



ITEM# UJWA261

A TADAMITSU 'CUTTING TEST' Ô-WAKIZASHI SIGNED, SUE-KOTÔ PERIOD (TENBUN ERA: 1532~1555)

Swordsmith: *Bishû Osafune Tadamitsu (Jûrôzaemon)*
Measurements: **Length:** 54.9cm (*orikaeshi-mei*) **Curvature:** 1.6cm **Moto-haba:** 2.46cm
Jihada: *Ko-mokume and nagare-hada with ji-nie and midare-utsuri*
Hamon: *Bright suguha with ko-gunome midare, ko-ashi and kinsuji*
Certificate #1-2: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (*sword & koshirae Especially Worthy of Preservation*)
Fujishiro rank: **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*)
Included: *Shirasaya, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description*

SOLD

This very sharp Japanese sword was originally crafted as a curvy *katate-uchi* (one handed katana) at the height of the *Sengoku-jidai* (warring states period) by *jô-saku* *Jûrôzaemon Tadamitsu*, who flourished during the *Tenbun* era (1532~1555). At some point in the late 1500s, early 1600s, this sword underwent *suriage* (shortening) to its now *ô-wakizashi* length of 54.9cm. In the shortening process, rather than cutting off and losing the *mei*, the signature was carefully preserved on the *nakago* by a folding over process called *orikaeshi-mei*. Swords with *orikaeshi-mei* are rather rare and thus a veritable talking point of the sword. A *bo-hi* (groove) was added to the sword after the *suriage* process in order to lighten and aid in the cutting performance of the piece as well. Inscribed in bright, well-preserved gold inlay on the *nakago*, it states that this sword was tested *twice* [on a human body] severing through both the centre of the chest (*Ichino dô*) and diagonally through the body from the base of the neck to the opposite armpit - a rather vicious test cut known as *ô-kesa*.



Saki-kasane: 4.3mm

Moto-kasane: 6.4mm

Omosa: 470g

Kissaki: 2.97cm

Saki-haba: 1.69cm

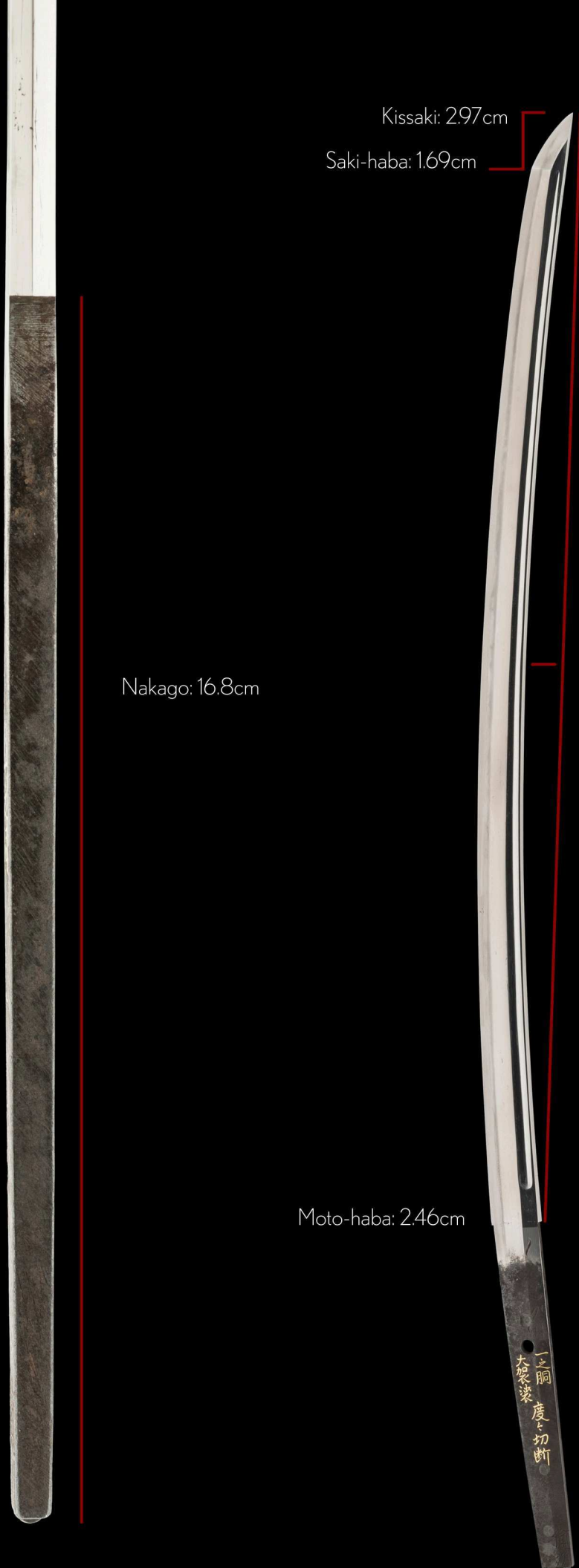
Nakago: 16.8cm

Moto-haba: 2.46cm

Nagasa: 54.9cm

Sori: 1.6cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



一之胴
本家
度々切断

This very sharp Japanese sword was originally crafted as a curvy *katate-uchi* (one handed katana) at the height of the *Sengoku-jidai* (warring states period) during the mid-1500s in late *Muromachi*.

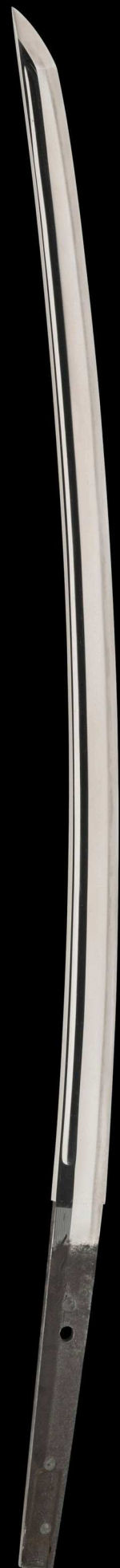
It is signed *Bishû Osafune Tadamitsu*, which was a *mei* (signature) used by a number of smiths in *Osafune* village in Bizen province at that time. Upon careful analysis of the signature and with advice from a trusted source, we can state that this sword was made by *jô-saku* (superior smith) *Jûrôzaemon Tadamitsu*, younger brother of second generation *Kurôzaemon*, and worked during the *Tenbun* era (1532~1555).

There are a few interesting points to expand upon. First, at some point in the late 1500s, early 1600s, this sword underwent *suriage* (shortening) to its now *ô-wakizashi* (long wakizashi) length of 54.9cm. Its original length was likely around 63cm, which was typical of *katate-uchi* in the late Muromachi period. In the shortening process, rather than cutting off and losing the *mei* - which is the case of many *Kotô* period swords - the signature was preserved on the *nakago* by a folding over process called *orikaeshi-mei*. Swords with orikaeshi-mei are rather rare and thus a veritable talking point of the sword.

A *bo-hi* (groove) was added to the sword after the *suriage* process in order to lighten and aid in the cutting performance of the piece as well. Which now leads us to the major treat of this feisty number and that is the *tameshigiri* (cutting test) on this blade.

Inscribed in bright, well-preserved gold inlay on the *nakago*, it states that this sword was tested *twice* [on a human body] severing through both the centre of the chest (*ichi no dô*) and diagonally through the body from the base of the neck to the opposite armpit - a rather vicious test cut known as *ô-kesa*.

This *ô-wakizashi* is housed in *shirasaya* only. It's perfectly fine to collect the sword as it is, however, if the new owner wishes to build a cool custom *koshirae*, we're here to serve and make this journey possible.



(Osa) 長
(funo) 船
(Tada) 忠
(mitsu) 光
(saku) 作

切
断

備 (Bi)
州 (shû)

mei (signature) folds over
and continues on reverse

Location: *Bishû province*
Village: *Osafune*
Swordsmith: *Tadamitsu*

orikaeshi-mei (folded-over signature)
kiri-yasurime (straight file marks)





folded over close-ups



A blade with *orikaeshi-mei* is *suriage* (shortened). The original *mei* (signature) has been carefully preserved, bent back, and inserted into a slot cut in the opposite side of the *nakago*.

It is quite rare to find a sword with *orikaeshi-mei* and although there are a number of fakes that exist, the NBTHK (sword museum of Japan) has confirmed that this is a genuine example and thus awarded the sword with NBTHK Hozon (a sword worthy of preservation).



slot

Ichinodô ô-kesa tabitabi setsudan (in gold inlay)

This sword was tested twice [on a human body] severing through both the centre of the chest (*lchi no dô*) and diagonally through the body from the base of the neck to the opposite armpit (*ô-kesa*).

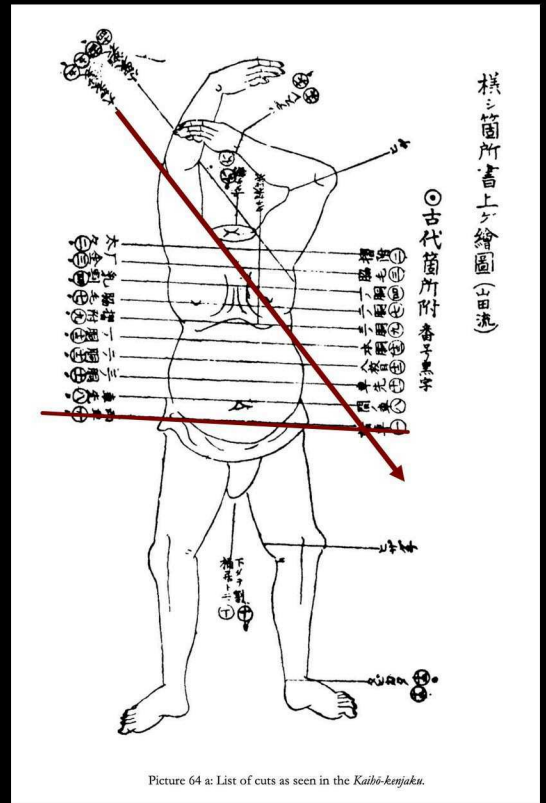
(Ô) 大
(ke) 袈
(sa) 裟

一之洞
大加衣裟
度々切斷

一 (lchi)
之 (no)
洞 (dô)

度 (tabi)
々 (tabi)
切 (setsu)
斷 (dan)

備 (Bi)
州 (shû)



Picture 64 a: List of cuts as seen in the *Kaibô-kenjaku*.

The red diagonal line shows the trajectory of the *ô-kesa* cut. This cut can be performed on a live or dead 'human target'. The more horizontal line is the *lchi no dô* test cut.

This is probably the original *mekugi-ana* (hole) which would make the cutting length around 63cm when it was first crafted, a typical one-handed *katate-uchi* katana of 16th century Japan.

04202212

No 3030855



鑑定書

一、脇指銘備州（以下折返）長船忠光作
（金象嵌）一之胴大袈裟度々切断

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

令和五年三月十日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



福岡県教育委員会
第 91802 号
平成2年6月21日

NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), March 10th

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)

*Bishû (ika orikaeshi) Osafune Tadamitsu saku
(Kinzôgan) ichinodô ô-kesa tabitabi setsudan*

Nagasa (length)

1-syaku 8-sun 1-bu kyô (54.9cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



備州長船忠光
Bishû Osafune Tadamitsu
Osafune Tadamitsu from Bishû Province

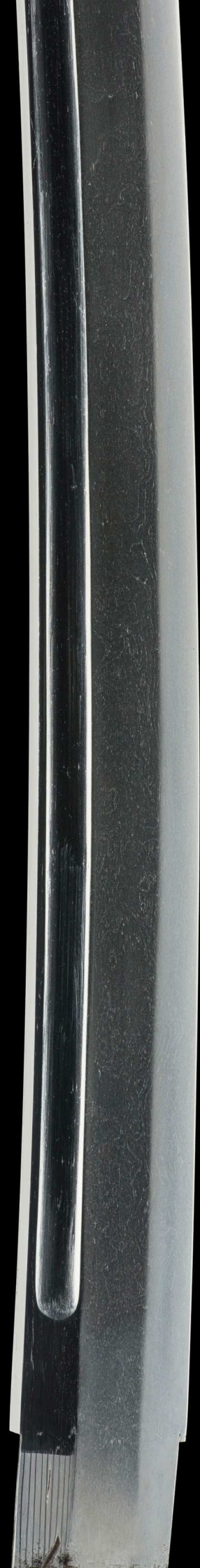
時代天文頃
Jidai Tenbun-goro
Around Tenbun period (1532~1555)

一之胴大袈裟度々切断
Ichinodô ô-kesa tabitabi setsudan
Tested twice severing through the centre of the chest and diagonally through the body from the base of the neck to the opposite armpit

刃長壹尺八寸一分強有之
Hachô 1-shaku 8-sun 1-bu kyô kore ari
Blade length 54.9 cm

令和六甲辰年卯月吉日誌之
Reiwa roku kinoe-tatsudoshi Uzuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu
Written on a lucky day in the fourth month in the sixth year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Dragon (April 2024).





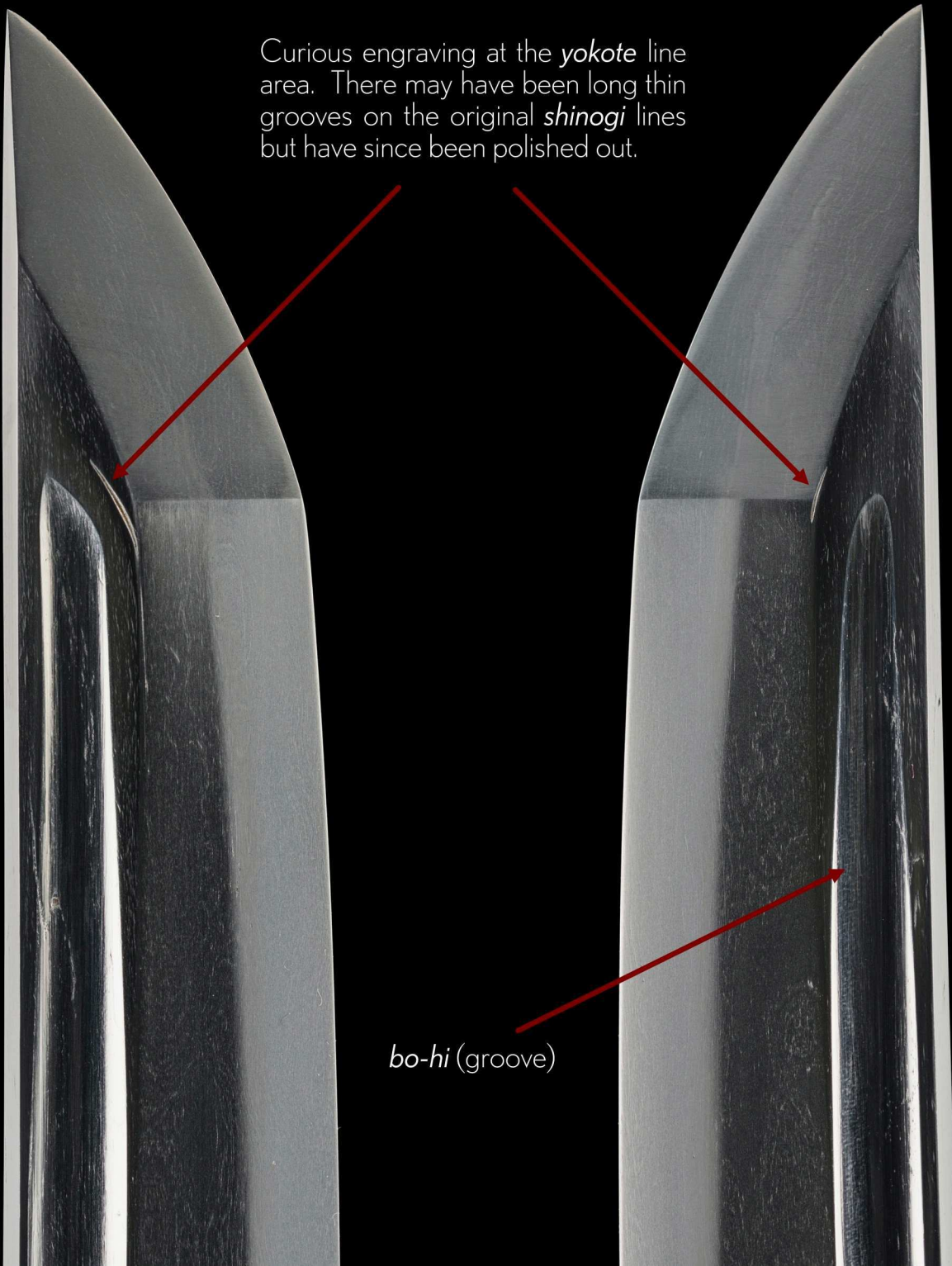
bo-hi (groove)



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 this sword, there is a full-length *bo-hi* on the *omote* (front) and *ura* (back) of the blade. These grooves would have been added after the sword was shortened.

Curious engraving at the *yokote* line area. There may have been long thin grooves on the original *shinogi* lines but have since been polished out.



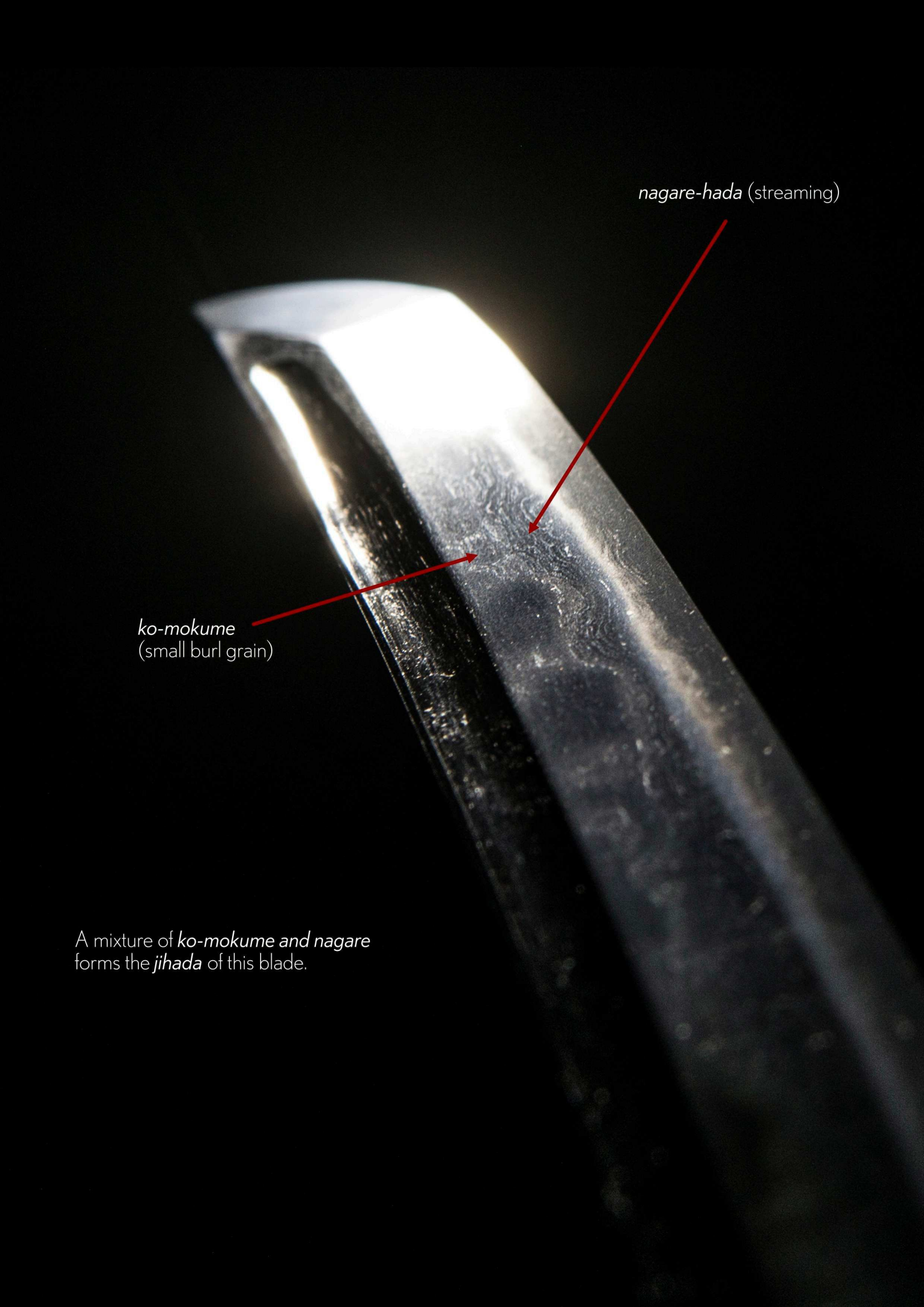
bo-hi (groove)

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, specifically the nakago (the part of the blade that remains after the tip has been shortened). The blade is made of metal and shows signs of wear and age. A red arrow points to a dark, textured area on the top surface of the nakago, which contains faint, partially obscured markings. In the upper left corner, a separate section of the blade is shown, featuring a clear and detailed engraving of a dragon winding around a sword. The background is black, making the metallic blade stand out.

Harumitsu horimono close-up

On the top of the *nakago* are remnants of a *horimono* (engraving) that was placed on the original (pre-shortened) blade.

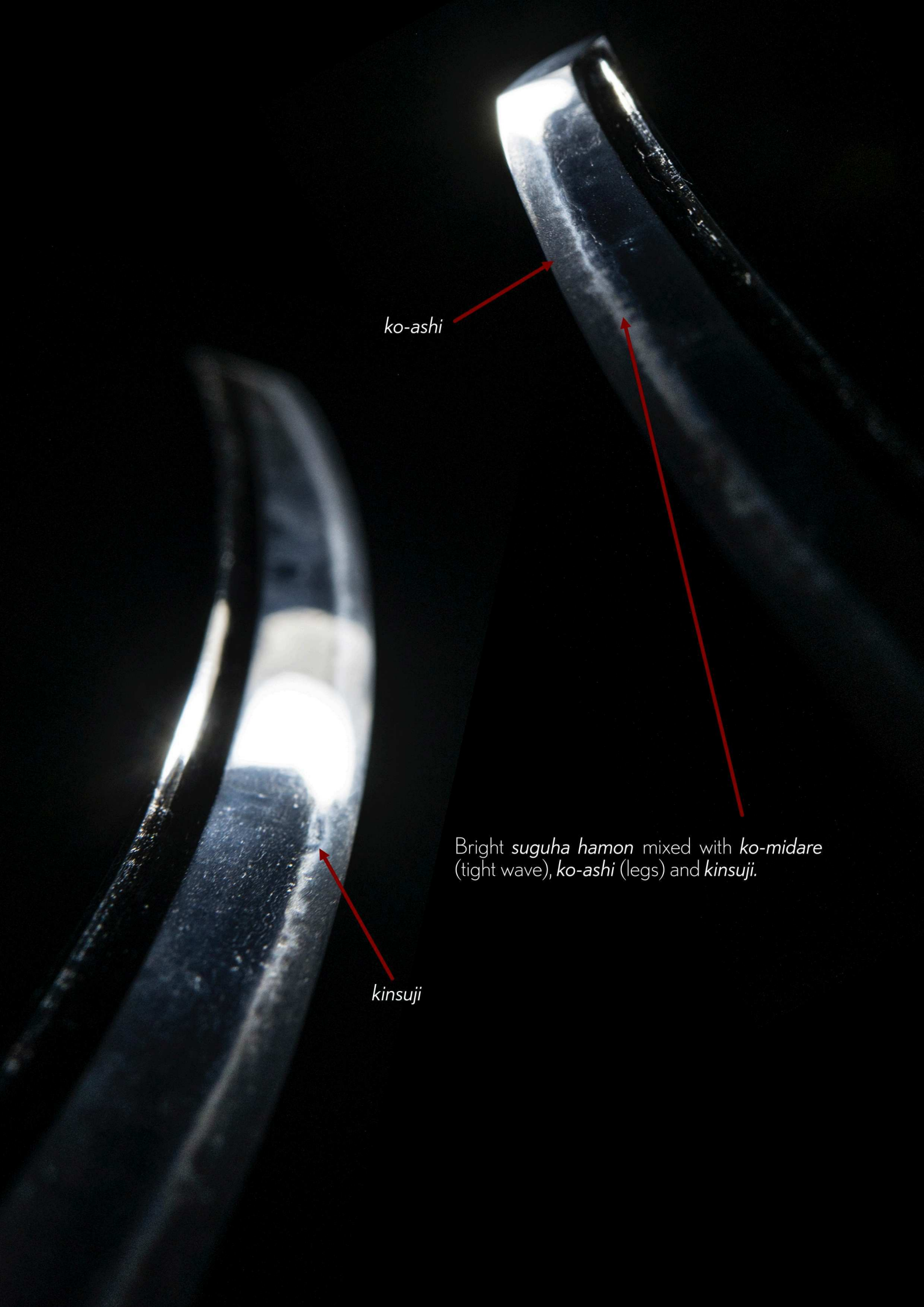
It's unclear what the original *horimono* exactly was, but it likely would have been similar to this *Sue-Bizen* stylised example from *Harumitsu* crafted in 1582 of a *kurikara* (dragon winding around a sword).



nagare-hada (streaming)

ko-mokume
(small burl grain)

A mixture of *ko-mokume* and *nagare* forms the *jihada* of this blade.



ko-ashi


Bright *suguha hamon* mixed with *ko-midare* (tight wave), *ko-ashi* (legs) and *kinsuji*.

kinsuji

Literally meaning "reflection", *utsuri* is a beautiful, misty reflection appearing in the *ji* (body of sword) above the *hamon* and generally ends at the *shinogi* ridge line.

It is a much loved and appreciated feature of swords, particular those made in the Bizen tradition in the Kotô period.

The type of *utsuri* is called *midare-utsuri* - a smokey pattern that billows in a wavy formation following the hamon pattern.



midare-utsuri



A long, terrific line of *kinsuji*
(black 'golden line' of nie crystals)



Shirasaya bag



gold-wrapped *habaki* with
horizontal file marks