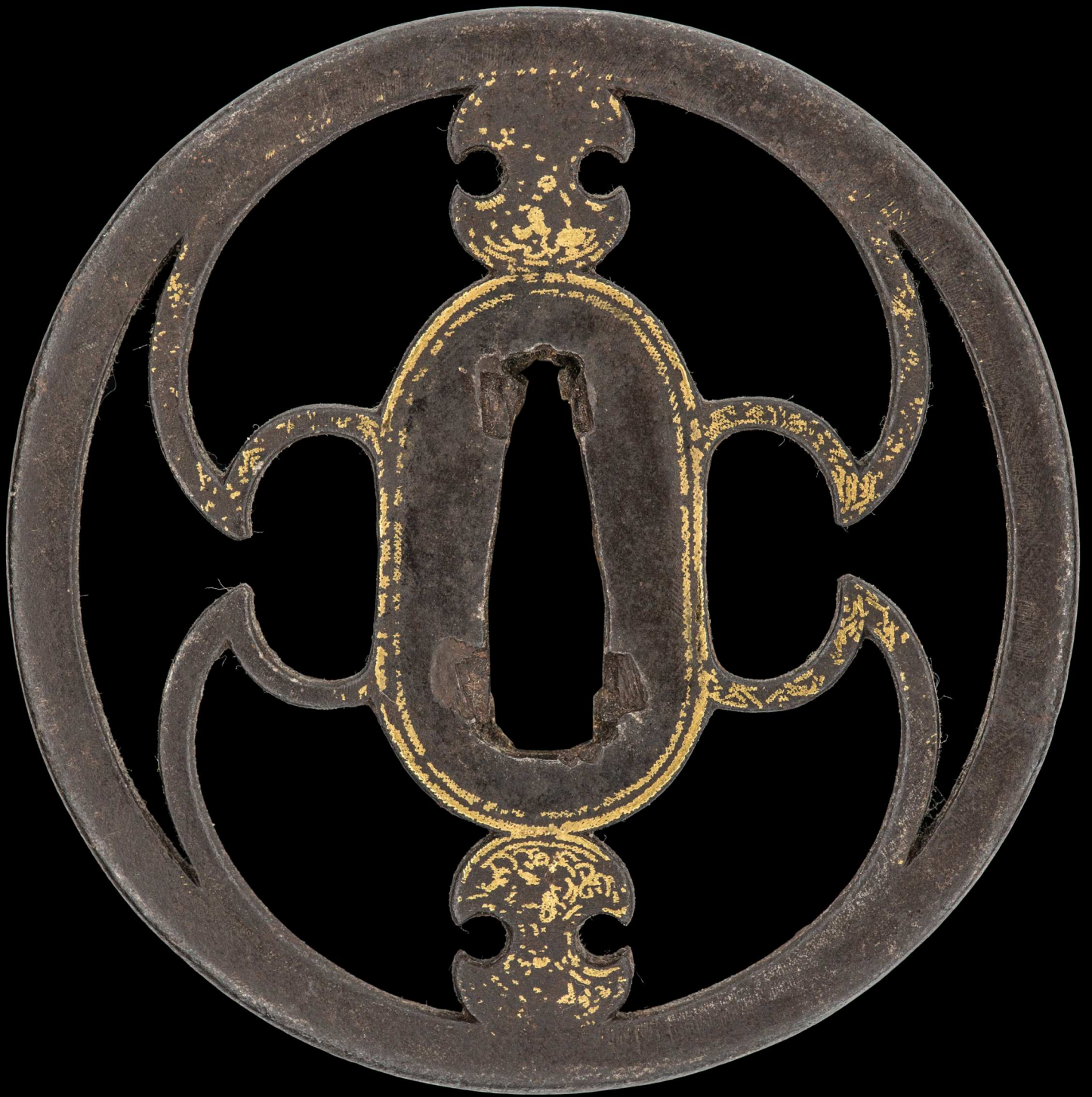
The *omote* side of the blade features a slightly thicker *nioguchi* that resembles freshly fallen snow.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



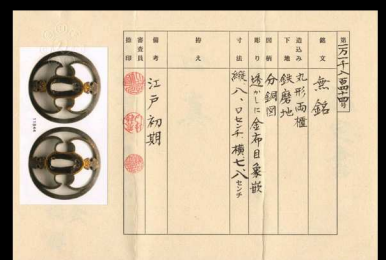
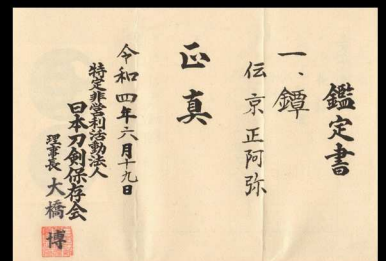
gold-wrapped *niju-habaki*
with crisp file marks



This is a wonderful polished iron tsuba attributed to the *Shôami* school, crafted some 350-400 years ago.

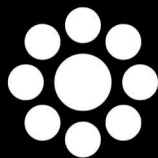
The unique design depicts an old-fashioned scale to measure weight. Traces of gold criss-cross *nunome-zogan* design pattern can be seen on the iron.

An NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certificate of authenticity attributing the piece to the *early-Edo period* circa 1603~1700 has been attained.





(Edo period scale)



The kashira features *kuyô-mon*, the nine-planet family crest that was first adopted by the powerful daimyô family leader *Hosokawa Tadaoki* (1563-1646).



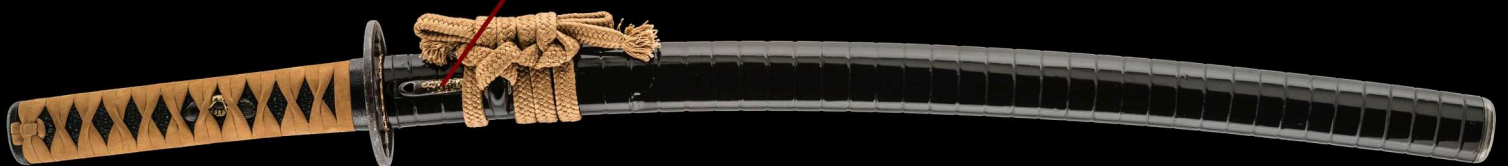
Fuchi-kashira
attributed to
Misumi school from *Higo province*
(1700s)

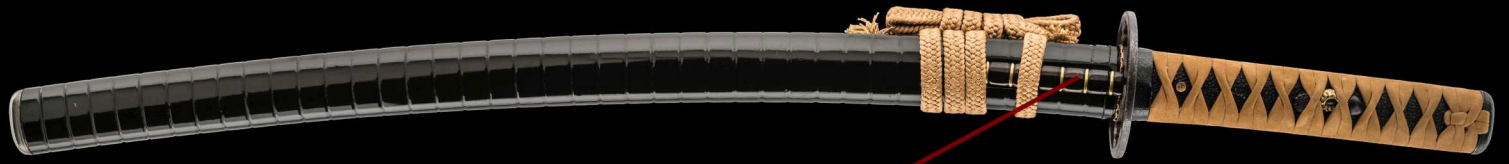


Bashin

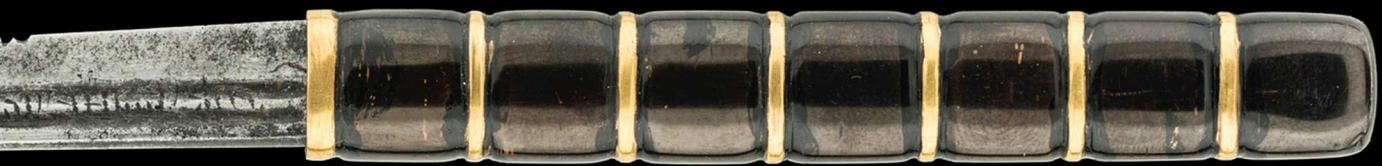
Lit. "horse needle." Was worn - if at all - instead of a *kozuka* or *kôgai* on the saya; the bashin was originally designed to ease a horses' blood congestion after a very long ride by *bloodletting*; later the bashin had more an ornamental character and were mostly worn to a *Higo-koshirae*.

The term bashin can also be read as *umabari*.



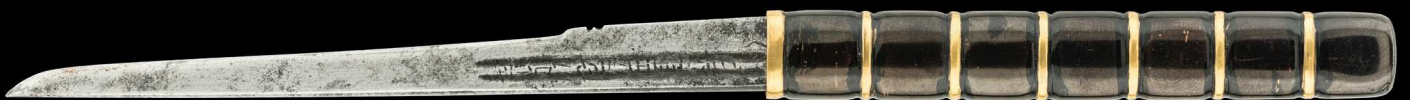


ribbed design, in polished *shakudô*



A kogai is a thick blunt needle that was primarily used as a hair arranging tool by the samurai.

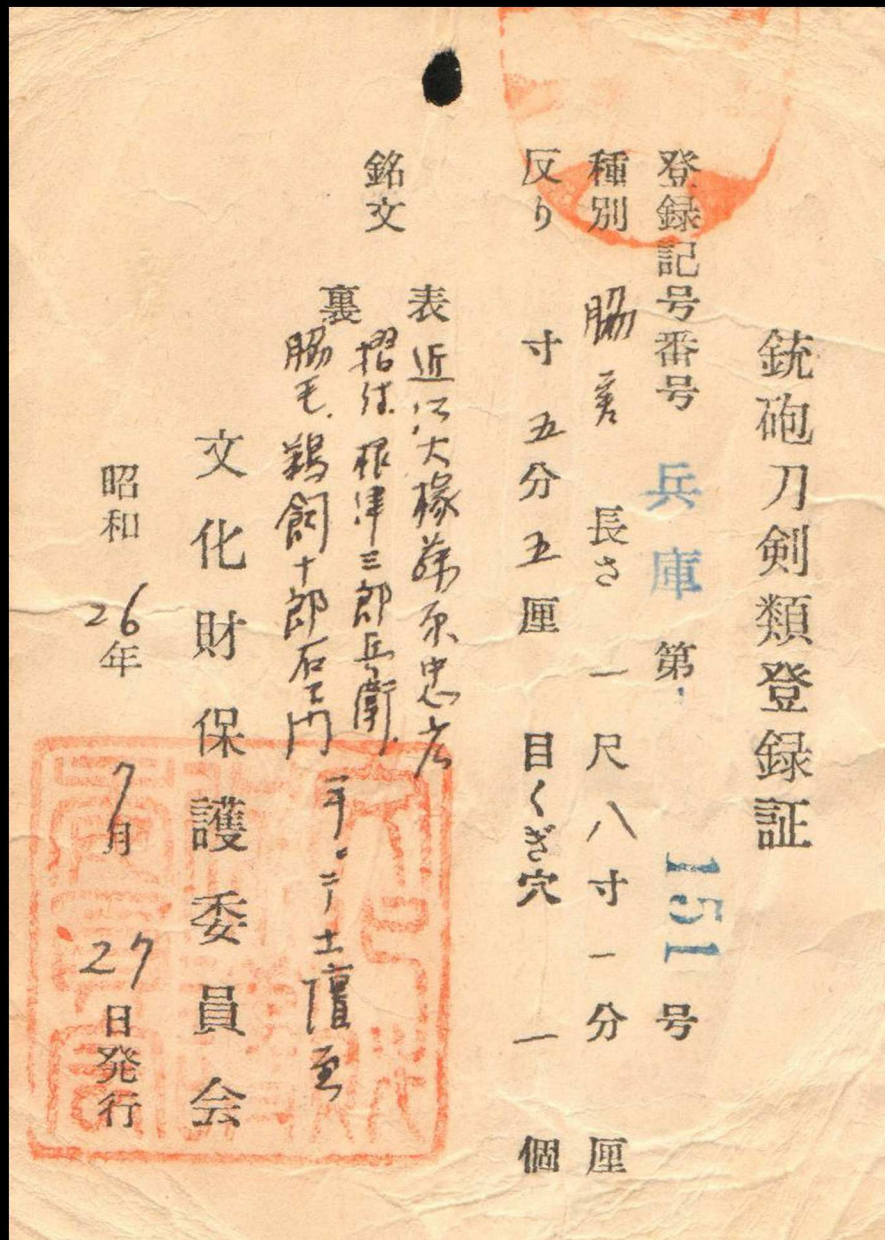
It is fastened into a special notch built inside the *saya* (scabbard) and drawn through the 'bumpy' hole in the *tsuba*.





Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) carry seashell theme. This choice of *menuki* pays homage to the open sea as *Hizen* province is one of nine islands in *Kyûshû*.





This is the original *torokusho* (registration card) for the *Tadahiro wakizashi*.
The card was registered in the 26th year of Showa (1951).

This is significant as 1951 was the very first year that swords were formally registered in Japan. Many former Daimyo families were invited to submit their collections suggesting this blade was once held by a prominent family.

The serial number is just **151**, one of the very first swords registered in Japan.



Koshirae bag