UNIQUE JAPAN
ユニーク ジャパン

ALL SOLD!

# Japanese Sword Catalogue 44

RELEASED:
MAY 23, 2025



(COVER PHOTO)

ITEM# UJKA452

A SHODAI KANEWAKA KATANA
MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1596~1615)

BUTTERFLY MENUKI BY GOTÔ SCHOOL
CHRYSANTHEMUM TSUBA BY KYÔ-SHÔAMI SCHOOL

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# Antique Japanese Swords For Sale (volume 44)

## Released: May 23, 2025 to VIP Clients only

The following pages contain descriptions and images of genuine antique Japanese swords sold to clients in Catalogue 44.

**Each sword can be legally owned and exported outside of Japan. All swords have certification papers (origami) such as from NBTHK and/or the NTHK-NPO.**

Descriptions and availability are subject to change without notice.

Please enquire for additional images and information on swords of interest to service@uniquejapan.com.

We look forward to assisting you. We have service offices in Tokyo and near London, England.



Pablo Kuntz
Founder, unique japan

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Hi everyone,

I hope you are all doing great, enjoying the warmer weather as we march on into 2025. We've had a wonderful spell of sunshine here in the UK, and I have been taking Barney out for fairly long walks in my growing passion for hiking. Feels good. I want to congratulate all those that have claimed swords in Catalogue 43 and to the numerous private sales of late. Now it's time to take a stroll into some brilliant Japanese swords that are on offer for you all in Catalogue 44. Let's go!!

We kick off the catalogue with a long and graceful *tachi* by the ***Ko-Naminohira school*** that instantly transports you to the beaches of *Satsuma* province from the late 1200s, which *Dr. Kanzan Satô* dates it to and further attributes the blade to the work of *Naminohira Yukiyasu*. According to the *sayagaki*, this particular piece was passed down within the *Date* family in *Yoshida* province as a family heirloom. A long *bo-hi* lightens the blade just right - it's easy to envision a samurai on his horse galloping with this dependable tachi by his side. The *hamon* is a straight laser beam of *hoso-suguha*, synonymous with the *Kamakura* period with contrasting *kinsuji* and bright *shirake-utsuri*. A wonderful set of *koshirae* depicts *Enoshima* shrine on the *fuchi-kashira* and has a glorious *tachi tsuba* that makes reference to Japan's literary masterpiece of the 11th century, *The Tale of Genji*. If you adore the freedom of the open water, this *koshirae* will speak to you. On a side note, I personally have a *Ko-Naminohira tachi* in my collection that will eventually go to our eldest son, Lennon.

We remain in the glorious *Kamakura* period to a sword attributed to one of Japan's finest swordsmiths. ***Norishige*** was a fellow student of *Masamune* under *Shintôgo Kunimitsu*. Among the early great *Sôshû* masters, Norishige's workmanship is closest to that of the *Masamune*. The major difference is that the *kitae* produced by *Norishige* stands out more visibly – resulting in his iconic *matsukawa-hada* - a spiraled grain pattern resembling the bark of old pine trees. This is a relatively short katana that feels agile in hand, and takes you back some seven hundred years with an elegant *jihada* that will absolutely capture your heart. This is what collecting *nihontô* is all about. Claim the sword in *shirasaya* or let's build a top-class custom koshirae with the finest craftsmen in Japan.

OK, now hold on to your hats (and heads) with this next sword…. this remarkable katana has been attributed to the ***Echizen Seki school*** – its name originating from a group of swordsmiths that migrated to *Echizen* from *Seki* city of *Mino* province. This sword features an incredible *gunome-midare hamon* that swells the width of the body into dramatic dove-tail wave formations known as *yahazu-ba*. This splendid hamon harmonizes beautifully with the dragon and wave fittings that equally fire up the senses. A series of extreme *tameshigiri* tests were performed on this blade that include a test on June 22, 1753 where *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by ***severing through two bodies [in one stroke]*** and into the earthen mound below. Then, on March 13, 1756, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* prison by ***severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits*** and into the earthen mound below. ***He then proceeded to execute a further 73 prisoners severing their heads one after another.*** This is samurai intensity like no other…

This now brings us to a terrific katana by ***Shodai Kanewaka*** (*Sandai Kanewaka*'s grandad). Born *Tsujimura Jinroku*, *shodai* travelled to *Kaga* province subsequently founding the *Kaga Kanewaka school* and became so highly esteemed that he was referred to as *Kaga Masamune*. This fine *ubu-nakago katana* exudes a proud *Keichô shintô* shape with a well-forged *jihada* containing a great amount of *chikei* with a bright *gunome-midare hamon* that dramatically hugs the *ha-saki* in parts. In wealthy *Kaga* province, ruled by the powerful *Maeda* clan, and renowned for its gold leaf artistry - the *samekawa* (ray skin) wrapping the sword's hilt (*tsuka*) was specially lacquered in gleaming gold and juxtaposed with meaningful butterflies reflecting the region's rich heritage. This is a rare, celebratory samurai sword to be cherished within your family for generations to come.

We stay within the *Kanewaka* family with a splendidly sharp katana that was crafted by ***Tsujimura Shirô'emon Kanewaka***, third generation (and shodai's grandson) of the *Kanewaka* family. An awe-inspiring mountain range comes to mind when admiring the splendid peaks and valleys found in its *gunome-midare hamon*. Adding to the ferocity of this katana, sword tester *Matsunami Toki'emon* performed a *tameshigiri* test with this blade by severing through a human body at the armpit level and directly into the earthen mound below. One gets the sense that this blade could have easily cut multiple bodies in one stroke. Sword has *sayagaki* potential with *Tanobe-sensei* and will definitely make for a superb custom koshirae project.

Talented swordsmith ***Izumi no Kami Morikuni*** was a student of *Izumi no Kami Kaneshige* during the *shintô* period, later becoming known as *Edo Senjuin*. Such great energy is packed into this statuesque katana - expertly forged *mokume* and *itame-hada* provides the foundation for a brilliant *gunome midare hamon* with impressive sawtooth-like *ashi* that bite into the blade. A comparison is often drawn between *Morikuni* and grandmaster *Nagasone Kotetsu*, as they both shared the same *sensei* in *Kaneshige*. A terrific set of koshirae features a wonderfully wise *tsuba* by *Mogarashi Sôten* along with a detailed *fuchi-kashira* depicting rats attributed to *Ishiguro Masaaki*. A delightful trio of butterflies form the *menuki* on the regal *jabara-maki* braided silk representing joy and longevity.

Our third *shirasaya-only* sword in the catalogue is by ***Shodai Yoshikado*** who was a prominent *shintô* swordsmith that descended from the lineage of *Zenjô Kaneyoshi*. Yoshikado's career advanced significantly when in 1672 he became an official swordsmith of the *Mito* domain led by *Tokugawa Mitsukuni*, receiving a stipend supporting seven people, prompting his relocation to Mito's *Daimachi* district. This highly energetic katana is a prime example from the later years of Yoshikado's storied career. The blade's vibrant *hamon* in *nie-deki* is an *ô-midare* with *notare* elements, even *hako-midare* that is reminiscent of the famed *Kanewaka* school. This is a swordsman's sword, just the right length to manoeuvre with samurai fluidity. This katana is currently on hold.

We cap off the catalogue with four recently sold items that I have included as reference pieces. The first is a *kogatana* by ***Sumitani Masamine*** – this miniature masterpiece has been forged in pure *masame-hada* with a bright *gunome-midare hamon* and comes housed in a beautiful *maki-e* decorated koshirae and charming storage box. Next is an exceptional wakizashi by grandmaster swordsmith ***Hankei*** with his iconic "*ro-mata*" signature from his prime years. This is a particularly rare and significant collector's item with a glorious custom koshirae with *Mino* school fittings. Following *Hankei* is a powerful katana attributed to *wazamono*-ranked ***Yasushige*** from the *Shitahara* school with a three-body gold inlay cutting test by *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* when he was 62-years-old. This sword was just sold at a private meeting at our studio in Tokyo. Our final katana in the catalogue is a *Ko-Mizuta* ***Sandai Kunishige***. This splendid katana was commissioned for *Nakayama Gen'ue no Jô* and further dated to February 1590 during the famed *Momoyama* period. Sword is housed in a lovely *tachi koshirae* with matching silver fittings and a powerful *Fudo Myô-ô tsuba.*

Thank you all for your passion, trust and continued confidence in our ability to serve you in this wonderful world of Japanese samurai swords. It means a lot to me and the team.

Have a great summer ahead!



Pablo Kuntz
Founder, Unique Japan
May 2025

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**ALL PRICES ARE IN US DOLLARS**

To access current and previous catalogues, please visit:
**http://new.uniquejapan.com/currently-available-swords-at-unique-japan**

# To online visitors around the world…

Welcome! We completely respect the fact it takes a huge leap of personal faith in us to commit to a particular sword(s) given the reliance on photos and descriptions for such a highly valued item.

It is our promise to address all your questions to the best of our ability. It's important to us that you feel completely confident that the sword you choose (and chooses YOU) is destined for your family to cherish and preserve.

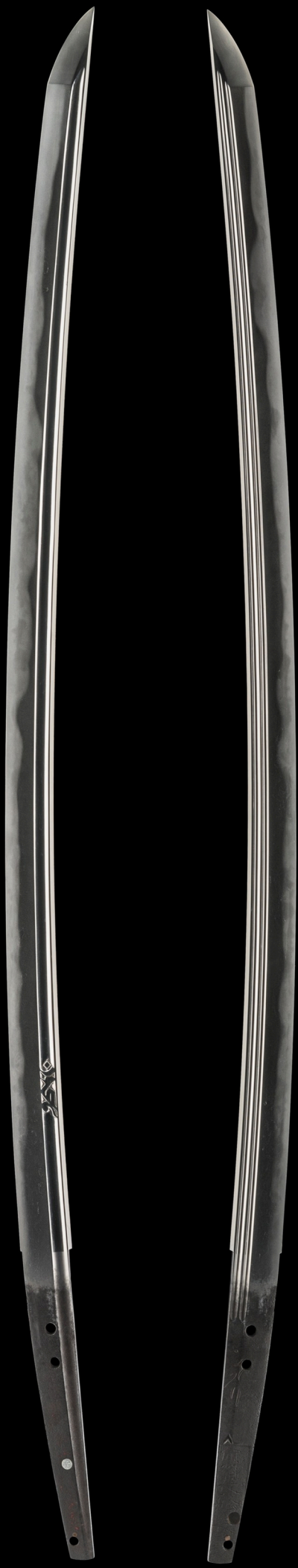
Please take reassurance that all swords from Unique Japan are guaranteed authentic and come with a **3-day worry free inspection period** upon arrival to your home.

We acquire swords on a regular basis and can source swords for collectors seeking a specific smith and/or school. Please inquire about our latest arrivals that may not be listed in the catalogue.

Also, be sure let us know if you are travelling to Tokyo as we can book a private meeting together at our studio in Meguro.

Domo arigato,
Pablo

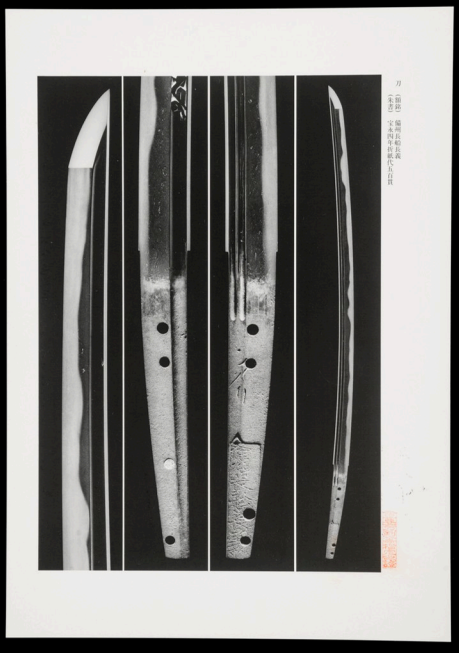


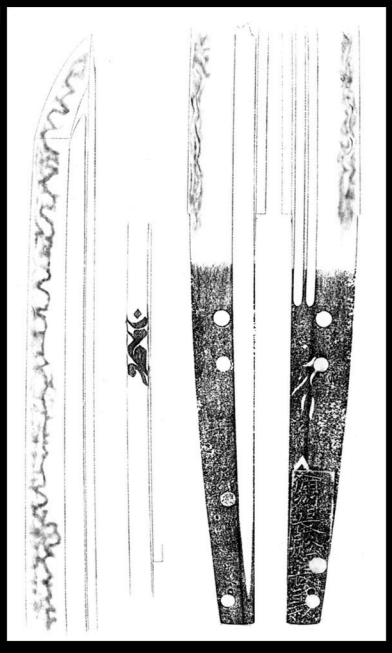


Coming soon...

**ujka471 - A Chôgi Katana**
15th Tokubetsu Jûyô Tôken
A ***gaku-mei*** masterpiece by the ***Sôden Bizen*** grandmaster of the 14th century.

(ON HOLD)









Coming soon...

ujwa262- A Sanemori Wakizashi
NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
A beautiful sword from the *Bizen Hatakeda* school crafted during in 13th century.

(PLEASE ENQUIRE)



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# CURRENTLY AVAILABLE JAPANESE SWORDS

## Released: May 23, 2025 to VIP Clients only
## Updated: September 30, 2025

The following pages contain descriptions of authentic and certified Japanese swords sold in catalogue 44.

**Please contact me at service@uniquejapan.com for further images and information into items of interest.**

**All swords are offered on a "first-serious-hold-request', first served basis. Even if an item is listed as being "on hold", register your interest as it may come available.**

Swords may be purchased over a number of months if required, please inquire for details. Descriptions and availability are subject to change without notice.

Thank you,



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(mobile on 'signal & whatsapp' / british time)

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ITEM# UJKA441

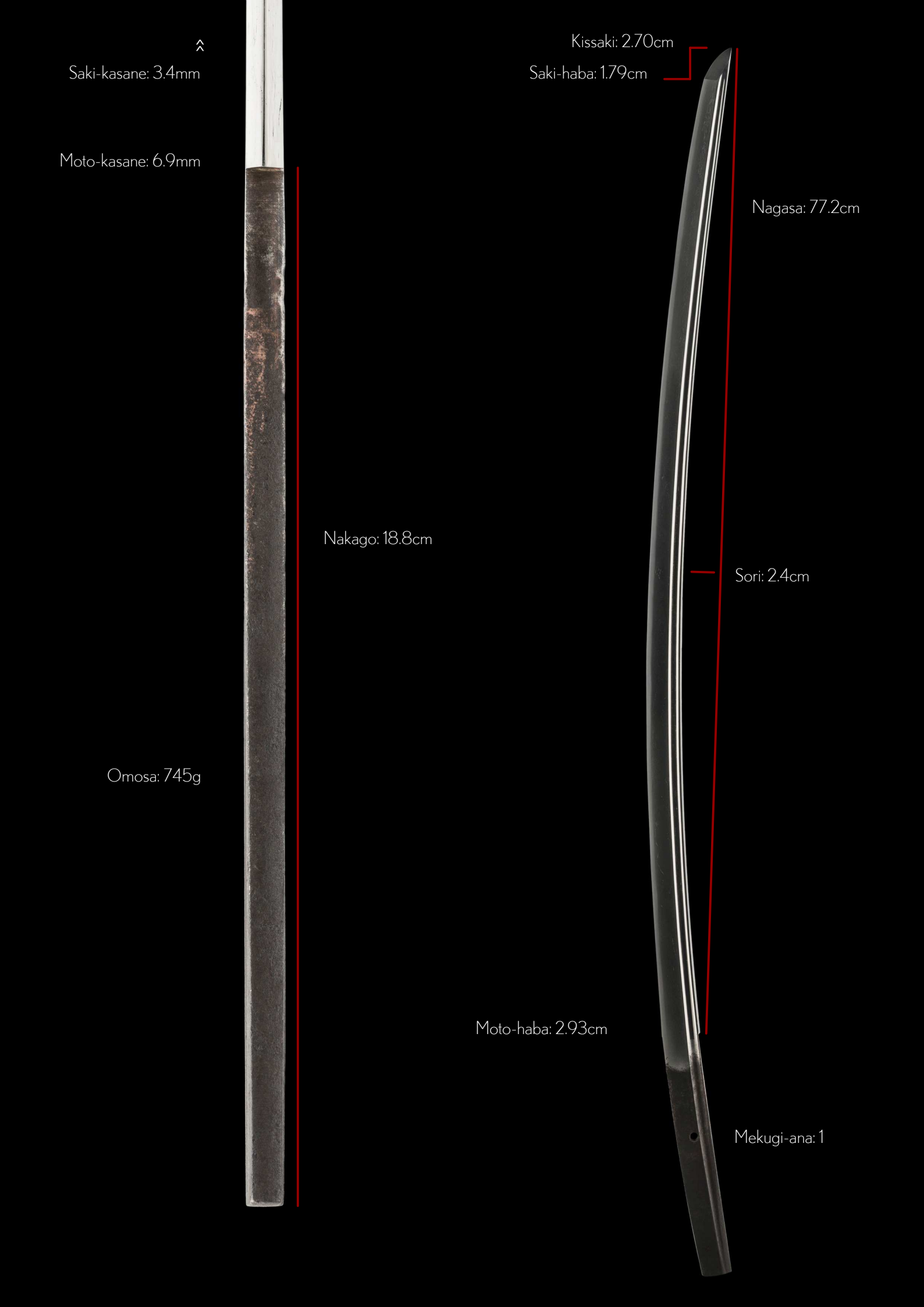
# A KO-NAMINOHIRA TACHI

## UNSIGNED, KOTÔ KAMAKURA PERIOD (EININ ERA: 1293~1299)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Ko-Naminohira*** *[Yukiyasu - according to Kanzan sayagaki]* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 77.2cm (*o-suriage*) **Sori:** 2.4cm **Moto-haba:** 2.93cm **Weight:** 745g |
| **Jihada:** | *Nagare-hada mixed with itame and ayasugi with plentiful chikei and shirake utsuri* |
| **Hamon:** | *Beaming hoso-suguha with kinsuji* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*Naminohira Yukiyasu is ranked as a superior swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Kanzan-sensei** (*Dr. Satô Kanzan)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

This long and graceful tachi by the ***Ko-Naminohira school*** instantly transports you to the beaches of *Satsuma* province from late 1200s, which *Dr. Kanzan Satô* dates it to and further attributes the blade to the work of *Naminohira Yukiyasu*. According to the *sayagaki*, this particular piece was passed down within the *Date* family in *Yoshida* province as a family heirloom. A long *bo-hi* lightens the blade just right - it's easy to envision a samurai on his horse galloping with this dependable tachi by his side. The *hamon* is a straight laser beam of *hoso-suguha*, synonymous with the *Kamakura* time period with contrasting *kinsuji* and bright *shirake-utsuri*. A wonderful set of *koshirae* depicts *Enoshima* shrine on the *fuchi-kashira* and has a glorious over-sized tachi tsuba that references the *Tale of Genji*. If you have adore the freedom of the open water, this koshirae will speak to you.


Saki-kasane: 3.4mm
Moto-kasane: 6.9mm
Nakago: 18.8cm
Omosa: 745g
Kissaki: 2.70cm
Saki-haba: 1.79cm
Nagasa: 77.2cm
Sori: 2.4cm
Moto-haba: 2.93cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

The *Naminohira* school is one of the oldest sword-making traditions said to have begun working in *Satsuma* province way back in 987AD. Satsuma province is located at the southern end of Japan's southernmost island *Kyûshû*. The island is known for its high-quality sand iron that was found on its rivers and beaches.

The pioneering smiths of the *Naminohira* school originally travelled from Japan's old capital *Yamato* province, present-day *Nara* prefecture, and most impressively, this school worked uninterrupted right up to the end of the Edo-period 1868.

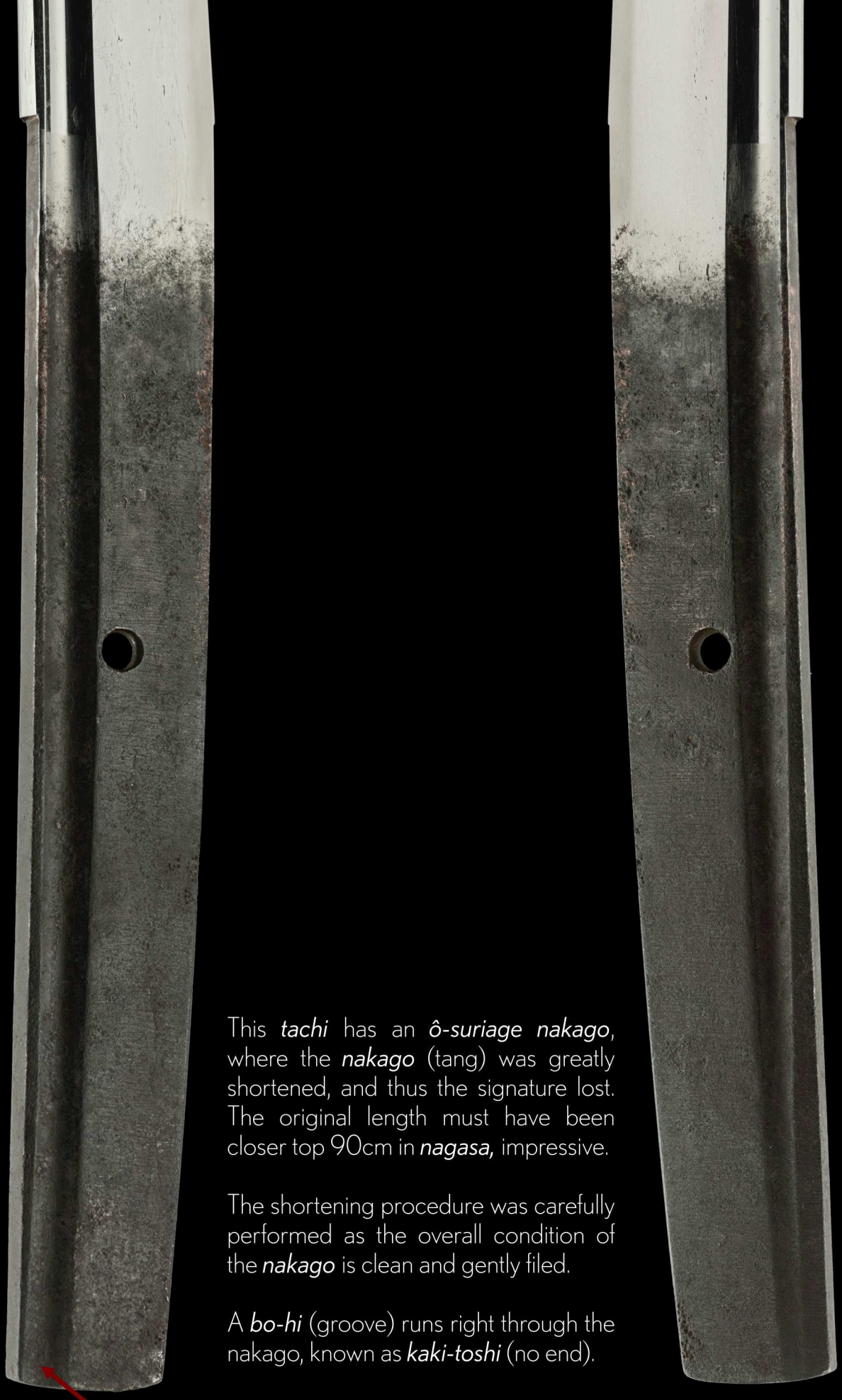
The two *kanji* characters that form *Naminohira* are *Nami,* meaning 'wave', and *hira* being 'flat', thus translating to *calm seas.* Swords of the *Naminohira* school were said to have been prized by the Japanese navy for their name carried such a good omen.

This long and graceful tachi extends for miles into the horizon - a sword that instantly transports you to the beaches of *Satsuma* province from late 1200s, which *Dr. Kanzan Satô* dates it to and further attributes the blade to the work of *Naminohira Yukiyasu*. Also according to the *sayagaki*, this particular piece was passed down within the *Date* (pronounced '*Dah-tay*') family in *Yoshida* province as a family heirloom.

Yes, the sword is somewhat tired in spots (which is completely normal as it is over 700-years-old after all), but the incredible shape of the blade more than makes up for any shortcomings. A long *bo-hi* (groove) lightens the blade just right - it's easy to envision a samurai on his horse galloping with this dependable tachi by his side. The *hamon* is a straight laser beam of *hoso-suguha*, a temper line synonymous with the *Kamakura* time period. Fabulous dark lines of contrasting *kinsuji* can be seen in the *yakiba* and a bright *shirake-utsuri* illuminates the blade held at the correct angle under the light.

A wonderful set of koshirae compliments this highly collectible Tokubetsu Hozon sword depicts *Enoshima* shrine on the *fuchi-kashira* and has a glorious over-sized *tachi tsuba* that makes reference to Japan's oldest novel, the *Tale of Genji*. If you have a passion for boating and adore the freedom of the open water, this koshirae will speak to you.



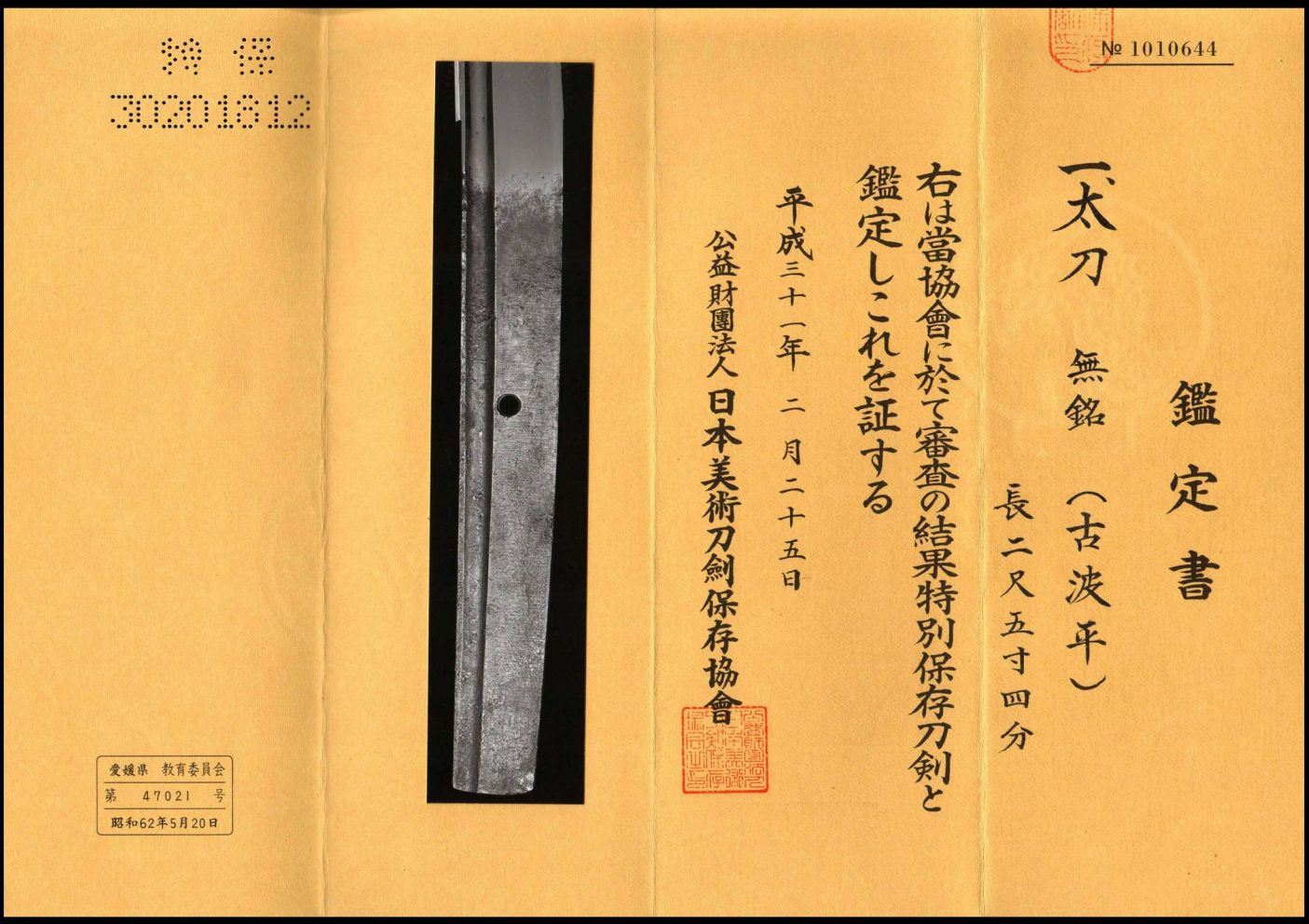


This ***tachi*** has an ***ô-suriage nakago***, where the ***nakago*** (tang) was greatly shortened, and thus the signature lost. The original length must have been closer top 90cm in ***nagasa,*** impressive.

The shortening procedure was carefully performed as the overall condition of the ***nakago*** is clean and gently filed.

A ***bo-hi*** (groove) runs right through the nakago, known as ***kaki-toshi*** (no end).

*kaki-toshi*




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

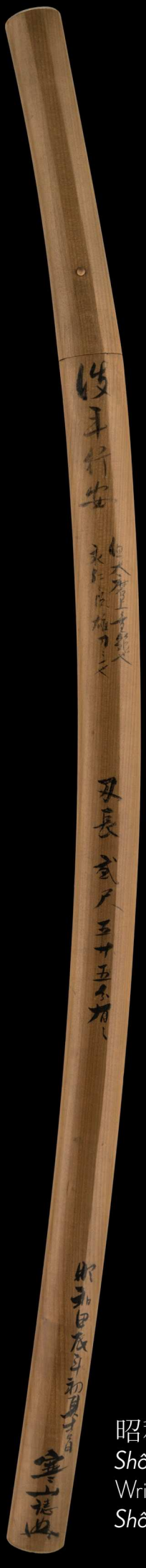
Issued in the 31st year of Heisei (2019), February 25th

One, Tachi

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Ko-Naminohira*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 5-sun 4-bu (77.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



波平行安
*Naminohira Yukiyasu*
Naminohira Yukiyasu

但大磨上無銘也永仁ノ頃雄刀也
*Tadashi ô-suriage mumei nari Einin no koro yûtô nari*
Ô-suriage, unsigned, valiant sword from *Einin* era (1293~1299)

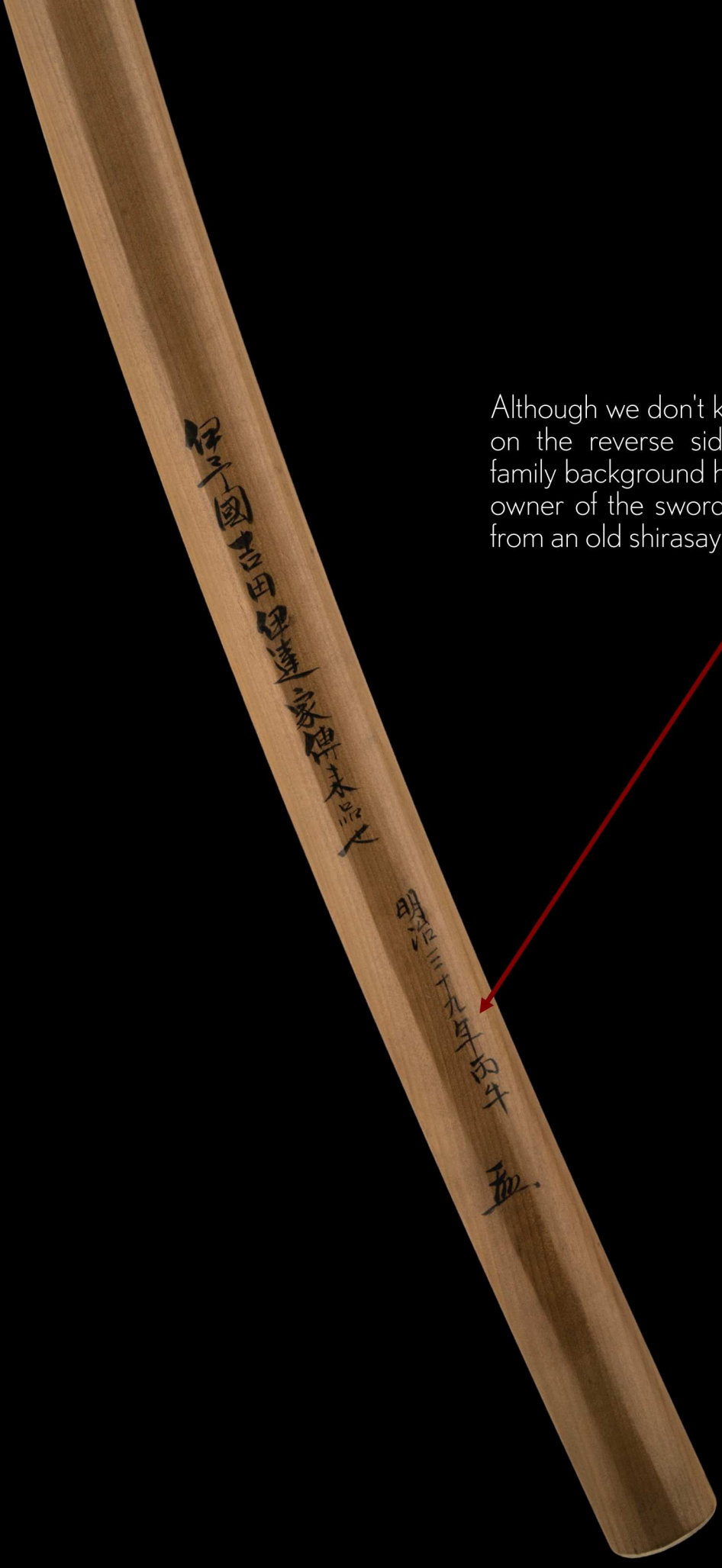
刃長貳尺五寸五分有之
*Hachô 2-shaku 5-sun 5-bu kore ari*
Blade length ~77.2 cm

伊予國吉田伊達家傳来品也
*Iyo no kuni Yoshida Date-ke denrai hin nari*
Passed down within the *Date* family in *Yoshida* of *Iyo* province

明治三十九年丙午（花押）
*Meiji sanjûkunen hinoe-uma + kaô*
Signed in the 39th year of *Meiji* era during the Year of the Horse (1906) + monogram

昭和甲辰年初夏吉日寒山誌（花押）
*Shôwa kinoe-tatsudoshi shoka kichijitsu Kanzan shirusu + kaô*
Written by *Kanzan sensei* on a lucky day in early summer in *Shôwa* period during the Year of the Tiger (1964)





Although we don't know who wrote the *sayagaki* on the reverse side that references the *Date* family background history, it's possible that a past owner of the sword transcribed this information from an old shirasaya onto this one.

Modern-day genealogy of the ***Date*** (pronounced **Dah-tay**) ***Yoshida*** Family




*Date Masamune (Main family, Sendai domain)*

↓ *son*

*Date Hidemune (Branch family, Uwajima domain)*

↓ *son*

*Date Munezumi (2nd branch family, Yoshida domain)*

⋮

*Date Munesada (10th head of Yoshida Date family, viscount during Meiji era)*



*Date Masamune in Sendai*



*Head of the Yoshida Date family in 1906 when the shirasaya was crafted*







A good look at the flowing *nagare/ayasugi-hada*.




This is a graceful ***tachi*** that is over seven hundred years old. The stories it can tell...

As such, through polishes over its many centuries of existence, the core steel known as ***shingane***, can be seen in parts on this blade. If you are seeking a perfectly healthy blade, then consider a younger sword. But if it's age and a wise old soul you desire, then this is a samurai sword to cherish.

A beautiful brushed *hakikake boshi.*



With a long cutting edge of 77.2cm and a dramatic curvature of 2.4cm, this sword epitomises the classic ***tachi*** shape of the ***Kamakura*** period. The simple (yet complex) ***hoso-suguha hamon*** also speaks to its incredible age and to a time of less is more...






An impressive line of ***kinsuji*** below the ***hoso-suguha hamon*** inside the ***yakiba*** - hardened area of the blade.




Holding the sword just right, reveals a delightful bright white ***shirake-utsuri*** reflecting the ***hamon*** inside the dark ***jigane*** (body) of the sword. This is a key feature of swords made in the ***Naminohira***, ***Kongôbyôe***, ***Enju*** and ***Mihara*** schools.



*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

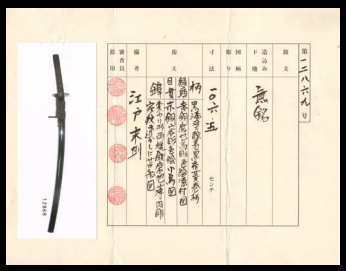


gold ***habaki*** with
vertical file marks

*Kuro-roiro-nuri saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂色塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



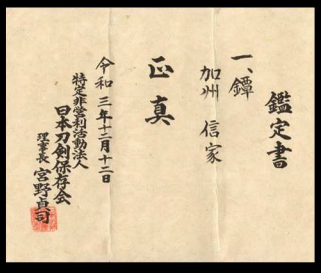
*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*

This *tsuba* is crafted by *Nobuie* from *Kashû* province, inspired by master metalsmith *Myôchin Nobuie*.

The symbol on the upper right are those used in the aristocratic game of "*Genji-kô* (Genji incense)", in which each of the 52 symbols represents a different volume of the *Tale of Genji*. The symbol on this tsuba represents the 51st volume, "*Ukifune* (a boat)," and thus a small boat is featured in the design of the tsuba.



*Ukifune*


鑑定書

一、鐔

加州 信家

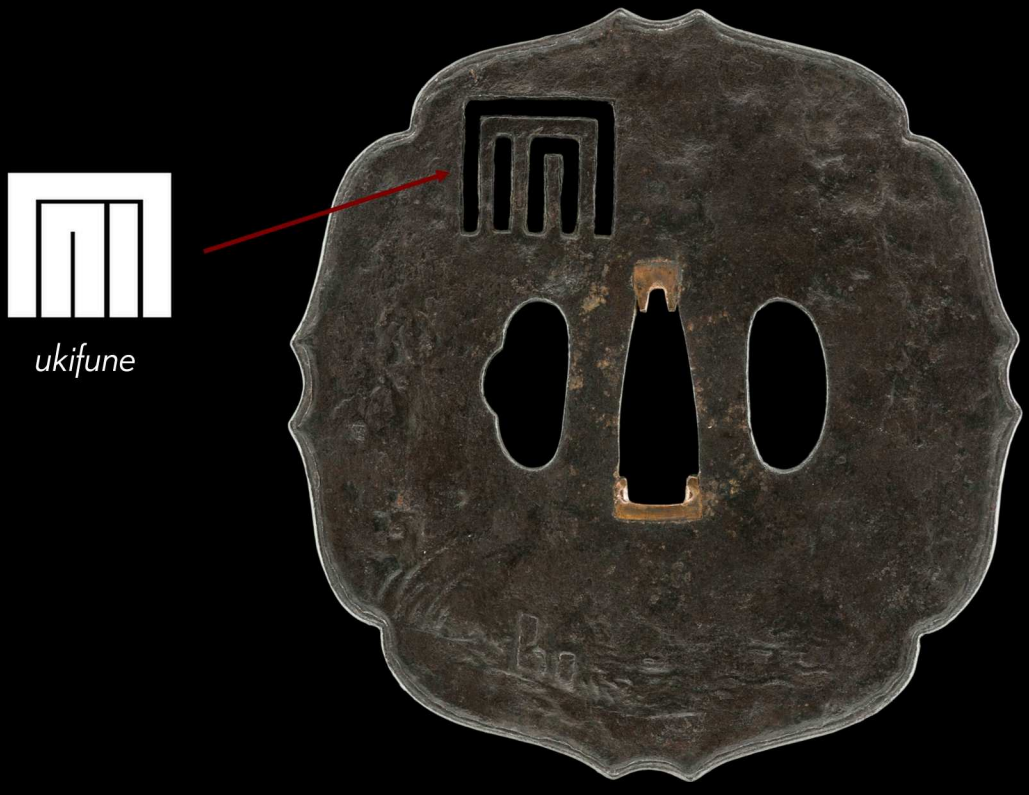
正真

令和三年十二月十二日

特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 宮野良司







*ukifune*

(reverse)





*Fuchi-kashira* depicting the revered *Enoshima shrine*.
Attributed to *Yasufusa* (1700s), a student of *Shodai Tsuchiya Yasuchika*



*Enoshima island* by *Utagawa Hiroshige*



*Enoshima shrine* during the *Meiji* period



Beautifully braided by an expert craftsman in Japan.



This charming ***menuki*** depicts a bird surfing on an oar, complimenting the boat motif on the ***tsuba***.





Koshirae bag with
a traditional crane pattern

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA450

# A NORISHIGE KATANA

UNSIGNED, CHÛ-KOTÔ KAMAKURA PERIOD (SHÔWA ERA: 1312~1317)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Etchû Norishige*** *(1st gen.)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 61.5cm (*ô-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.4cm **Moto-haba:** 2.81cm **Weight:** 585g |
| **Jihada:** | *Stand-out itame with mokume and nagare forming matsukawa-hada, darkish steel* |
| **Hamon:** | *Bright suguha mixed with gunome, ko-notare, ashi, kinsuji and sunagashi* |
| **Boshi:** | *Nie-laden ko-maru kaeri with plenty of hakikake* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificates #2:** | **NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku** *(as sword designated as Masterwork)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Saijô-saku** (*ranked as a grandmaster swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei** (*Tanobe Michihiro*) |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

It gives us great pleasure to introduce a sword by one Japan's finest swordsmiths. *Norishige* was a fellow student of *Masamune* under *Shintôgo Kunimitsu*. Among the early great *Sôshû* masters, Norishige's workmanship is closest to that of the *Masamune*. The major difference is that the *kitae* (grain) produced by Norishige stands out more visibly – resulting in his iconic *matsukawa-hada* - a spiraled grain pattern resembling the bark of old pine trees. This is a relatively short katana that feels agile in hand, and instantly transports you back some seven hundred years with an elegant *jihada* that will absolutely capture your heart. This is what collecting *nihontô* is all about. Claim the sword in *shirasaya* or let's build a top-class custom koshirae with the finest craftsmen in Japan.

Saki-kasane: 3.0mm

Moto-kasane: 4.8mm



Nakago: 18.2cm

Omosa: 585g

Kissaki: 2.49cm

Saki-haba: 1.78cm

Nagasa: 61.5cm



Sori: 1.4cm

Moto-haba: 2.81cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

According to the *Kokon Mei Zukushi* (古今銘尽) and other Edo period sword publications, grandmaster swordsmith *Norishige* was one of the Ten Students of Masamune but judging from the shapes of his *tachi* and *tantô* and dated signatures from the *Shôwa* era (正和, 1312~317) and *Gen'ô* era (元応, 1319-1321), it appears that he was a fellow student of Masamune under *Shintôgo Kunimitsu* (新藤五 国光) as Muromachi period sword texts suggest.

Norishige's workmanship stands among the early great *Sôshû* masters, with a style closest to that of the the great *Masamune*. However, his blades are generally characterized by a higher *nie* content , and his *jihada* (steel grain pattern) is notably more prominent than Masamune's work.

What truly distinguishes Norishige's craftsmanship is the presence of thick and prominent *chikei* (bright dark lines in the steel) and his unique *jihada*, specifically known as "*matsukawa-hada*" (pine bark pattern). This distinctive patterning creates a visual texture reminiscent of pine bark, setting his work apart from other master smiths of the period.

*Tanobe-sensei* reviewed this katana and in his *sayagaki* he summarized the sword's characteristics as:

*"...we can overall truly see a reference to the Ko-Hôki style, hence I am in agreement with said period attribution, and this masterwork has an abundance of classical features."*

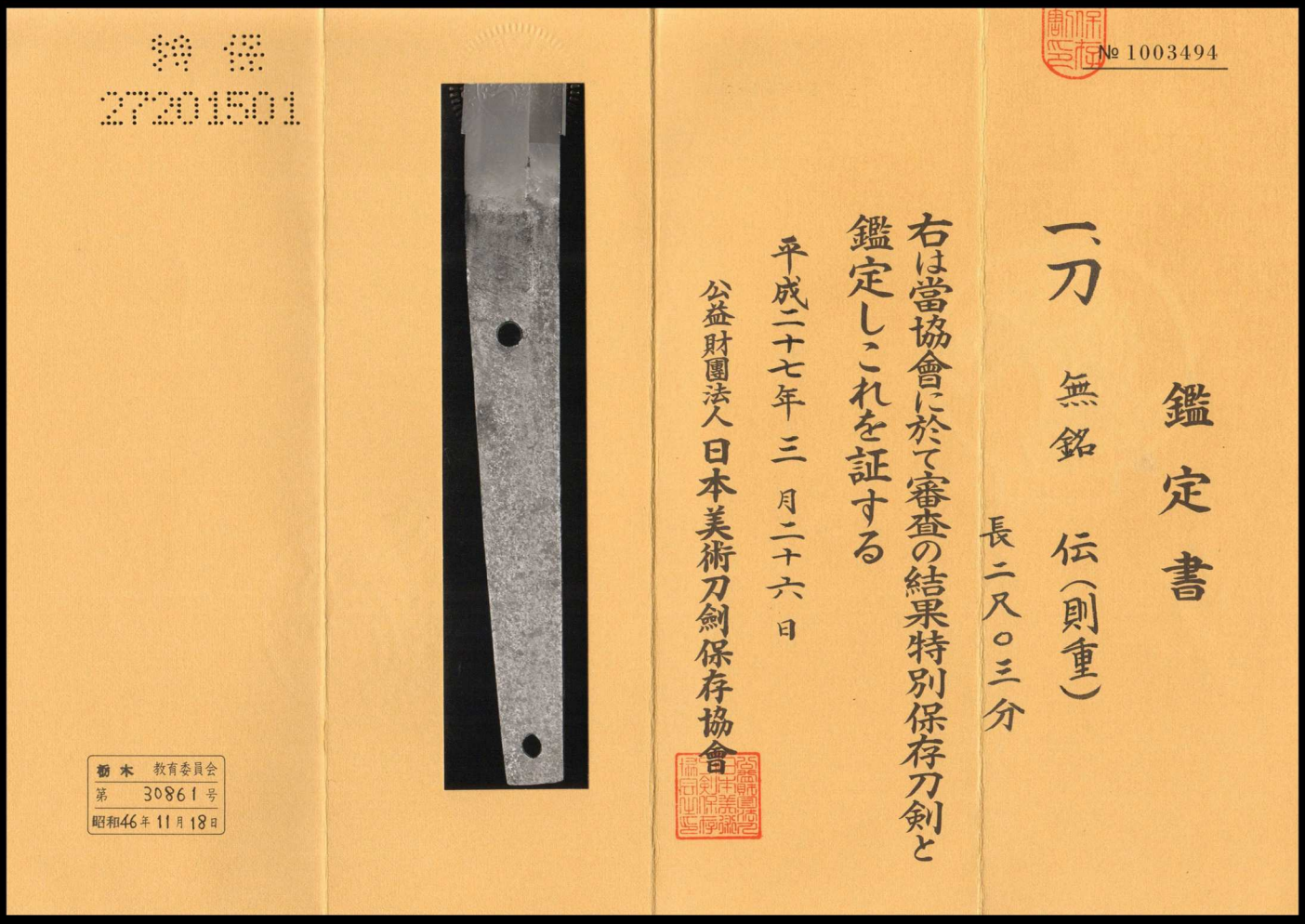
See the full sayagaki translation later in this description.

This katana represents an opportunity to own and cherish a sword from one of the most influential swordsmiths in the *nihontô* world. Enjoy in shirasaya, or let's build a memorable custom koshirae together that your family will cherish for generations to come.





*o-suriage nakago*




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

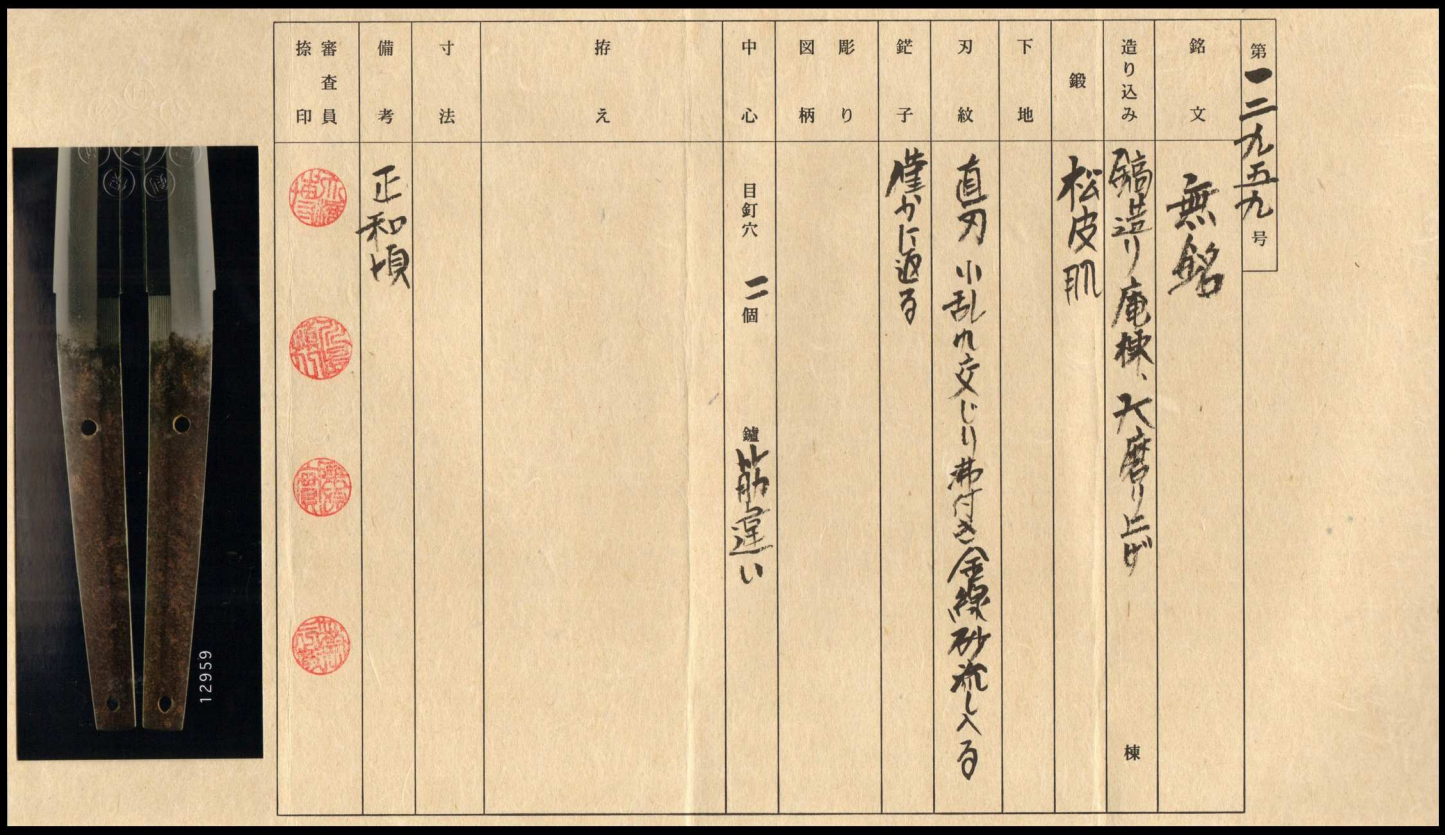
Issued in the 27th year of Heisei (2015), March 26th

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Den Norishige*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 0-sun 3-bu (61.5cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




# NTHK-NPO Yushusaku
# Certificate of Authenticity

This katana was designated as *Yushusaku* (Highly Excellent)
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Etchû Norishige*

*Nagasa* (length)
*2-shaku 3-bu kore ari* (61.5cm)

Crafted circa *Shôwa* period (1312~1317)

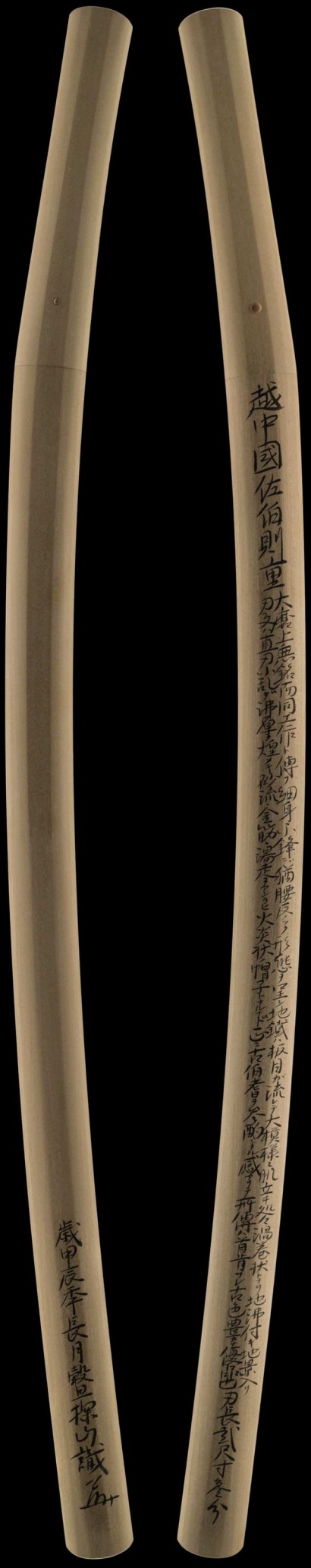
Issued in 6th year of Reiwa (2024), December 15th

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)

This sword has reached the highest level of honour at the NTHK-NPO.
Four judges have stamped their names to the certificate.




*Yûshûsaku* A3 photo (included with certificate)



越中國佐伯則重
*Etchû no Kuni Saeki Norishige*
Saeki Norishige from Etchû Province

大磨無銘而同工作ト傳フ細身・小鋒デ猶腰反ノツク形態ヲ呈シ地鐵ハ板目ガ流レテ大模様ニ肌肌立チ処々渦巻状トナリ地沸付キ地景入リ刃文ハ直刃小乱デ沸厚ク煌メキ砂流・金筋・湯走ヲアシラヒ火炎状ノ帽子トナルナド正ニ古伯耆ヲ参酌シタル感アリテ所傳ハ首肯サレ古色豊カナ優品也

Ô-suriage mumei shikôshite dôkô-saku to tsutau. Hosomi, ko-kissaki de nao koshizori no tsuku keitai o teishi jigane wa itame ga nagarete ô-moyô ni hadadachi tokorodokoro uzumaki-jô to nari ji-nie tsuki chikei hari hamon wa suguha ko-midare de nie atsuku kirameki sunagashi, kinsuji, yubashiri o ashirai kaen-jô no bôshi to naru nado masa ni Ko-Hôki o sanshaku-shitaru kan arite shoden wa shikô-sare koshoku yutaka na yûhin nari.

This blade is ô-suriage mumei, but was handed down as a work of Norishige. It has a slender mihaba, a ko-kissaki, and a koshizori, and displays a jigane in a standing-out and large-structured itame that tends to uzumaki in places and that features ji-nie and chikei. The hamon is a suguha komidare with plenty of sparkling nie that displays sunagashi, kinsuji, and yubashiri, and with the kaen-style bôshi, we can overall truly see a reference to the Ko-Hôki style, hence I am in agreement with said period attribution, and this masterwork has an abundance of classical features.

刃長弐尺弐寸参分
Hachô ni-shaku ni-sun san-bu
Blade length ~ 61.5 cm

歳甲辰季長月穀旦探山識「花押」
Toki ni kinoe tatsudoshi nagazuki kokutan Tanzan shirusu + kaô

Written by Tanzan [Tanobe Michihiro] on a lucky day in September in the year of the dragon of this era (2024) + monogram.







*matsukawa-hada* (pine bark pattern)



A gorgeous ***hakikake*** (brushed) ***boshi*** with a short ***kaeri*** (turn back).

sparkling *nie.*



The *nie* content in *Norishige's* work is generally as being higher than that of the great *Masamune* (pictured above).



A delightful ***suguha*** (straight) ***hamon*** mixed with ***ko-midare*** (small waves).

Cherish the channels of ***chikei*** and ***kinsuji***.





The beauty that is *Norishige*.



*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold ***ni-ju habaki***
with crisp file marks

If I can turn back time...

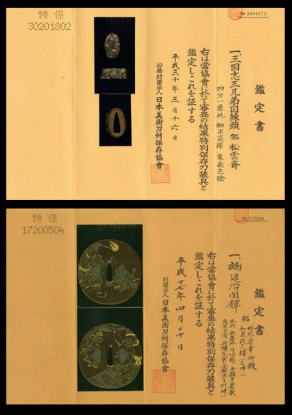






*An Amata Kunitsugu Katana*

A recently completed ***custom koshirae*** featuring a ***Myôchin Muneyuki tsuba***, a ***Shôunsai fuchi-kashira*** and ***koi menuki.***









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ITEM# UJKA440

# AN ECHIZEN SEKI 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

## UNSIGNED, SHINTÔ EDO PERIOD (HOREKI ERA: 1751~1753)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Echizen Seki school*** |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 69.7cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.5cm **Moto-haba:** 2.93cm **Weight:** 705g |
| **Jihada:** | *Well-forged itame-hada with nagare-hada with darkish steel, chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gorgeous ô-gunome midare with wide yaki, with yahazuba, ashi in nie-deki* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Hozon** *(sword Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fk and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, dragon koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

This remarkable katana has been attributed to the ***Echizen Seki school*** – its name originating from a group of swordsmiths that migrated to *Echizen* from *Seki* city of *Mino* province. This sword features an incredible *gunome-midare hamon* that swells the width of the body into dramatic dove-tail wave formations known as *yahazu-ba*. This splendid hamon harmonizes beautifully with the dragon and wave fittings that equally fire up the senses. A series of extreme *tameshigiri* tests were performed on this blade that include a test on June 22, 1753 where *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by ***severing through two bodies [in one stroke]*** and into the earthen mound below. Then, on March 13, 1756, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* prison by ***severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits*** and into the earthen mound below. ***He then proceeded to execute a further 73 prisoners severing their heads one after another.*** This is samurai intensity…



Saki-kasane: 4.4mm

Moto-kasane: 7.1mm

Nakago: 19.0cm

Omosa: 705g



Kissaki: 3.85cm

Saki-haba: 1.88cm

Nagasa: 69.7cm

Sori: 1.5cm

Moto-haba: 2.93cm

Mekugi-ana: 1

In the late 16th century, *Echizen* province was conquered by *Oda Nobunaga* (織田信長), and later *Shibata Katsuie* (柴田勝家) was sent to the region to build a large-scale castle, which resulted in dramatically developing the region.

Swordsmiths from *Ômi*, *Yamashiro*, *Mino*, and other areas subsequently emigrated to *Echizen* province. The group that migrated from *Seki* city of *Mino* province (modern-day *Gifu* prefecture) is formally called *Echizen Seki,* the maker attribution for this remarkable katana.

This is the kind of sword that will quicken the pulse rate of even the most stoic of individuals. Placing the sword under the light reveals an incredible *gunome-midare hamon* that swells the width of the body into dramatic dove-tail wave formations known as *yahazu-ba*. This splendid hamon harmonizes beautifully with the dragon and wave fittings that equally fire up the senses.

But it may be the *tameshigiri* (cutting tests) that truly turns heads (pun intended, you'll see). The first *tameshigiri* test chiseled onto the nakago states that on June 22, 1753, Year of the Rooster, *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by severing through two bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below.

Then, on March 13, 1756, Year of the Rat, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* prison by severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits and into the earthen mound below. He then proceeded to execute a further *73 prisoners severing their heads* one after another...

Markus Sesko, author of *TAMESHIGIRI*, provided this feedback after he translated the test for us:

*"this is the first time that I have seen a cutting test performed on so many heads!... he probably must have swept out the entire [Denmachô] jail that day..."*

Although this sword is rated NBTHK Hozon (as it is unsigned), make no mistake that in terms of condition of the sword, this is a Tokubetsu Hozon level of quality.

What an intense samurai collectible sword this is.





Location: *Echizen province*
School name: *Echizen Seki school*

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*katte-sagari yasurime* (slanting file marks)

宝 (Hô)
暦 (reki)
三 (san)
酉 (tori)
六 (roku)
月 (gatsu)
廿 (nijû)
二 (ni)
日 (nichi)
於 (oite)
浅 (Asa)
草 (kusa)

(Futatsu) 二
(dô) 胴
(do) 土
(dan) 壇
(barai) 拂
(Yama) 山
(da) 田
(Gen) 玄
(za) 左
(e) 衛
(mon) 門
(tamesu) 試
(kore) 之

*Hôreki san tori rokugatsu nijûninichi Asakusa ni oite, futatsu-dô dodan-barai Yamada Genzaemon kore o tamesu*

On the 22nd day of the sixth month in the third year of *Hôreki* era (June 22, 1753), Year of the Rooster, *Yamada Genzaemon* tested this blade in *Asakusa* by severing through two bodies [in one stroke] and into the earthen mound below.

*Hôreki roku ne sangatsu jûsannichi Denma-chô ni oite Ijima Jûdayû kore o tamesu, karigane mitsuba-giri dodan-barai kubi oioi nanajûsan otosu*

On March 13, 1756, Year of the Rat, *Ijima Jûdayû* tested this blade at *Denmachô* by severing three times through a body at the height of the armpits and into the earthen mound below.

He then proceeded to execute a further *73 prisoners* severing their heads one after another...



Seventy-three times



(Kari) 鴈
(gane) 金
(mitsu) 三
(ba) 刃
(giri) 斬
(do) 土
(dan) 壇
(barai) 拂
(kubi) 首
(oi) 追
(oi) 々
(nana) 七
(jû) 拾
(san) 三
(otosu) 落

宝 (Hô)
暦 (reki)
六 (roku)
子 (ne)
三 (san)
月 (gatsu)
十 (jû)
三 (san)
日 (nichi)
於 (oite)
傳 (Den)
馬 (ma)
町 (chô)
井 (I)
島 (jima)
重 (Jû)
太 (da)
夫 (yû)
試 (tamesu)
之 (kore)





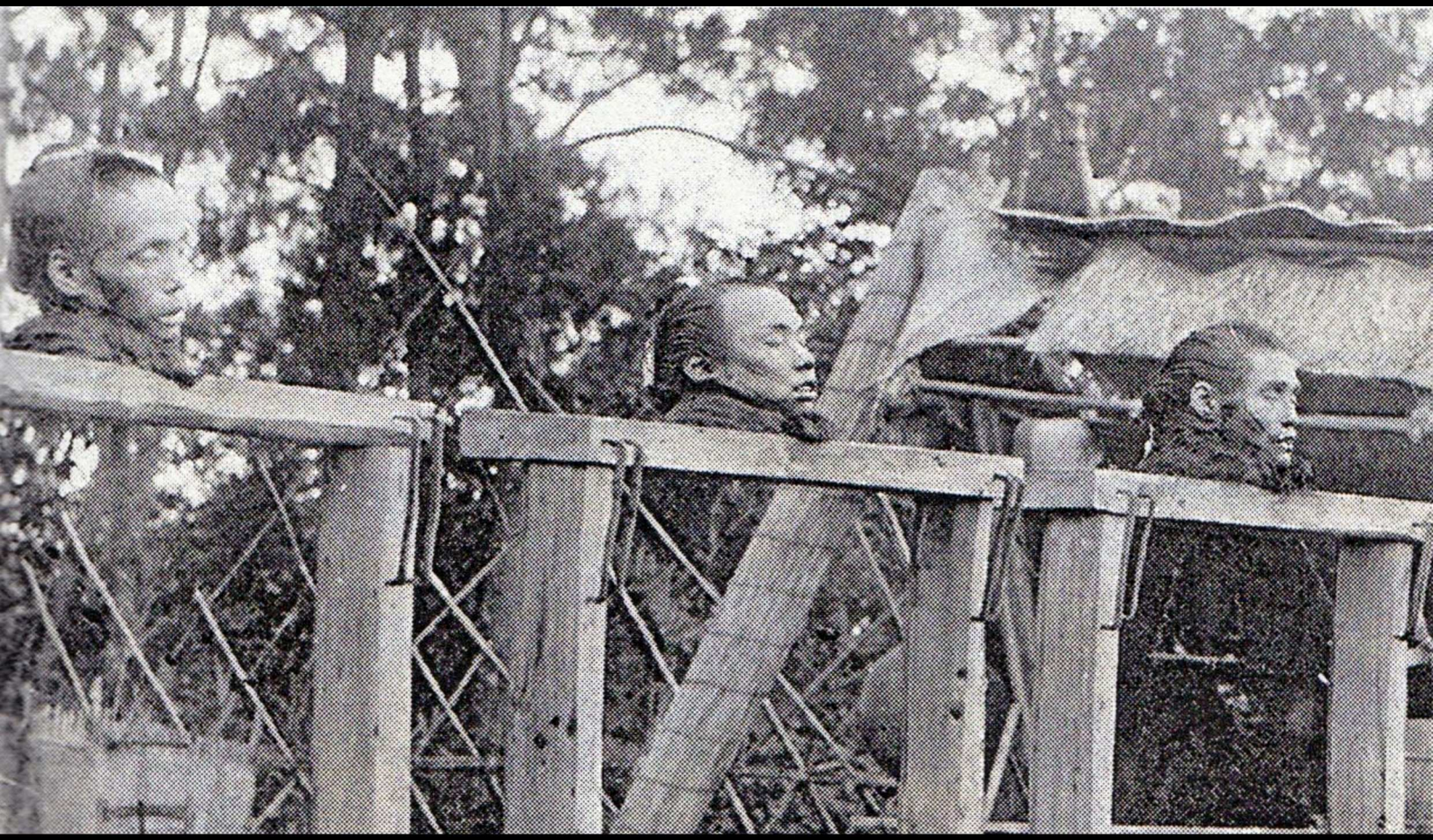
*Kozukahara* Execution Site



The 8th Yamada Asaemon

In *Asakusa*, there was an execution site called *Kozukahara Penitentiary*, where about 200,000 executions were carried out from its foundation in 1651 until its abolition in 1873.

Cutting tests were performed by the *Yamada Asaemon* family, but when the volume of executions became too large, apprentices performed the work. *Yamada Genzaemon* was associated with the Yamada Asaemon family.



Three decapitated heads on display at *Kurayamamisaka* execution grounds in *Yokohama.*

Photo taken by *Felice Beato in* 1869 - an Italian-British war photographer and one of the first to take photographs in East Asia. Scanned from page 113 of *Markus Sesko*'s book 'TAMESHIGIRI' - History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing




*Denma-cho Rôyashiki* was a large prison and execution site that was in operation from circa 1600 to 1875. The execution platform had a dedicated space for cutting test, called "*otameshi-ba*."

*Ijima Jûdayû* was one of the executioners.




# 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 31st

One, Katana

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Echizen Seki*
*(Kiritsuke-mei) Hôreki san tori rokugatsu nijûninichi Asakusa ni oite*
*futatsu-dô dodan-barai Yamada Genzaemon kore o tamesu*
*Hôreki roku ne sangatsu jûsannichi Denma-chô ni oite Ijima Jûdayû kore o tamesu*
*karigane mitsuba-giri dodan-barai kubi oioi nanajûsan otosu*

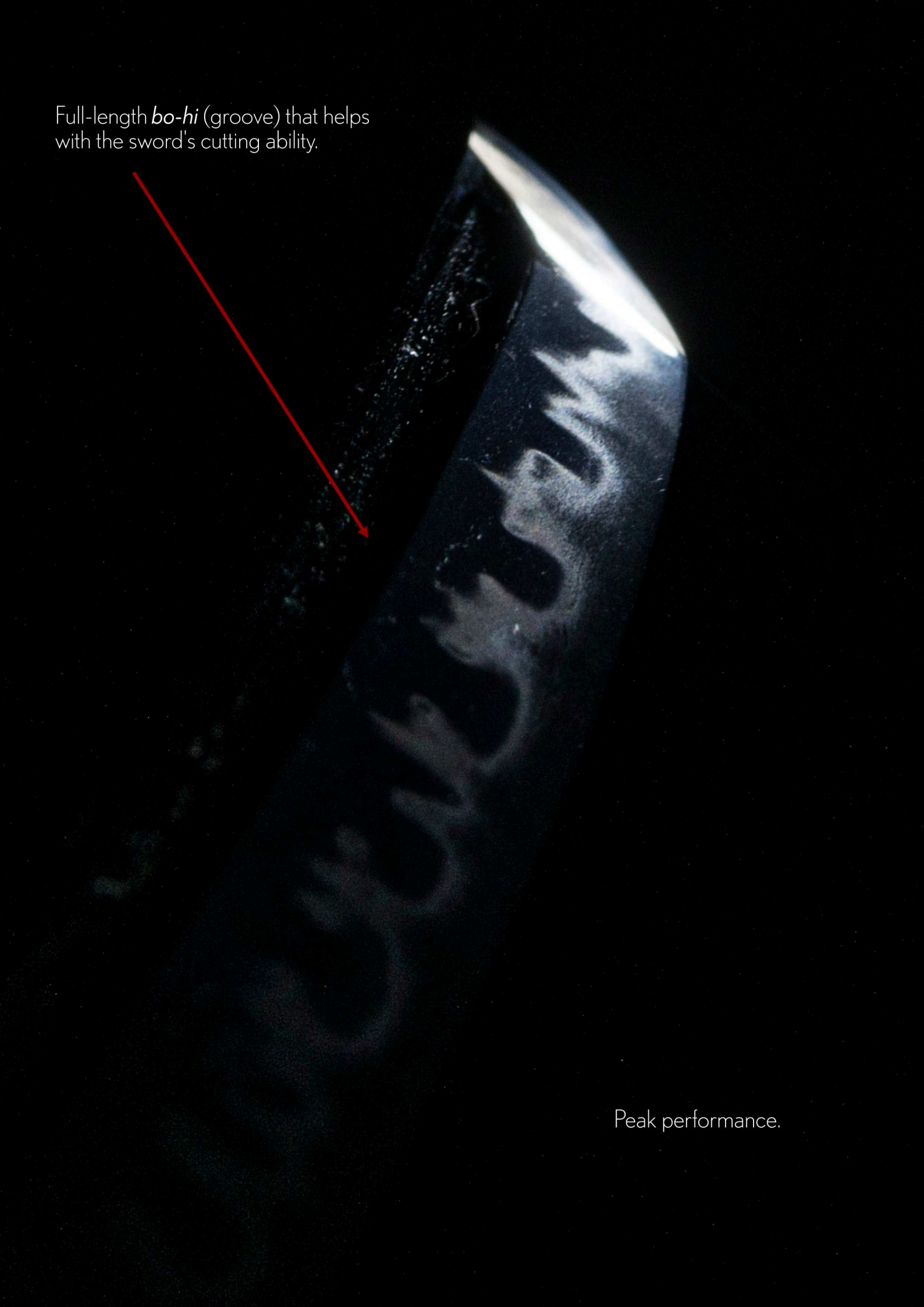
*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 3-sun (69.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

**As a rule of the NBTHK, any sword made from the Muromachi period onwards (1400~) that is ***unsigned***, the highest level of certification will be NBTHK Hozon. In terms of quality, had this sword been signed it would surely have been granted NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon.






Full-length *bo-hi* (groove) that helps with the sword's cutting ability.
Peak performance.



Deep, courageous swells form the *gunome-midare hamon*.




Splendid dove-tail shaped ***midare*** elements
that resemble ***yahazu*** (arrow notches).

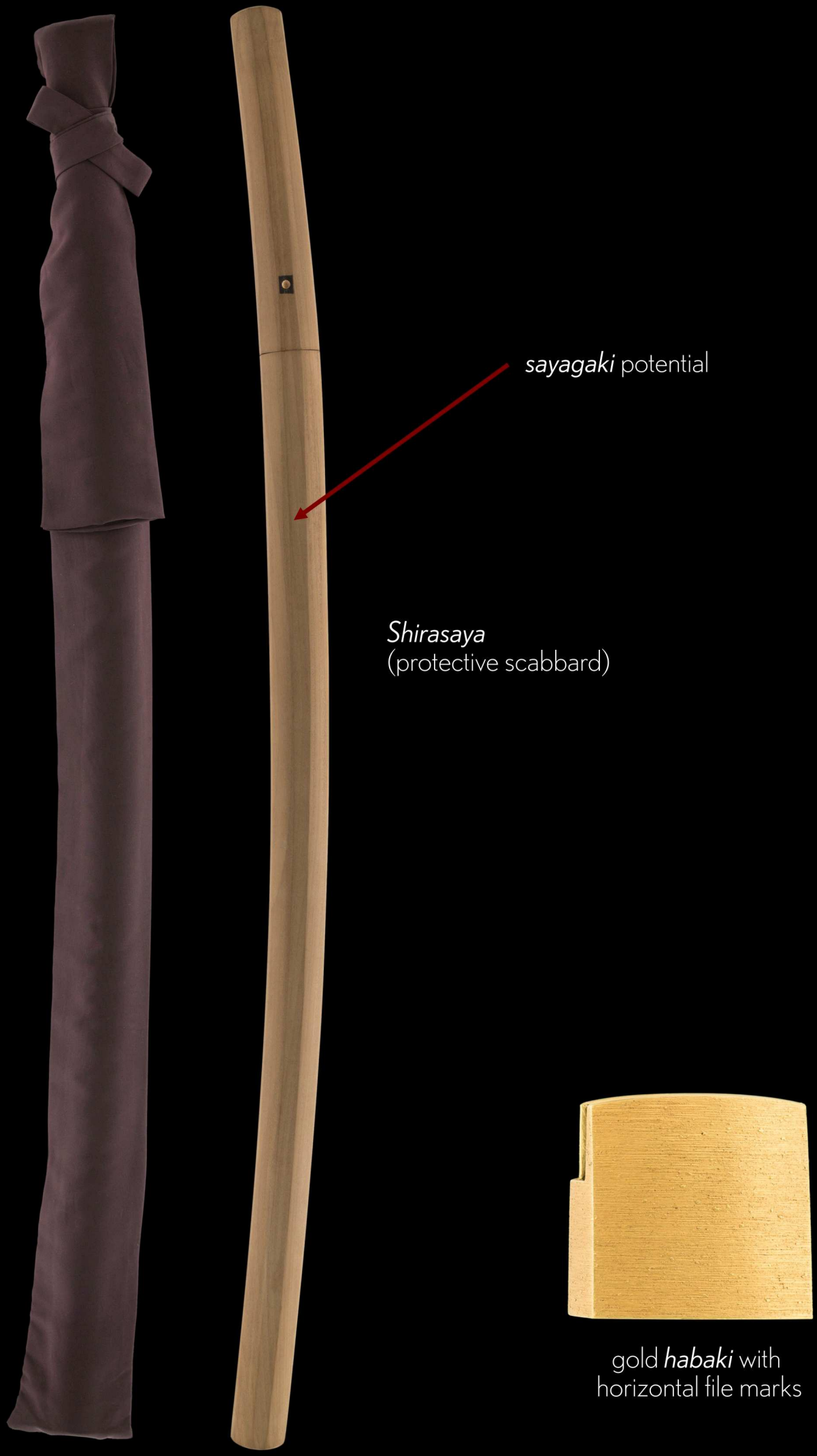


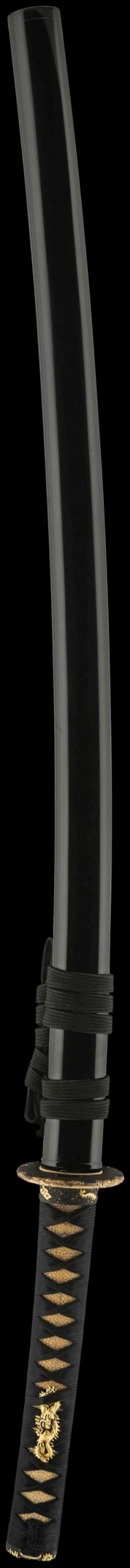
See the light.  Feel the energy.



Face the storm. Tame the dragon.

You got this.

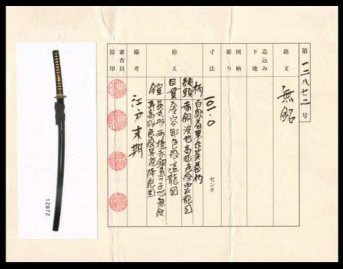

*sayagaki* potential
*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)
gold *habaki* with
horizontal file marks



*Kuro-roiro-nuri saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂色塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*

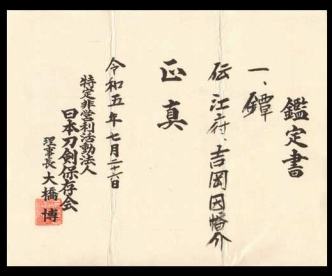


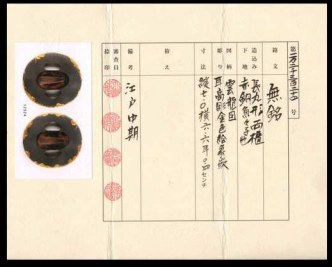


This striking *tsuba* carries cloud dragon theme with gold color accents on the rim.

The *Yoshioka Inaba no Suke* family, along with the *Gotô* family, was a prestigious family that served as the official craftsmen of the Tokugawa shogunate. Items delivered to the shogunate were mostly unsigned.

This type of work with relief and color accents on *shakudô* with *nanako* ground is the traditional technique of the family, and the more formal style found in the Edo period.


鑑定書
一、鐔
伝 江府・吉岡因幡介
応真
令和五年七月二十日
特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋 博





(reverse)





*Fuchi-kashira*
attributed to
*Yanagawa Naotsune*
(Middle Edo period 1700~1780)

Depicting cloud dragons.

The *Yanagawa* school was founded by *Naomasa Yanagawa* (柳川直政), who was an outstanding student of *Yokoya Sômin* (横谷宗珉).

Based in *Kanda*, *Edo*, they specialized in works in relief with color accents on *shakudô* ground. This *fuchi-kashira* exemplifies their work.

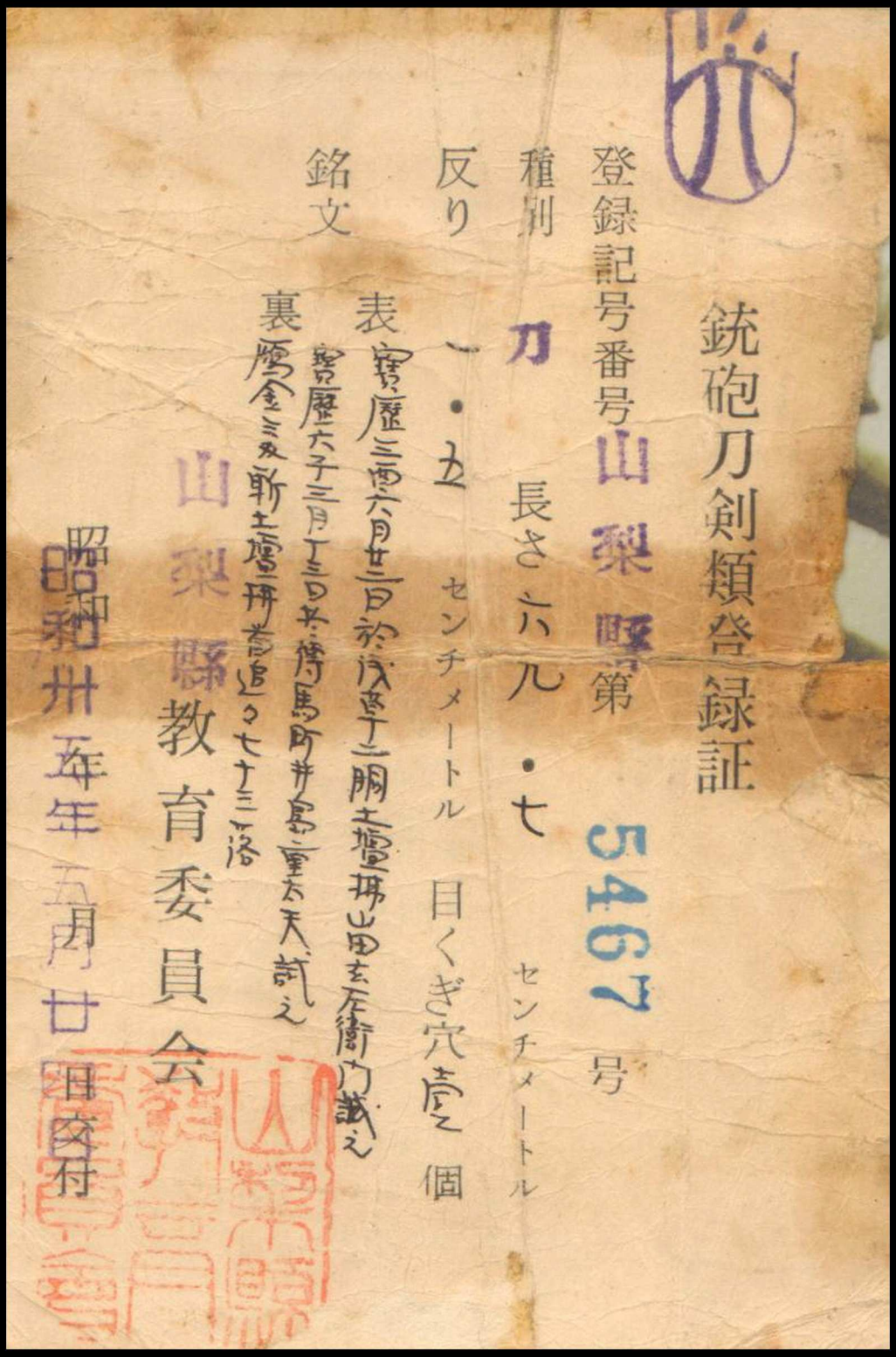
Gold crawling dragon ***menuki*** guard the koshirae.

The ***tsuka*** (hilt) is braided in black silk with aged white ***samekawa*** (ray skin).






*mimi* (*tsuba* rim)
*fuchi* (collar)
Dragons at scale.
*menuki*


銃砲刀剣類登録証
登録記号番号 山梨縣 第 5467 号
種別 刀 長さ六九・七 センチメートル
反り 一・五 センチメートル 目くぎ穴壹個
銘文 表 寶歷三酉六月廿二日於伐草二胴土壇拂山田去左衛門誠之
寶歷六子三月十三日於傳馬町井島重太天誠之
裏 鷹金三及斬土壇拂者追々七十三落
山梨縣教育委員会
昭和卅五年五月廿日交付

This is the original *torokusho* (handwritten registration card) for the *Echizen Seki katana*. The card was registered in May of the 35th year of *Showa era* (1960) in *Yamanashi prefecture* and one of the earliest recorded swords given a serial number of just *5467*.



Koshirae bag

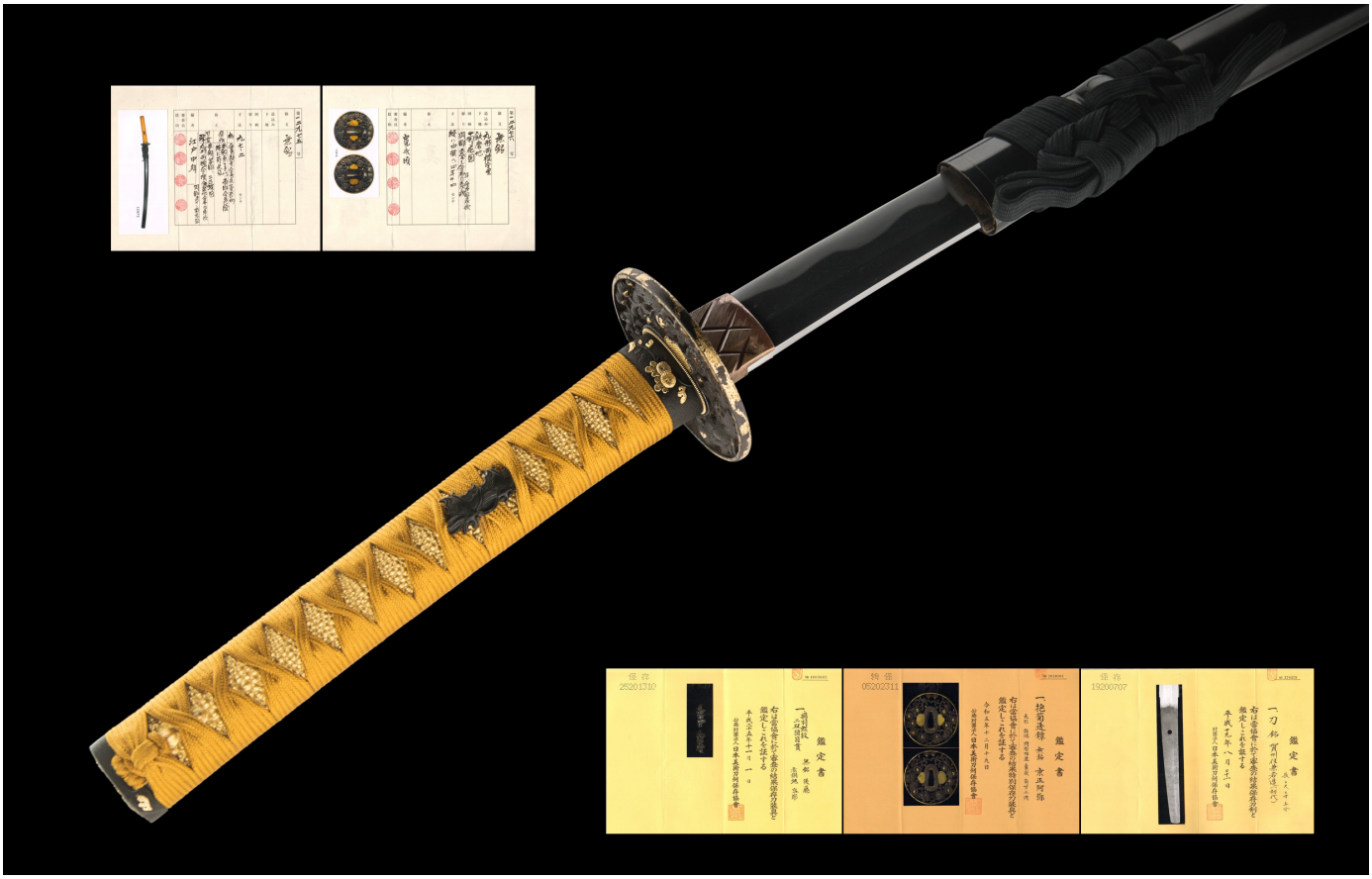
A complimentary sword maintenance kit with ***mekugi-nuki*** and a bottle of ***Fujishiro*** sword oil (trusted by the Japanese sword museum) is included with all sword purchases.





safe, extra large cloth for adding oil to the blade

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA452

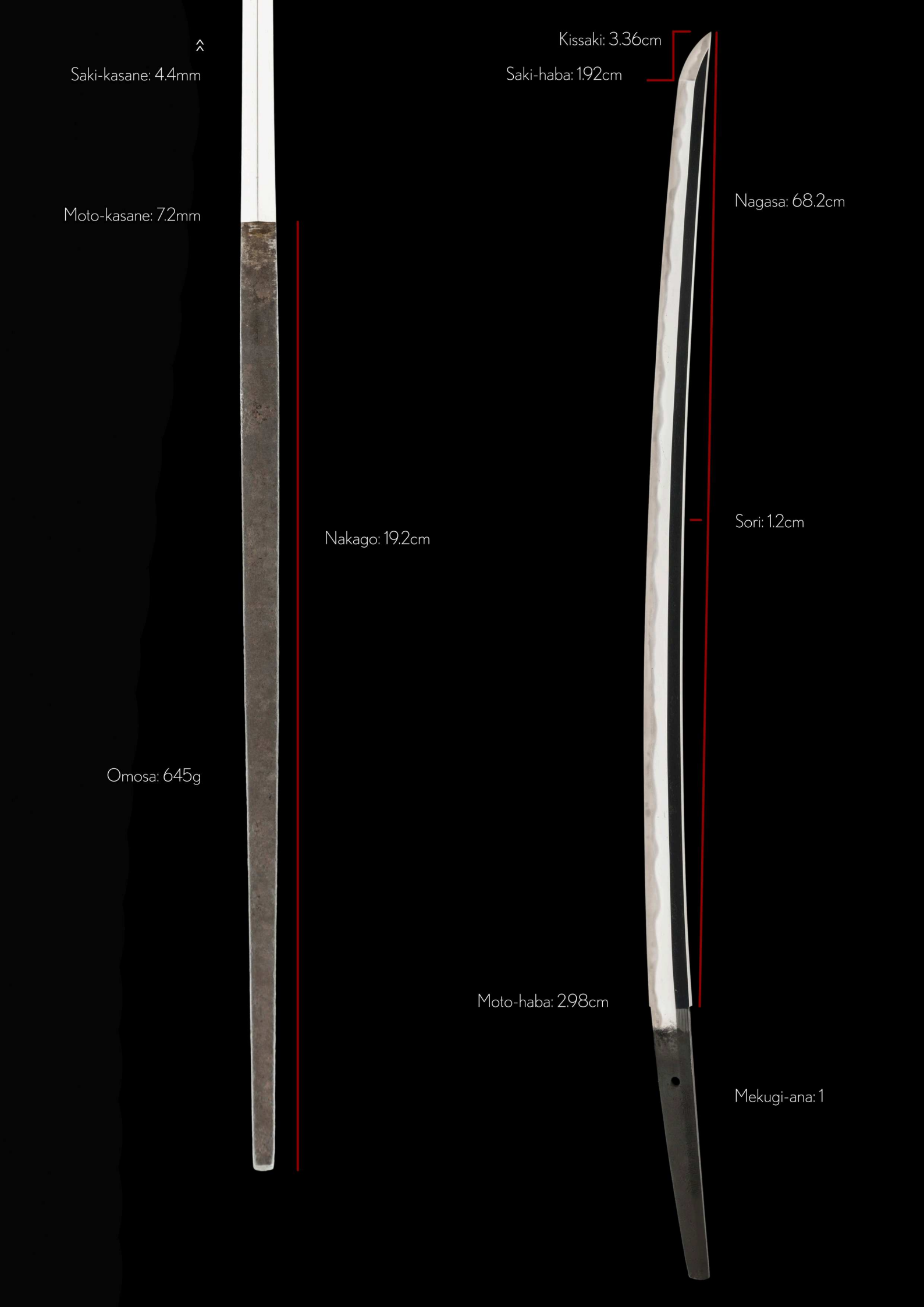
# A KANEWAKA KATANA

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ MOMOYAMA PERIOD (KEICHÔ ERA: 1596~1615)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Kashû jû Kanewaka Tsukuru*** *(shodai, first generation)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 68.2cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.2cm **Moto-haba:** 2.98cm **Weight:** 645g |
| **Jihada:** | *Itame mixed with nagare-hada with plentiful chikei, tobiyaki with ji-nie* |
| **Hamon:** | *Bright gunome-midare with dramatic dips, togari, kinsuji and sunagashi* |
| **Certificate #1-2:** | **NBTHK Hozon** *(a sword and set of menuki Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #3:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(a tsuba Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificates #4-5:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** *(tsuba and koshirae designated Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jôjô-saku** (*ranked as a highly superior swordsmith*) |
| **Sharpness**: | **Ô-wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of supremely sharp swords*) |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

Born *Tsujimura Jinroku*, ***Shodai Kanewaka***, travelled to *Kaga* province and founded the prestigious *Kanewaka school*. He became so esteemed that he was referred to as *Kaga Masamune*. This fine *ubu-nakago katana* exudes a proud *Keichô shintô* shape with a well-forged *jihada* containing a great amount of *chikei* with a bright *gunome-midare hamon* that dramatically hugs the *ha-saki* in parts. In wealthy *Kaga* province, ruled by the powerful *Maeda* clan, and renowned for its gold leaf artistry - the *samekawa* (ray skin) wrapping the sword's hilt (*tsuka*) was specially lacquered in gleaming gold and juxtaposed with brilliant butterflies reflecting the region's rich heritage. This is a terrific celebratory samurai sword by a highly superior smith to be cherished for generations to come.


Saki-kasane: 4.4mm
Moto-kasane: 7.2mm
Nakago: 19.2cm
Omosa: 645g
Kissaki: 3.36cm
Saki-haba: 1.92cm
Nagasa: 68.2cm
Sori: 1.2cm
Moto-haba: 2.98cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

The famed Kanewaka family of smiths all started in *Mino* province during the *Bunmei era* (1469~1487) with first generation *Mino Kanewaka* said to be a descendent of great swordsmith *Shizu Saburo Kaneuji.*

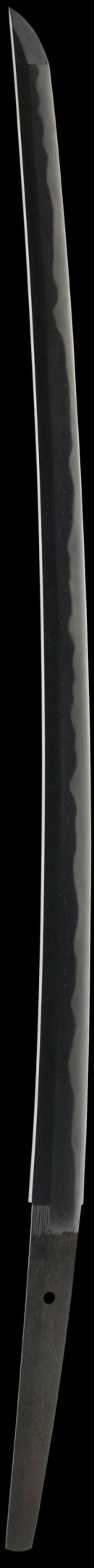
Fast forward to 1605, the fifth generation Kanewaka, born *Tsujimura Jinroku*, travelled to *Kaga* province from either *Mino* or *Inuyama* in *Owari*, subsequently founding the *Kaga Kanewaka school* and becoming *Kashû (Gashû) jû Kanewaka*. He received the title *Etchu no Kami* circa 1620 and he died in 1628.

Shodai Kanewaka demonstrated a magnificent range of skill, crafting katana in classic *Keichô shintô suguta* (shape), *wakizashi* and *tantô*. In his early years he worked in the *Mino* tradition (that we see in this sword) and later on when signing with the name *Takahira,* he show skilfully cut *horimono* in the form of *shôchikubai* (pine, bamboo and plum) or *kurikara*.

Kanewaka was so highly esteemed that he was referred to as *Kaga Masamune* - in tribute to one of Japan's most celebrated swordsmiths. And because of his fame, his blades were quite expensive for the average samurai, resulting in the famous *nihontô* Edo period saying *"those bushi (samurai) who want a Kanewaka have to spend so much money that they have to sell their daughters."*

This fine *ubu-nakago* katana exudes a proud *Keichô shintô* shape with a relatively shallow curvature and extended *chû-kissaki* (tip). The *jihada* containing a great amount of dark swirling *chikei* with a bright *gunome-midare* hamon that dramatically hugs the *ha-saki* (edge) in parts. There are some areas of *hada-ware* that may turn off some collectors, but seeing past these non-fatal flaws reveals a four hundred-year-old samurai sword with terrific energy.

In wealthy *Kaga* province—ruled by the powerful *Maeda* clan and centred in *Kanazawa*, renowned for its gold leaf artistry - the *samekawa* (ray skin) wrapping the sword's hilt (*tsuka*) was specially lacquered in gleaming gold to reflect the region's rich heritage. Even the silk was braided in gold with meaningful butterflies joining in the party. This is a feel-good, celebratory samurai sword to be cherished and enjoyed within your family for generations to come.





Location: *Kaga province*
Swordsmith: *Kanewaka* (first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*sujikai-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

賀 (Ga)

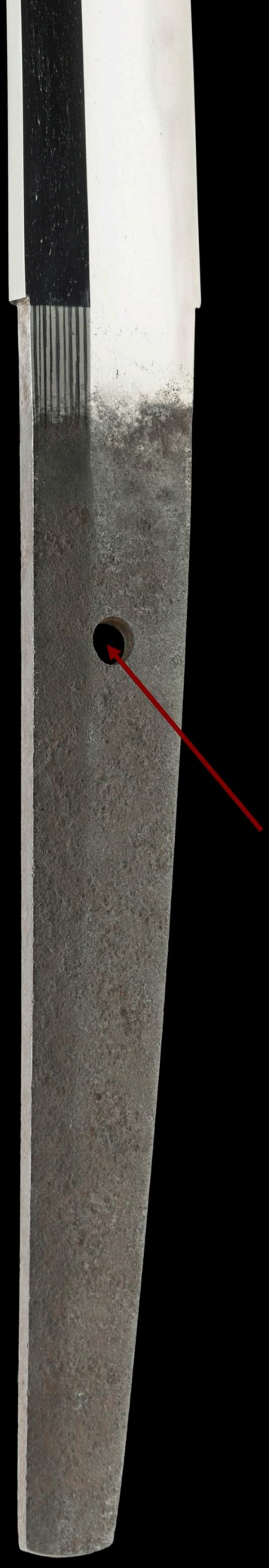
州 (shû)

住 (jû)

兼 (Kane)

若 (waka)

造 (tsukuru)

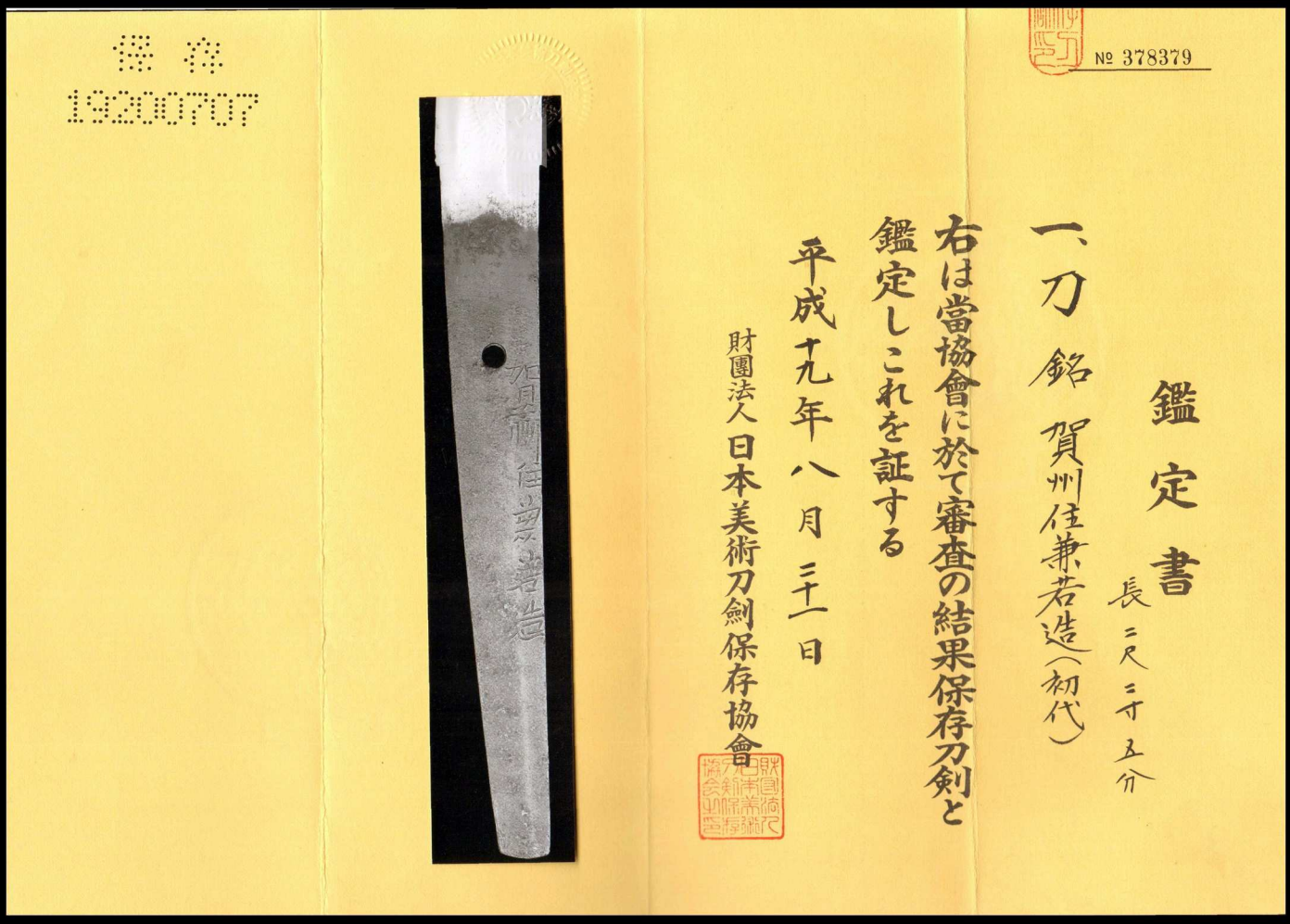


one clean hole in ***nakago***, always desirable

(***ura***, reverse)



Among the existing works of *Shodai Kanewaka*, the oldest known piece is dated to the 14th year of the *Keicho* era (1609), and pieces bearing his signature can be found until the 5th year of the *Genna* era (1619). From 1621, he signed a good number of blades with the name *Takahira* (高平). There are a greater number of swords with the *Takahira* signature, while pieces signed as *Kanewaka* are considered rare and precious.




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 19th year of Heisei (2007), August 21st

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Gashû-jû Kanewaka tukuru (Shodai)*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 5-bu (68.2cm)

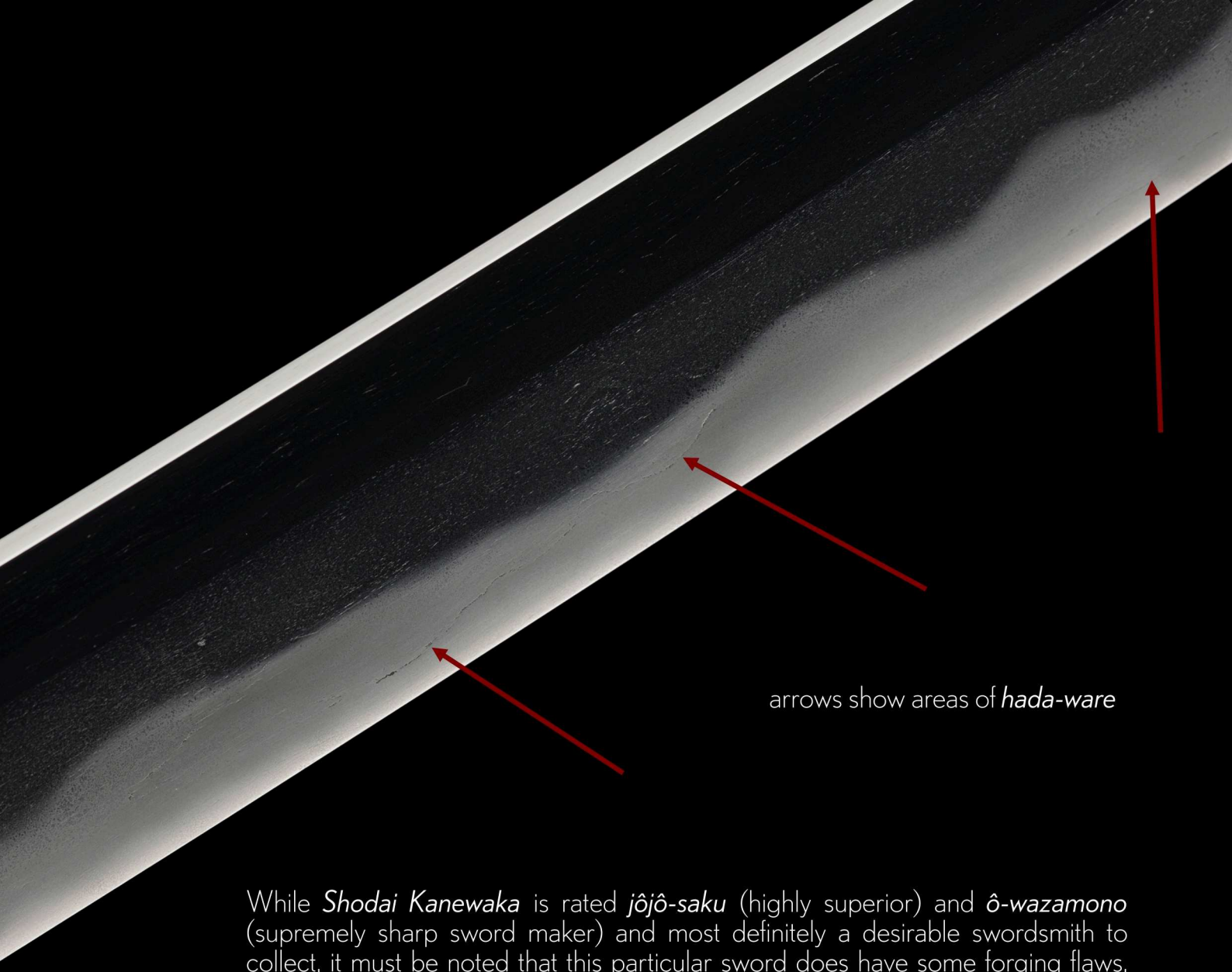
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





Stand tall. *Keichô* style.

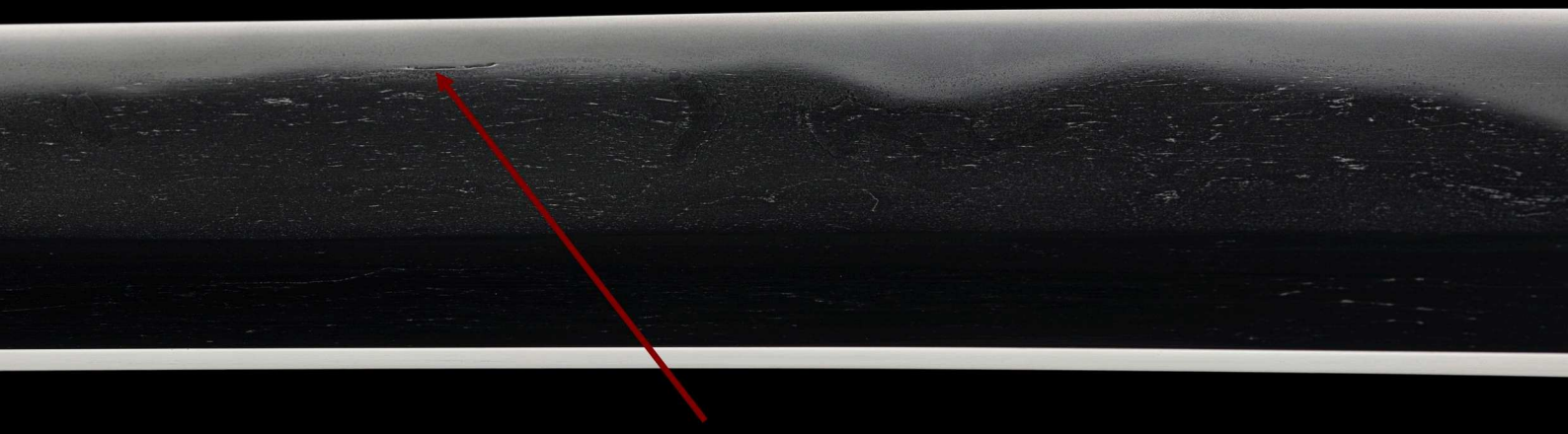




arrows show areas of ***hada-ware***

While ***Shodai Kanewaka*** is rated ***jôjô-saku*** (highly superior) and ***ô-wazamono*** (supremely sharp sword maker) and most definitely a desirable swordsmith to collect, it must be noted that this particular sword does have some forging flaws, notably ***hada-ware*** (openings at the steel folds) in the ***yakiba*** (hardened area) that the red arrows indicate. These are non-fatal flaws though, and they are stable.

As such, if you are seeking a clean, pristine blade, then skip this particular piece. However, seeing past these flaws and accepting them for what they are, and focusing on all the good with this sword, then world opens up to you. By claiming this sword, one can take pride in caretaking arguably the most famous smith to come from ***Kaga*** province and all the fabulous samurai history that it brings, plus such a wonderful set of koshirae!




The *gunome-midare hamon* stretches dramatically to the *ha-saki* (edge).
A unique ring of *tobiyaki* appears in the *ji* (body) of the sword.



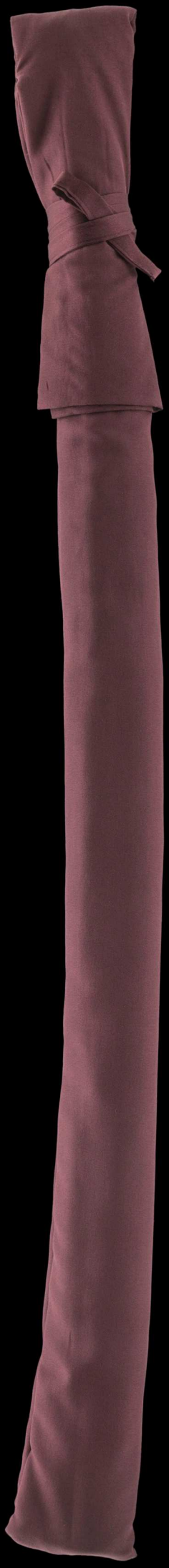
Captivating 'golden' lines of *kinsuji*.



A wonderful stream of ***sunagashi***.



The twinkling ***nie*** crystals with long ***ashi*** (legs) captures the imagination.





*sayagaki* potential!

*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

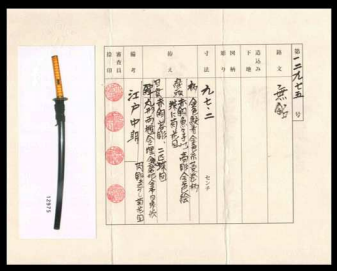


copper ***habaki*** with
Kaga style (***Kaga-habaki***)

*Kuro-ronuri saya*
*uchigatana-koshirae*
(黒呂塗鞘打刀拵)

*Uchigatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Middle Edo period
(1700~1780)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*



The *tsuba* has "*daki-giku* (embracing chrysanthemum)" theme.

The design of "*daki-giku*" features chrysanthemums arranged to suggest warmth and intimacy, symbolizing longevity, beauty, and the changing seasons. This motif is often used in various artistic forms in Japanese culture and is associated with nobility, signifying its status as a flower favoured by the aristocracy.

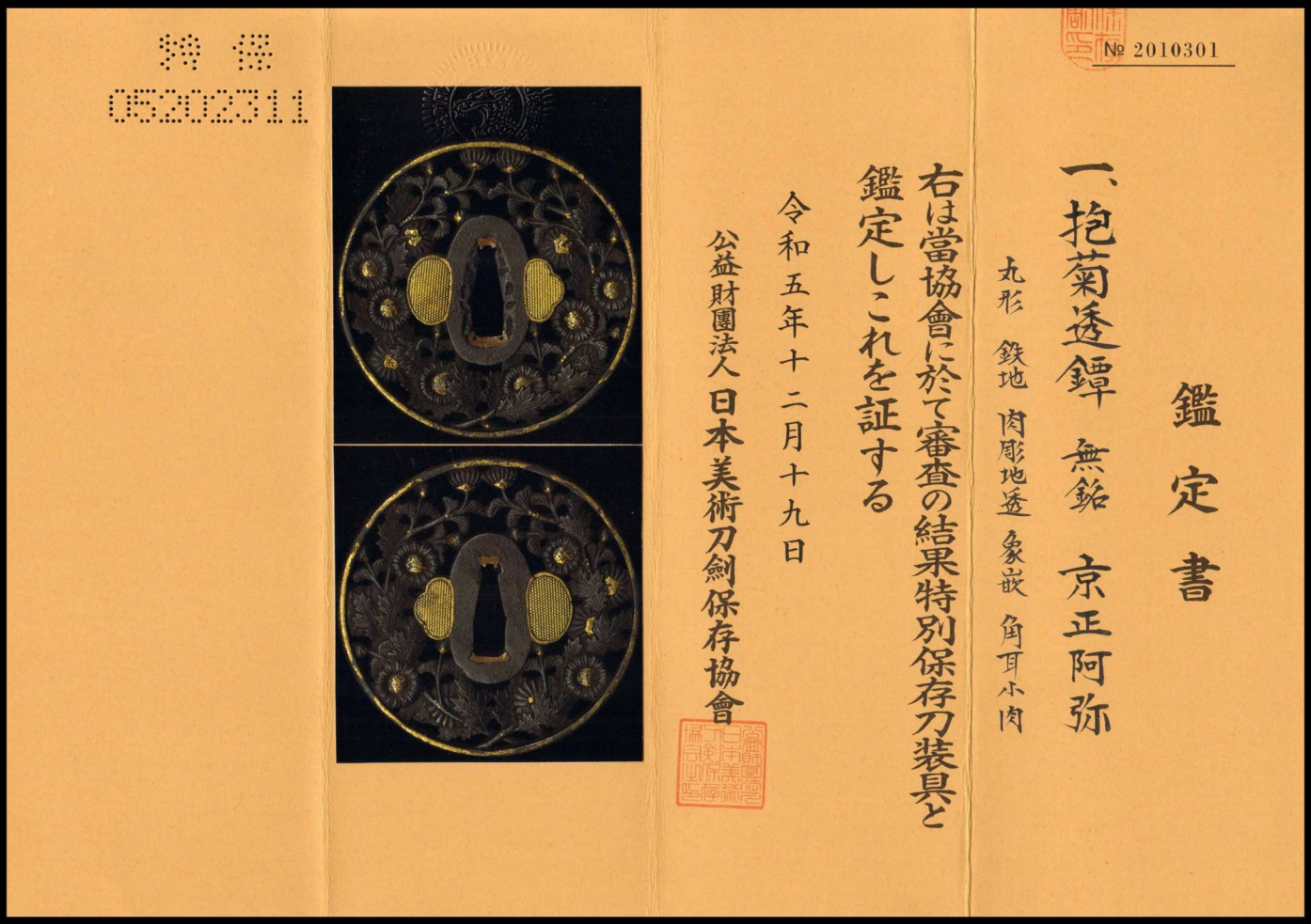
*Kyo-Shôami* (京正阿弥) is a traditional school of fittings that developed during the Edo period. The style emphasises delicate and detailed designs, often featuring motifs from nature, such as flowers and animals.

The pieces are characterized by their elegance, sophistication, and adherence to traditional aesthetics, making them highly valued among collectors and enthusiasts of Japanese swords.




NBTHK
Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate


(reverse)
*mimi* (rim)
*nunome-zôgan* (crosshatch design)




NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), December 19th

One, Tsuba

*With openworks depicting a chrysanthemum bouquet*

*Mumei* (Unsigned)
*Kyô-Shôami*

*Round shape, iron, three dimensional openworks, inlay,*
*angular rim with a little roundness.*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



*Fuchi-kashira*
depicting butterflies and chrysanthemum

The combination of butterflies and chrysanthemums expresses change and rebirth, love and beauty, as well as longevity and refinement.

This motif was frequently depicted in decorative arts, literature, and *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) during the Edo period.



*lacquered in gold*



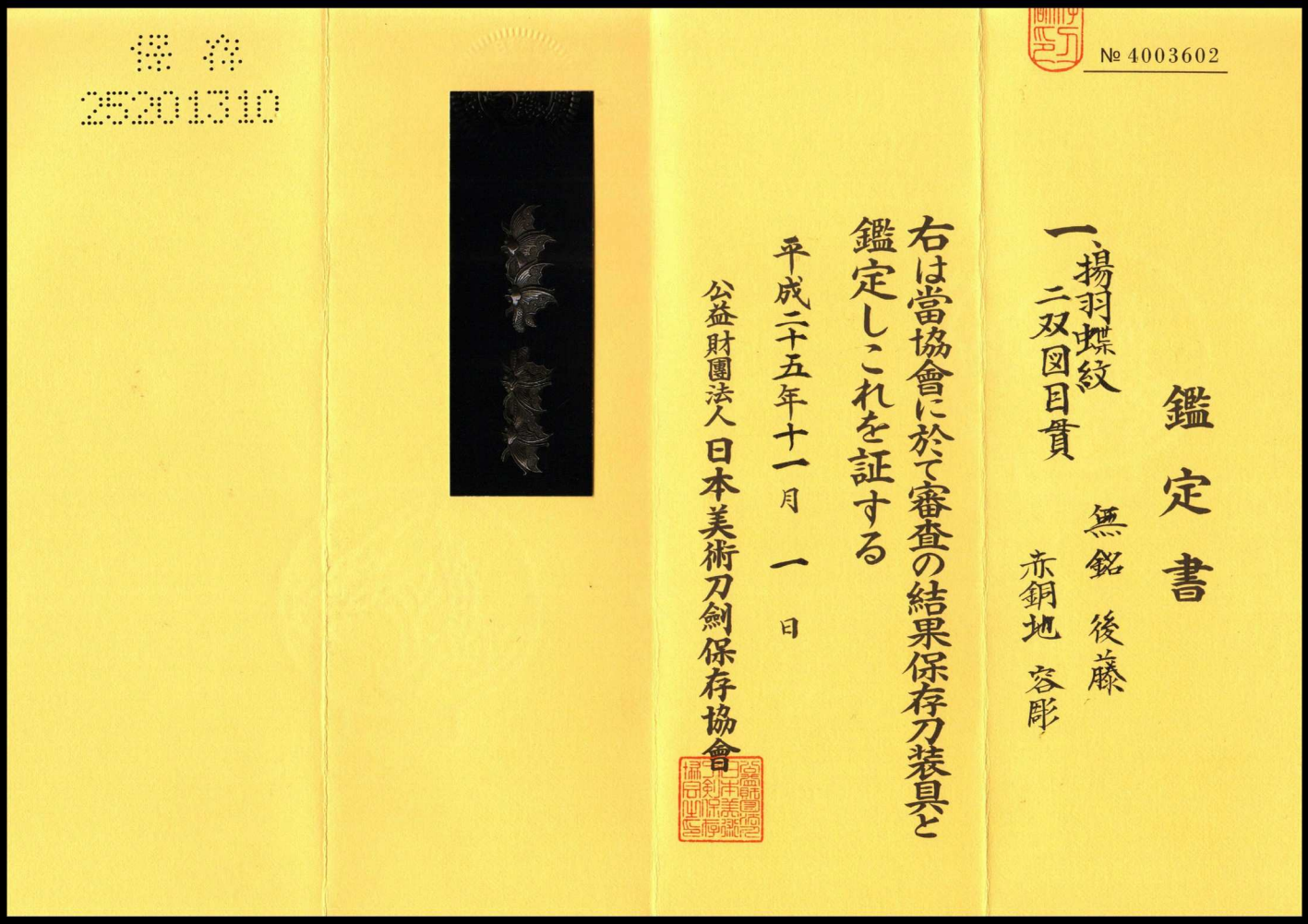


During the Edo period, ***Kanazawa*** served as the capital of the prosperous ***Kaga*** domain in ***Ishikawa*** Prefecture. The city established itself as a centre of exceptional gold leaf production – a prestigious artistic tradition that continues to flourish today. In respect to this tradition, the ***samekawa*** (ray skin) on the ***tsuka*** (hilt) was lacquered in gold and further braided in gold silk. All work was performed by master craftsman in Japan.

The ***menuki*** (ornamental grips) depict a swallowtail butterfly motif, beautifully matching the butterflies illustrated on the ***fuchi-kashira***.

The swallowtail butterfly crest originated during the ***Genpei*** era (~1192) when it was used by the ***Taira*** clan. It was also employed by the ***Chô*** family, who served the ***Maeda*** clan, the feudal lords of ***Kaga***.






NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 25th year of Heisei (2013), November 1st

One, Menuki

*Depicting a crast of a pair of swallowtail butterflies*

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Gotô school*

*Shakudô, three dimensional with forming the outline*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

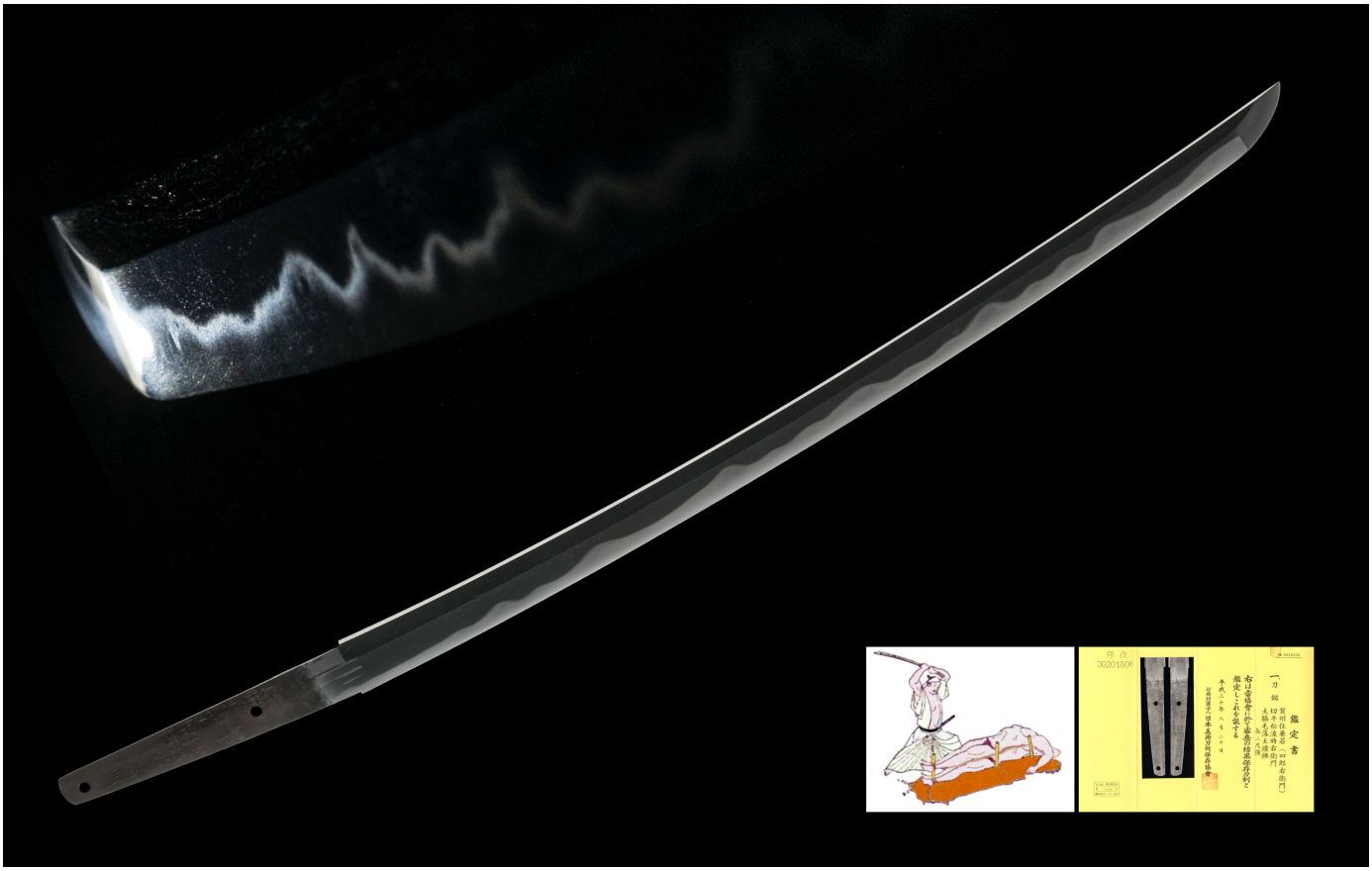


The butterfly effect



Koshirae bag with ***kiku-mon***
(chrysanthemum) pattern

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA461

# A SANDAI KANEWAKA 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (ENPÔ ERA: 1673~1681)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Gashû-jû Kanewaka (Shirô'emon)*** |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 60.7cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.2cm **Moto-haba:** 3.04cm **Weight:** 615g |
| **Jihada:** | *Well-forged itame-hada and masame-hada with chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Splendid gunome midare with wide yaki, with kanitsune, togari and midare-komi* |
| **Certificate:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*) |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

This wide and splendidly sharp katana was crafted by ***Tsujimura Shirô'emon Kanewaka***, third generation of the *Kanewaka* family. He succeeded as head of the Kanewaka family in 1677 until his death in May 1711. An awe-inspiring mountain range comes to mind when admiring the splendid peaks and valleys found in its *gunome-midare hamon*. From every angle, the health and vibrancy of this 2-shaku sword shines through. As such, this sword recently passed NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon with flying colours. Adding to the ferocity of this katana, sword tester *Matsunami Toki'emon* performed a *tameshigiri* cutting test with this blade by severing through a human body at the armpit level and directly into the earthen mound below. One gets the distinct sense that this blade could have easily cut multiple bodies in one stroke. This sword is an excellent candidate for *Tanobe-sensei sayagaki* and also an enjoyable custom koshirae project that Unique Japan will assist the new owner with. Of course, a powerful katana such as this one can also be enjoyed in shirasaya only.



Saki-kasane: 4.7mm

Moto-kasane: 7.1mm

Nakago: 16.8cm

Omosa: 615g

Kissaki: 3.64cm

Saki-haba: 2.07cm

Nagasa: 60.7cm

Sori: 1.20cm

Moto-haba: 3.04cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

The *Kanewaka* family held close ties with the *Maeda Daimyô* family in *Kaga* province as the castle town grew to immense prominence and wealth during the Edo period. Traditional Japanese gold leaf production was made famous in Kaga among numerous high-quality crafts.

Top samurai held great admiration for swords from the Kanewaka family. First generation Kanewaka was so highly esteemed that he was referred to as *Kaga Masamune* - in tribute to one of Japan's most celebrated swordsmiths.

This wide and splendidly sharp katana was crafted by third generation Kanewaka who was born *Tsujimura Shirô'emon*. He was the eldest son of the second generation Kanewaka and after the death of his father in 1677, he succeeded as head of the Kanewaka family until his death in May 1711. Shirô'emon is rightfully rated *jô-saku* (a superior swordsmith).

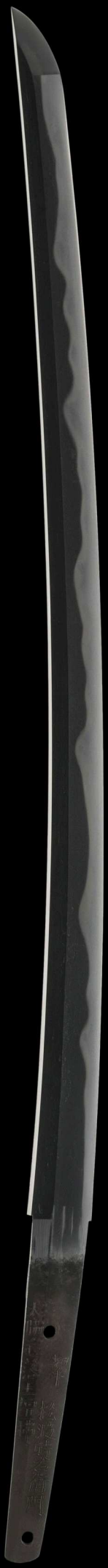
An awe-inspiring mountain range comes to mind when admiring the splendid peaks and valleys found in its *gunome-midare hamon*. From every angle, the health and vibrancy of this *2-shaku* sword shines through. As such, this sword recently passed NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon with flying colours.

Adding to the ferocity of this katana, sword tester *Matsunami Toki'emon* performed a *tameshigiri* cutting test with this blade by severing through a human body at the armpit level and directly into the earthen mound below. One gets the distinct sense that this blade could have easily cut multiple bodies in one stroke.

This sword is a good candidate for *Tanobe-sensei sayagaki* and also an enjoyable custom koshirae project - Unique Japan will gladly assist the next owner build something special. Of course, a powerful katana such as this one can also be enjoyed in shirasaya only.



*tameshigiri* (one-body cutting test)





Location: *Kaga province*
Secular name: *Shirôemon*
Swordsmith: *Kanewaka* (third generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*sujikai-yasurime* (diagonal file marks)

賀 (Ga)

州 (shû)

住 (jû)

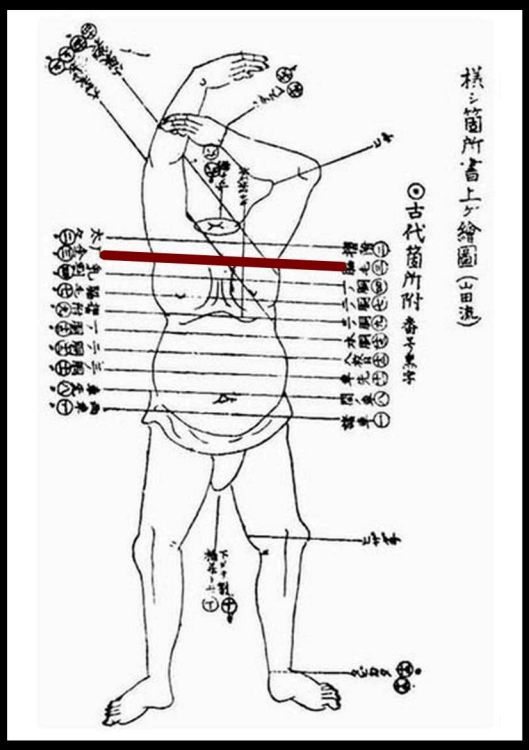
兼 (Kane)

若 (waka)

*Hikae-mekugi-ana*
An extra peg hole was made for reinforcement during the cutting test.

*Kirite Matsunami Toki'emon ô-wakige otoshi dodan barai*

This katana tested by *Matsunami Toki'emon* by severing through a body at the armpit level and directly into the earthen mound below.



*ô-wakige* cutting test illustrated

(Ô) 大

(waki) 脇

(ge) 毛

(otoshi) 落

(do) 土

(dan) 壇

(barai) 拂

切 (Kiri)

手 (te)

松 (Matsu)

波 (nami)

時 (Toki)

右 (')

衛 (e)

門 (mon)

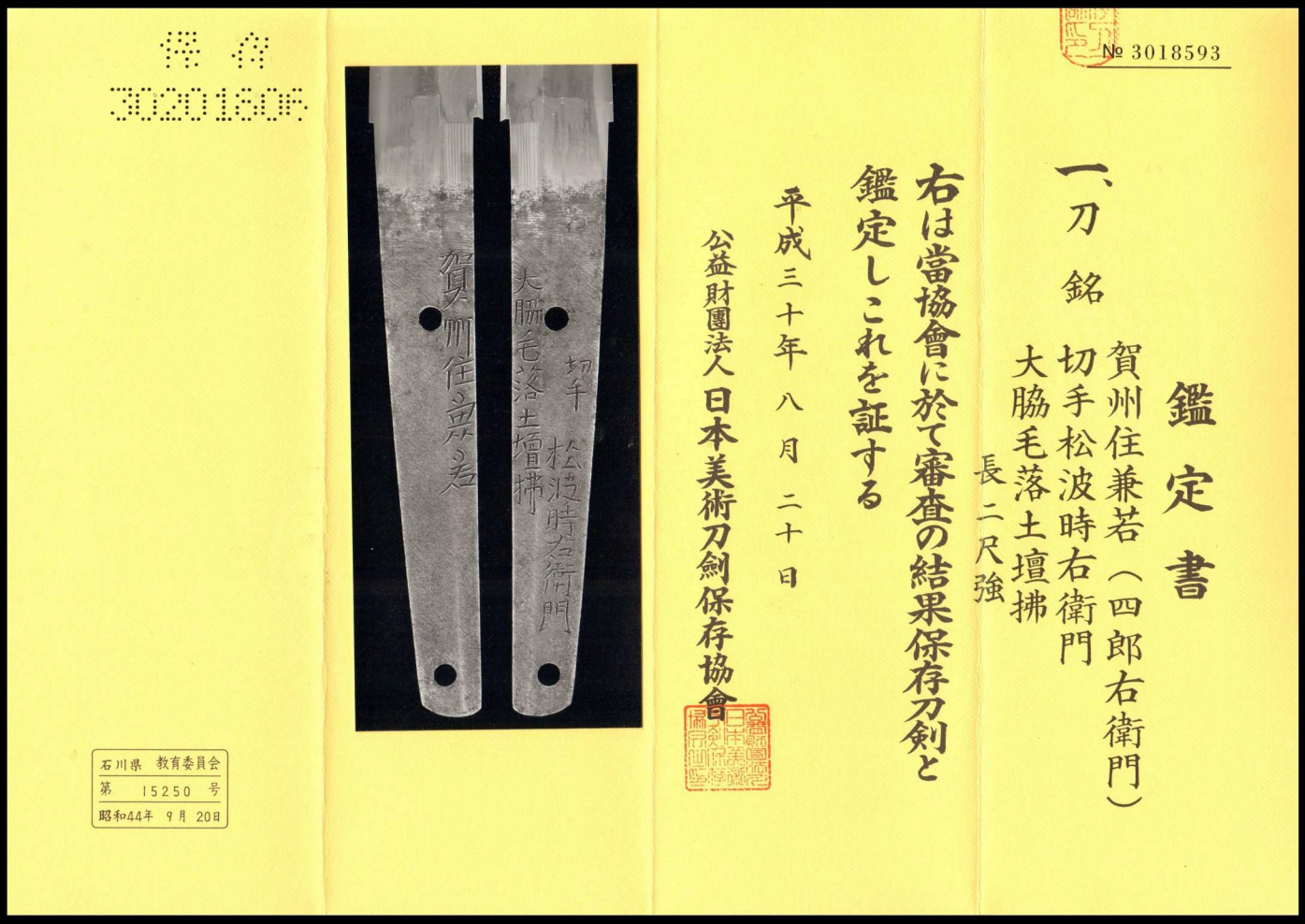
Sword tester, *Matsunami Toki'emon*, whose secular name was *Yoshitake* (義賢), was a descendant of *Hitachi no Suke Yoshichika* (常陸介義親), the Lord of *Matsunami* Castle.

He appears to have worked primarily during the *Enpô* era (1673~1681).

In the first year of *Jôkyô* era (1684), he began to serve *Maeda Tsunanori* (前田綱紀), the fourth Lord of the *Kaga* domain, working as an inspector within the domain.



*Maeda Tsunanori*
Head of the *Kaga* domain
In office (1645~1723)




*This katana has recently attained Tokubetsu Hozon level certification.
The new NBTHK certificate will be issued in a couple months.

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 30th year of Heisei (2018), August 20th

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Gashû-jû Kanewaka (Shirôemon)*
*Kirite Matsunami Tokiemon*
*Ô-wakige otoshi dodan barai*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku kyô (60.7cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)





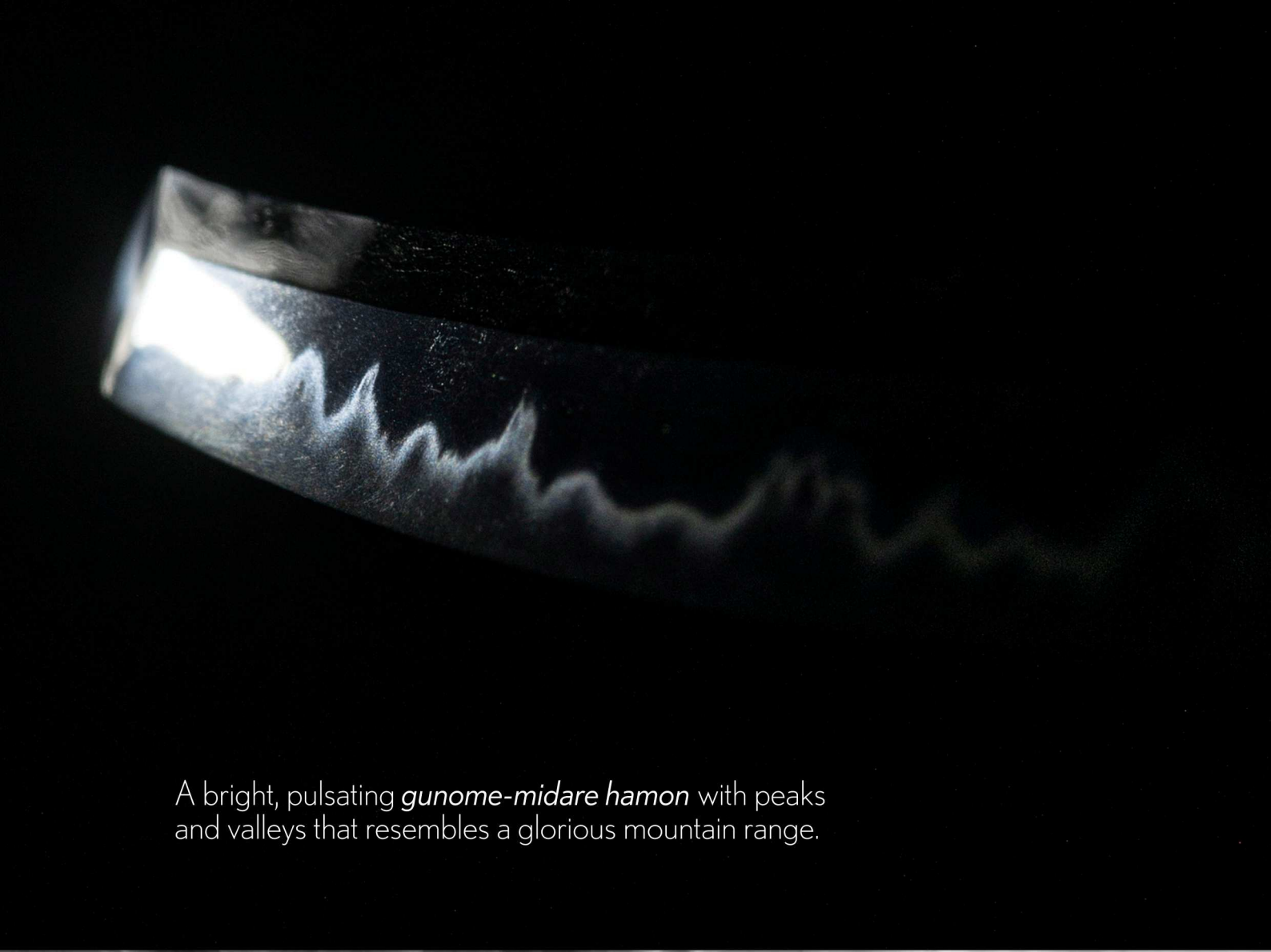


A lovely ***midare-komi boshi*** with modest ***kaeri*** (turn back).


Shining *ji-nie*.
*Ôsaka yakidashi*
(hamon gently widens to start)




The health and vibrancy of this *Kanewaka* school katana can be felt from all angles. A well-deserved upgrade from **NBTHK Hozon** to **Tokubetsu Hozon**.



A bright, pulsating ***gunome-midare hamon*** with peaks and valleys that resembles a glorious mountain range.





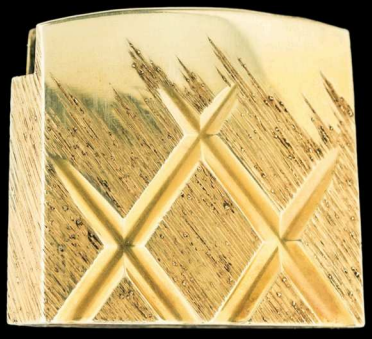
The ***hamon*** displays a unique pattern called ***kanitsume*** or "crab claws" in the upper cutting zone of the blade.

Crabs are symbolic of ninja warriors for they both move sideways, silently approaching their target.

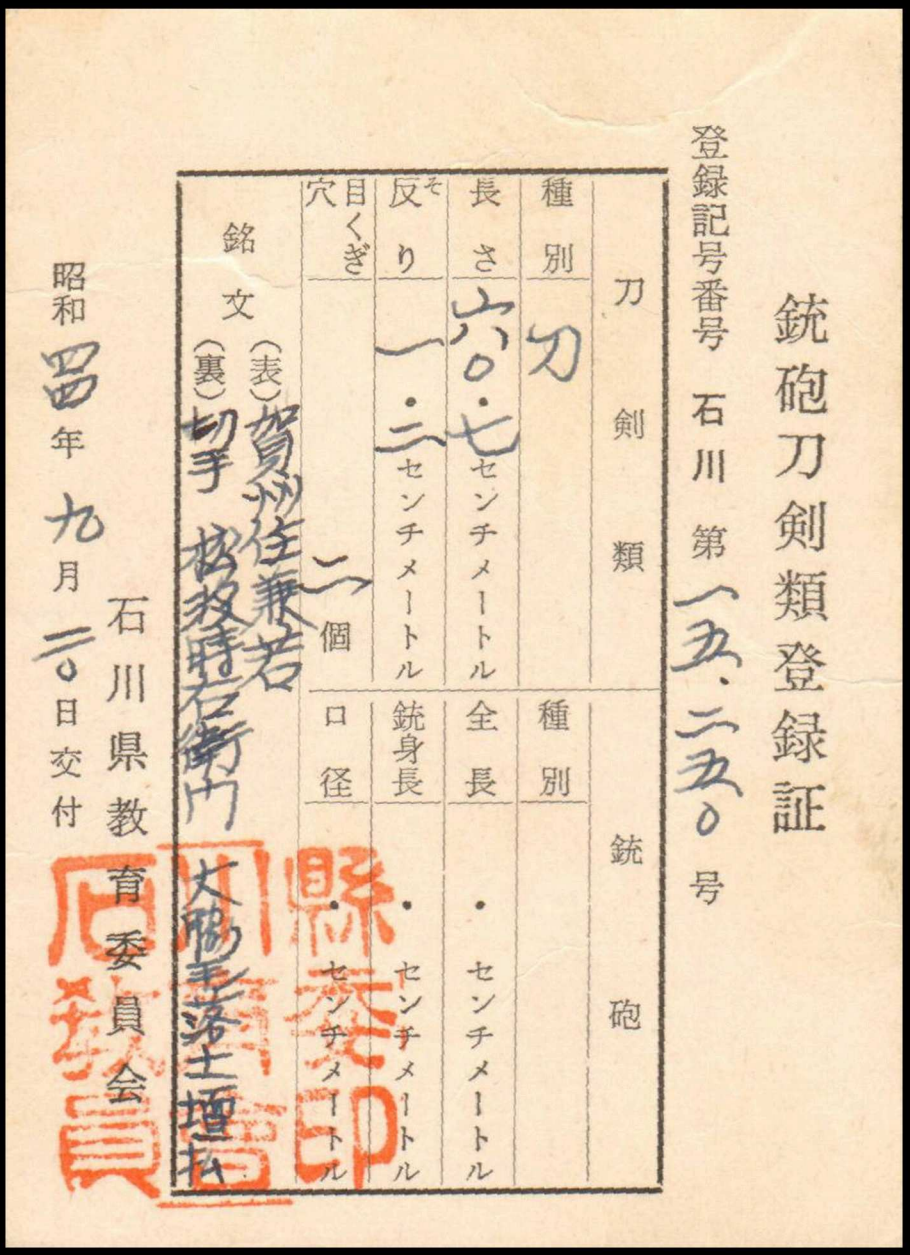


*Tanobe-sensei sayagaki* potential

*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold ***habaki*** with
*Kaga-yasuri* design



銃砲刀剣類登録証

登録記号番号 石川 第一五、二五〇号

| 刀剣類 | | 銃砲 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 種別 | 刀 | 種別 | |
| 長さ | 六〇・七 センチメートル | 全長 | ・センチメートル |
| そり | 一・二 センチメートル | 銃身長 | ・センチメートル |
| 目くぎ穴 | 二個 | 口径 | ・センチメートル |

銘文 (表) 賀州住兼若 (裏) 切手 松枝時右衛門 大脇手落土埋れ

昭和四四年九月二〇日交付

石川県教育委員会

This is the original *torokusho* (registration card) for the *Kanewaka katana*. The card was registered in the 44th year of Showa (1969). It was issued by *Ishikawa* prefecture, the modern/new name for *Kaga* province once the Edo period came to an end in 1868.

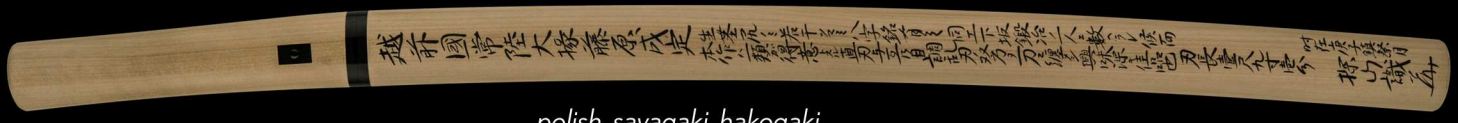
This suggests that this blade, which was crafted in Kaga, was looked after by several generations of samurai families in the area for some 300 years.

# Submit, Repair, Sell & Create!

Unique Japan offers a ***full-service menu*** to assist clients with their Japanese swords and fittings. All services are performed in Japan with top quality craftsmen and women.

## Services include (non exhaustive):

* NBTHK and NTHK-NPO ***shinsa*** certification (swords and fittings)
* polishing for all types of Japanese swords (standard to Jûyô-level quality polish)
* ***shirasaya*** making (standard to high quality with horn fittings)
* ***habaki*** making (gold, silver, copper in most any design pattern)
* fix wobbly koshirae, repair cracked scabbards, new lacquer work, etc.
* ***otoshi*** presentation boxes for your beautiful ***tsuba, menuki, fuch-kashira***, etc.
* ***tsuka-maki*** (re-wrap your hilts in silk or leather in most any colour, weave or braid)
* ***oshigata*** (sword/hamon tracing on a scroll with a large choice of background)
* ***sayagaki*** services with ***Tanobe-sensei*** and ***shodô*** artist Nozomi-san
* ***sword boxes with hakogaki (with humidifying options fo***r dry climates)
* custom koshirae projects (see separate page)
* sell your sword(s) on consignment (qualifying conditions apply)



*polish, sayagaki, hakogaki*





*tsuka-maki*



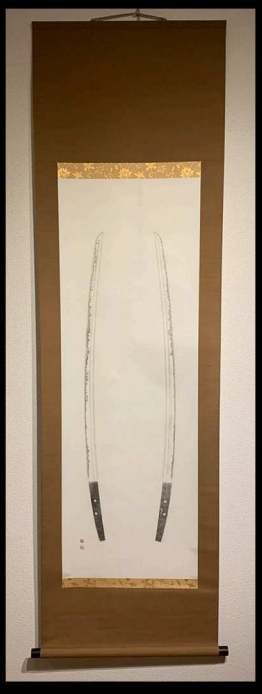
All NBTHK and NTHK-NPO Shinsa authentication services



*habaki* creations



*otoshi* boxes



*oshigata* scrolls

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uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA456

# A MORIKUNI KATANA

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1673)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Izumi no Kami Minamoto Morikuni*** *(shodai, first generation)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 67.6cm (*suriage*) **Sori:** 0.45cm **Moto-haba:** 2.87cm **Weight:** 745g |
| **Jihada:** | *Gorgeous mokume mixed with itame with plentiful chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Vibrant gunome-midare with sunagashi and long pointed ashi* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-5:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*ranked as a superior swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shôdo artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

Talented swordsmith ***Izumi no Kami Morikuni*** was a student of *Izumi no Kami Kaneshige* during the *shintô* period, later becoming known as *Edo Senjuin*. Such great energy is packed into this statuesque katana - expertly forged *mokume* and *itame-hada* provides the foundation for a brilliant *gunome midare hamon* with impressive sawtooth-like *ashi* that bite into the blade. A comparison is often drawn between *Morikuni* and grandmaster *Nagasone Kotetsu*, as they both shared the same *sensei* in *Kaneshige*. A terrific set of koshirae features a wonderfully wise *tsuba* by *Mogarashi Sôten* along with a detailed *fuchi-kashira* depicting rats attributed to *Ishiguro Masaaki*. A delightful trio of butterflies form the *menuki* on the regal *jabara-maki* braided silk representing joy and longevity.



Saki-kasane: 4.5mm

Moto-kasane: 6.0mm

Nakago: 24.5cm

Omosa: 705g

Kissaki: 2.76cm

Saki-haba: 1.94cm

Nagasa: 67.6cm

Sori: 0.45cm

Moto-haba: 2.87cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

Talented swordsmith *Izumi no Kami Morikuni* hailed from *Kai* province near *Mount Fuji* and was originally a smith of the *Akasaka Senjuin* (赤坂千住院) lineage.

After leaving for the capital *Edo* (Tokyo), Morikuni studied under the watchful eye of *Izumi no Kami Kaneshige* (和泉守兼重) and was a fellow student with grandmaster *Nagasone Kotetsu* (長曾祢虎徹). Similarities are often drawn in the work of both smiths.

*Morikuni* first signed with the name *Namen Morimasa* and later became known as *Edo Senjuin*.

There is such great energy packed into this statuesque katana by *Morikuni* - expertly forged *mokume* and *itame-hada* provides the foundation for a brilliant *gunome midare hamon* with impressive sawtooth-like *ashi* that figuratively bite into the blade. There is a sense of poise, a balance that shines through in his work, rightfully earning Morikuni the rank of *jô-saku*, a superior smith.

A terrific set of *koshirae* compliments the katana that features a wonderful openwork *tsuba* by *Mogarashi Sôten* along with a marvellously detailed *fuchi-kashira* depicting rats (signifying prosperity and good fortune) attributed to *Ishiguro Masaaki*. A delightful trio of butterflies form the *menuki* on the *jabara-maki* braided silk representing joy and longevity.

As the blade has a *suriage nakago*, this katana is being offered at a very reasonable price - a superb *shintô* period samurai sword to proudly take good care of.





Title: *Izumi no Kami* (Lord of Izumi province)
Clan/Family: *Minamoto*
Swordsmith: *Morikuni* (first generation)

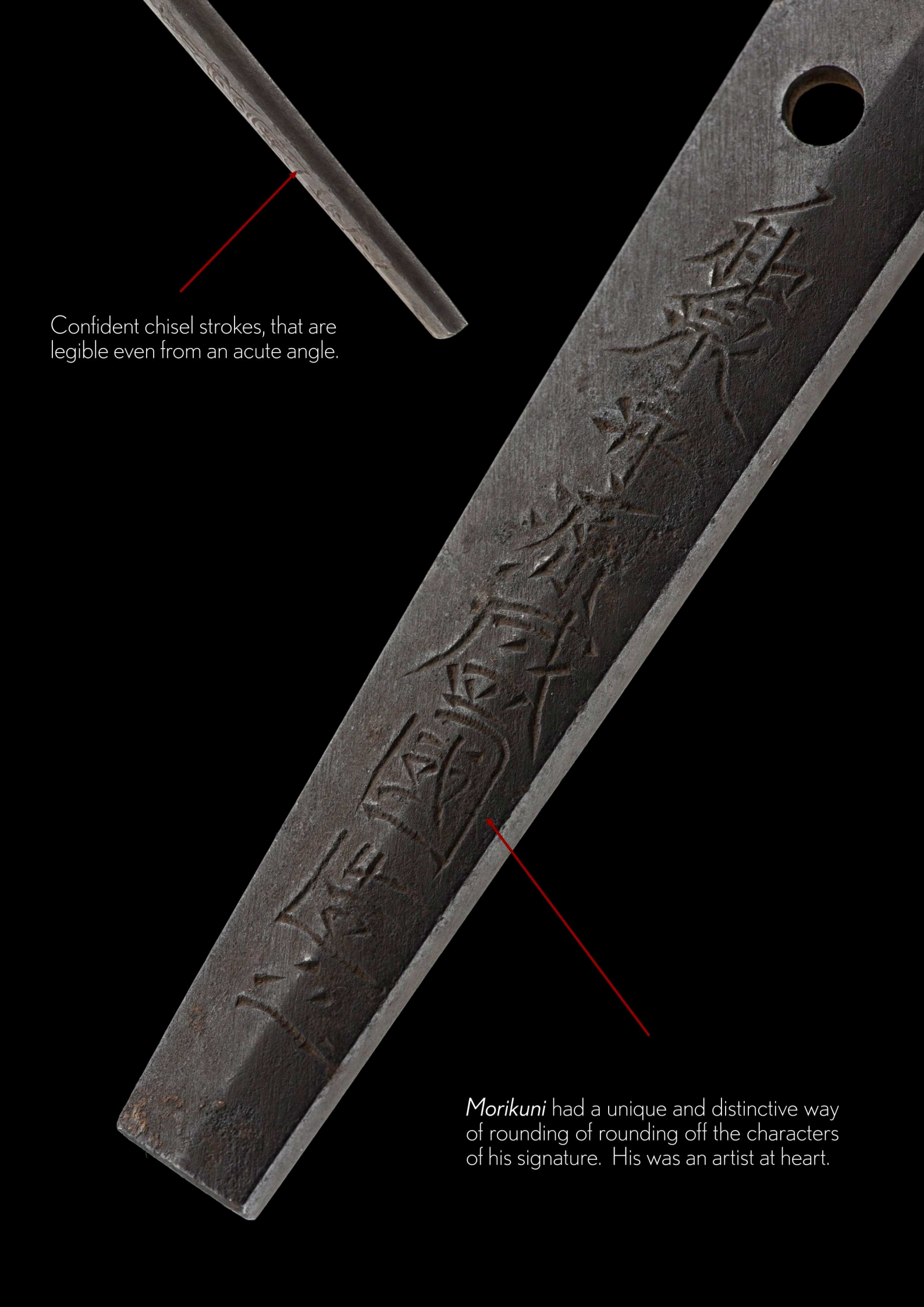
*suriage-nakago* (shortened tang)
*sujikai-yasurime* (diagonal file marks, lower area)

This katana carries an *suriage nakago*, where the *nakago* (tang) has been shortened but the signature remains intact.

A sword was normally shortened purely for practical reasons, primarily to accommodate for the height of a samurai so he can unsheathe more comfortably and rapidly.

The original length of the cutting edge would have been quite long, about 74cm, adding the distance between the two holes to the current *nagasa* of 67.6cm.

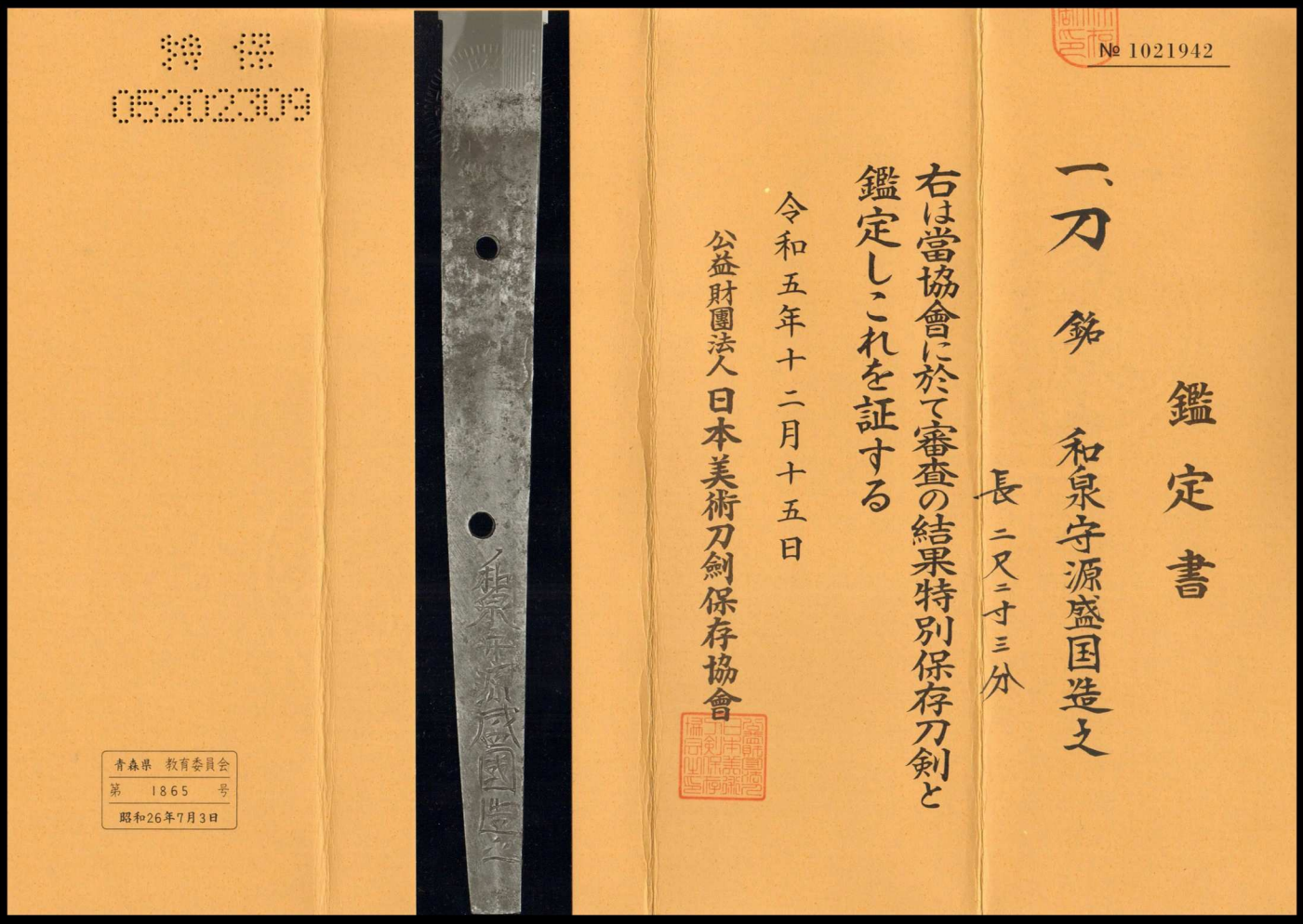
和 (I)
泉 (zumi, no)
守 (Kami)
源 (Minamoto)
盛 (Mori)
國 (kuni)
造 (tsukuru)
之 (kore, o)



Confident chisel strokes, that are legible even from an acute angle.

*Morikuni* had a unique and distinctive way of rounding of rounding off the characters of his signature. His was an artist at heart.


*kiri-yasurime*
(horizontal file marks)
(*ura*, reverse)




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 5th year of Reiwa (2023), December 15th

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Izumi no Kami Minamoto Morikuni kore o tsukuru*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 3-bu (67.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

The fact this katana was awarded **Tokubetsu Hozon** even though it has a strong ***suriage nakago*** is a testament to the quality of the sword.




和泉守源盛国造之
*Izumi no Kami Minamoto Morikuni kore o tsukuru*
Crafted by Izumi no Kami Minamoto Morikuni

時代寛文頃
*Jidai Kanbun goro*
Around Kanbun period (1661~1673)

刃長貳尺二寸三分有之
*Hachô 2-shaku 2-sun 3-bu kore ari*
Blade length 67.6 cm

令和七乙巳年卯月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Uzuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the fourth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (April 2025)






*mokume-hada* (rounded)
*itame-hada* (plank grain)



There is a certain poise to this *Morikuni* katana.
A balanced combination of quality *jihada* and a
bright and consistent *gunome-midare hamo*n.

He is rightfully ranked *jô-saku*, a superior swordsmith.



The jaws of life.
Sink your teeth into this delicious hamon.



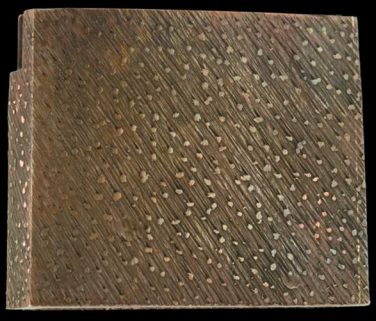
Gorgeous and skilfully forged *mokume-hada* (burl grain) pattern in the body.




An eye-catching ***gunome-midare hamon*** with a thick ***nioguchi***.




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

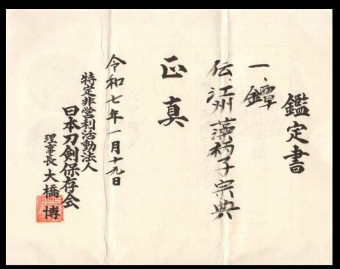


copper ***habaki*** with
rainfall file marks



Behold a charming *tsuba* crafted by *Mogarashi Sôten* from *Gôshû* (*Ômi*) province. This is a late Edo period openwork depicting sages in contemplative thought.

*Mogarashi Sôten* was a craftsman who lived in Hikone, Ômi province in the middle Edo period. *Mogarashi* is his Buddhist name. He was the founder of *Hikone-bori*, a style of dense carving in the tradition of *Mino-bori*, and many of his works are known for motif of battle scenes and figures of Japanese and Chinese characters.


鑑定書
一、鐔
伝江州藻朽子宗典
正真
令和七年一月十九日
特定非営利活動法人
日本刀剣保存会
理事長 大橋博





(reverse)



*Fuchi-kashira*

Motif of rats,
a symbol of prosperity and good fortune.

This exquisitely detailed ***fuchi-kashira*** has been attributed to ***Ishiguro Masaaki*** (born ***Sadakichi*** in 1813).

Working in Edo (Tokyo) under the founder of the famed ***Ishiguro*** school, ***Masatsune*** himself, Masaaki's artistry flourished during the ***Kaei*** era (1848-1855) when his reputation as a master craftsman was firmly established.




Parental protection.





Three beautiful butterflies form the ***menuki***, resting on this wonderful ***katate-maki tsuka*** (hilt). Three represents Japan's three-part harmony of ***mind***, ***body***, and ***spirit***.

Given their transformative nature from caterpillars, the Japanese believe butterflies carry the souls of the living and of past ancestors. They are a symbol of joy and longevity.





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.



Certified with NTHK-NPO Kanteisho attributing the menuki to *Gotô Unjô* circa the middle Edo period. The theme is of horse whip and saddle.





*NTHK-NPO Kanteishô certificate*





*Koshirae* bag with ***kikkô*** (tortoise shell) pattern representing heathy & longevity.

*Dig the well before you are thirsty.*

Chinese proverb



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uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA465

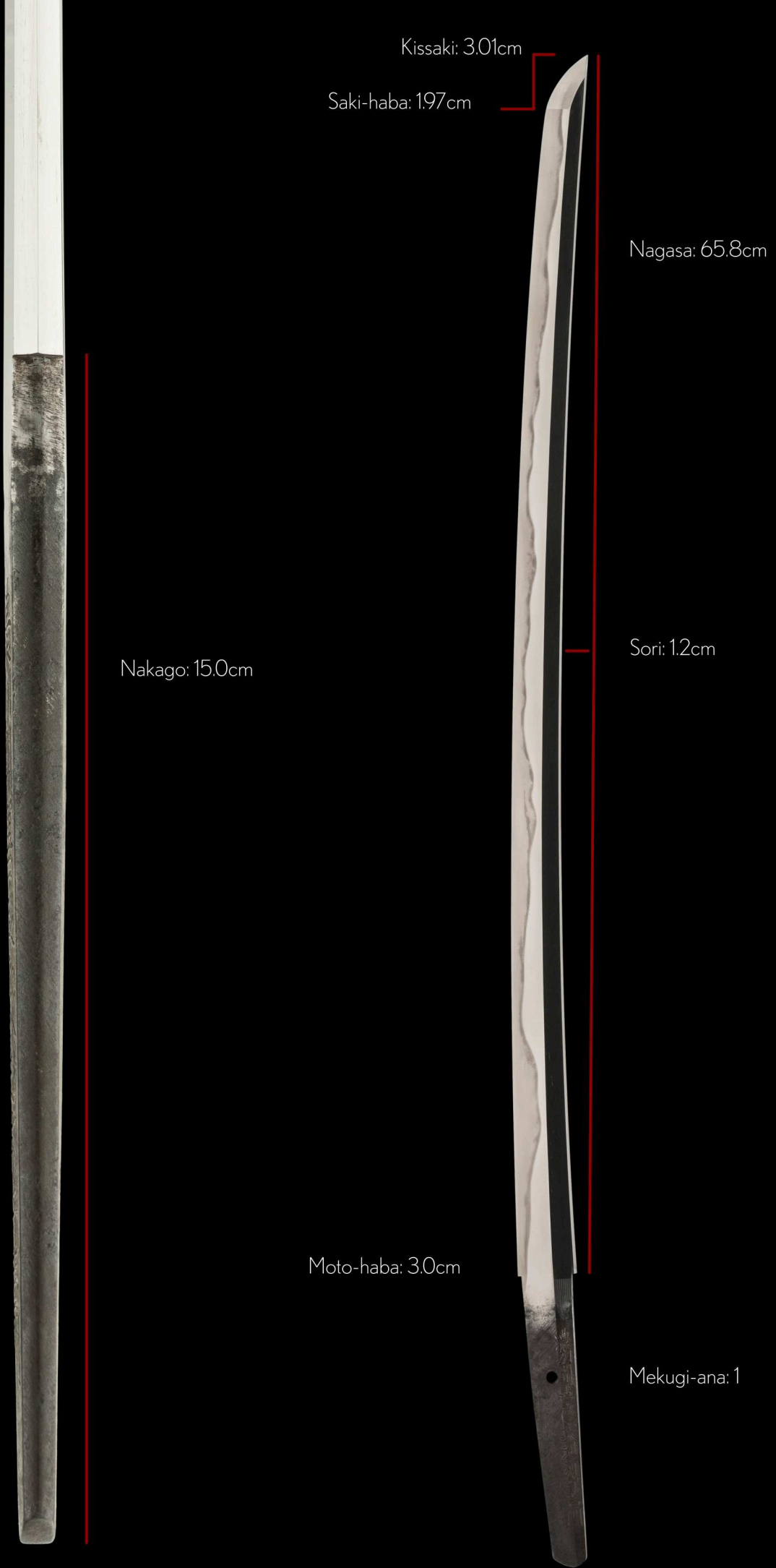
# A YOSHIKADO KATANA

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1671)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Noshû Seki Zenryô-ke Echizen no Kami Yoshikado*** *(1st gen.)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 65.8cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.2cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0cm **Weight:** 680g |
| **Jihada:** | *Well-forged itame-hada with sparkling ji-nie, chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Beautiful nie-deki mix of ô-midare, hako-midare, chôji, togariba, notare, ashi* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Jô-saku** (*ranked as superior swordsmith*) |
| **Sharpness**: | **Wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of sharp swords*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Nozomi-san** (*shodô artist)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

***Shodai Yoshikado*** was a prominent *shintô* swordsmith who descended from the lineage of *Zenjô Kaneyoshi*. Yoshikado's career advanced significantly when in 1672 he became an official swordsmith of the *Mito* domain led by *Tokugawa Mitsukuni*, receiving a stipend supporting seven people, prompting his relocation to Mito's *Daimachi* district. This brilliant and highly energetic katana is a prime example from the later years of Yoshikado's storied career. The blade's vibrant *hamon* in *nie-deki* is an *ô-midare* with *notare* elements, even *hako-midare* that is reminiscent of the famed *Kanewaka* school. This is a swordsman's sword, just the right length to manoeuvre with samurai fluidity. A custom koshirae is an option for this katana, however, a blade of this quality can certainly suffice in *shirasaya* only – enjoy and study it under the *nihontô* light for hours on end.


Kissaki: 3.01cm
Saki-haba: 1.97cm
Saki-kasane: 4.9mm
Nagasa: 65.8cm
Moto-kasane: 6.4mm
Sori: 1.2cm
Nakago: 15.0cm
Omosa: 680g
Moto-haba: 3.0cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

Born *Kawamura Ichirô-zaemon* in *Hitachi* province, first generation *Yoshikado* was a prominent swordsmith who began his career during the *Jôô* era (1652-1655). He originated from *Mino* and descended from the lineage of *Zenjô Kaneyoshi*. He began his apprenticeship around 1636 and was working in Edo by 1654, as demonstrated by a blade signature noting "more than 19 years of training."

Yoshikado's career advanced significantly when in 1672 he became an official swordsmith of the *Mito* domain led by *Tokugawa Mitsukuni*, receiving a stipend supporting seven people, which prompted his relocation to Mito's *Daimachi* district. His younger brother, also named *Yoshikado* (later known as *Bokuden*), was also employed by the Mito fief. While the exact date when he received the honorary title "*Echizen no Kami*" remains unknown, evidence suggests he held this title as early as 1625. Yoshikado died in the fourth year of *Jôkyô* era (1687).

This brilliant and highly energetic katana is a prime example from the later years of Yoshikado's storied career. The blade's vibrant *hamon* in *nie-deki* is an *ô-midare* with *notare* elements, even *hako-midare* in parts that is reminiscent of the famed *Kanewaka* school. This is a swordsman's sword, not too long, not too short, just right to manoeuvre with samurai fluidity. The sword has been further polished to an exceptionally keen edge as Yoshikado is renowned as a *wazamono* (sharp sword maker). His swords require careful handling due to their remarkable cutting ability.

A custom koshirae is an option as this sword is in shirasaya only, and we can assist you every step of the way. However, a blade of this quality can easily be enjoyed as it is without koshirae.



*Tokugawa Mitsukuni*
In office 1661~1690





Location: *Seki in Mino province* (resident of Seki city)
Title: *Echizen no Kami* (Lord of Echizen province)
Family name: *Zenryô*
Swordsmith: *Yoshikado* (first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*takanoha-yasurime* (mountain-shape file marks)

濃 (Nô)

州 (shû)

関 (Seki)

善 (Zen)

良 (ryô)

家 (ke)

越 (Echi)

前 (zen, no)

守 (Kami)

吉 (Yoshi)

門 (kado)



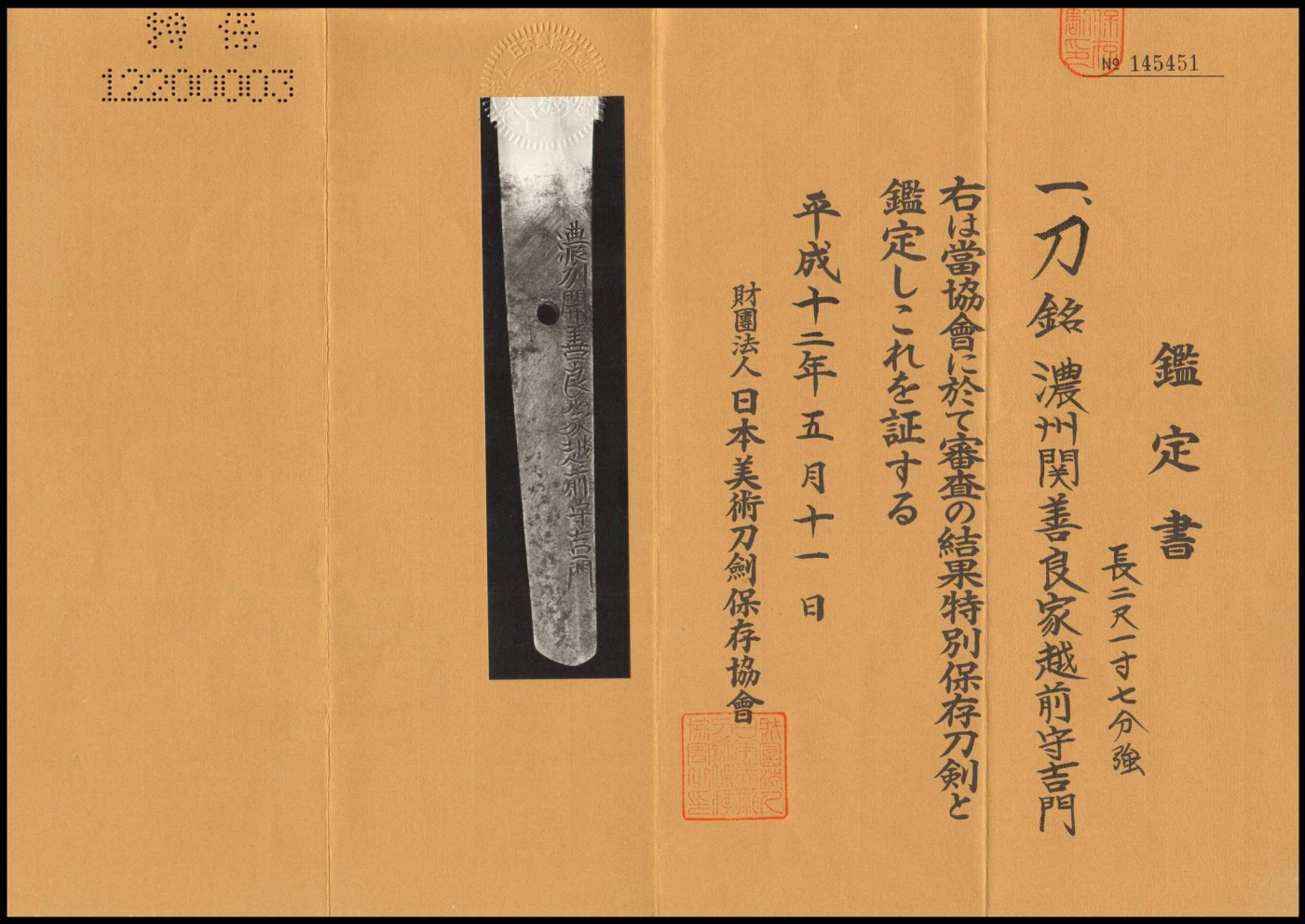
A gorgeous signature - crisp and clean.

Only shodai signed with ***Zenryô-ke*** (善良家), a proud descendant of the Zenryô family that can be traced back some thirteen generations to ***Zenjô Kaneyoshi*** who worked during the ***Ôei*** era (1394~1428).



(*ura*, reverse)

*kurijiri*
(chestnut shaped ***nakagojiri*** (butt end)




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 12th year of Heisei (2000), May 11th

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Nôshû Seki Zenryô-ke Echizen no Kami Yoshikado*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 1-sun 7-bu kyô (65.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




濃州関善良家越前守吉門
*Nôshû Seki Zenryô-ke Echizen no Kami Yoshikado*
Echizen no Kami Yoshikado of the Zenryô family
from Seki in Noshû (Mino) province

時代承應頃
*Jidai Jôô goro*
Around Jôô period (1652~1655)

刃長貳尺壱寸七分強有之
*Hachô 2-shaku 1-sun 7-bu kyô kore ari*
Blade length 65.8 cm

令和七乙巳年卯月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Uzuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the fourth month in the seventh year
of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (April 2025)

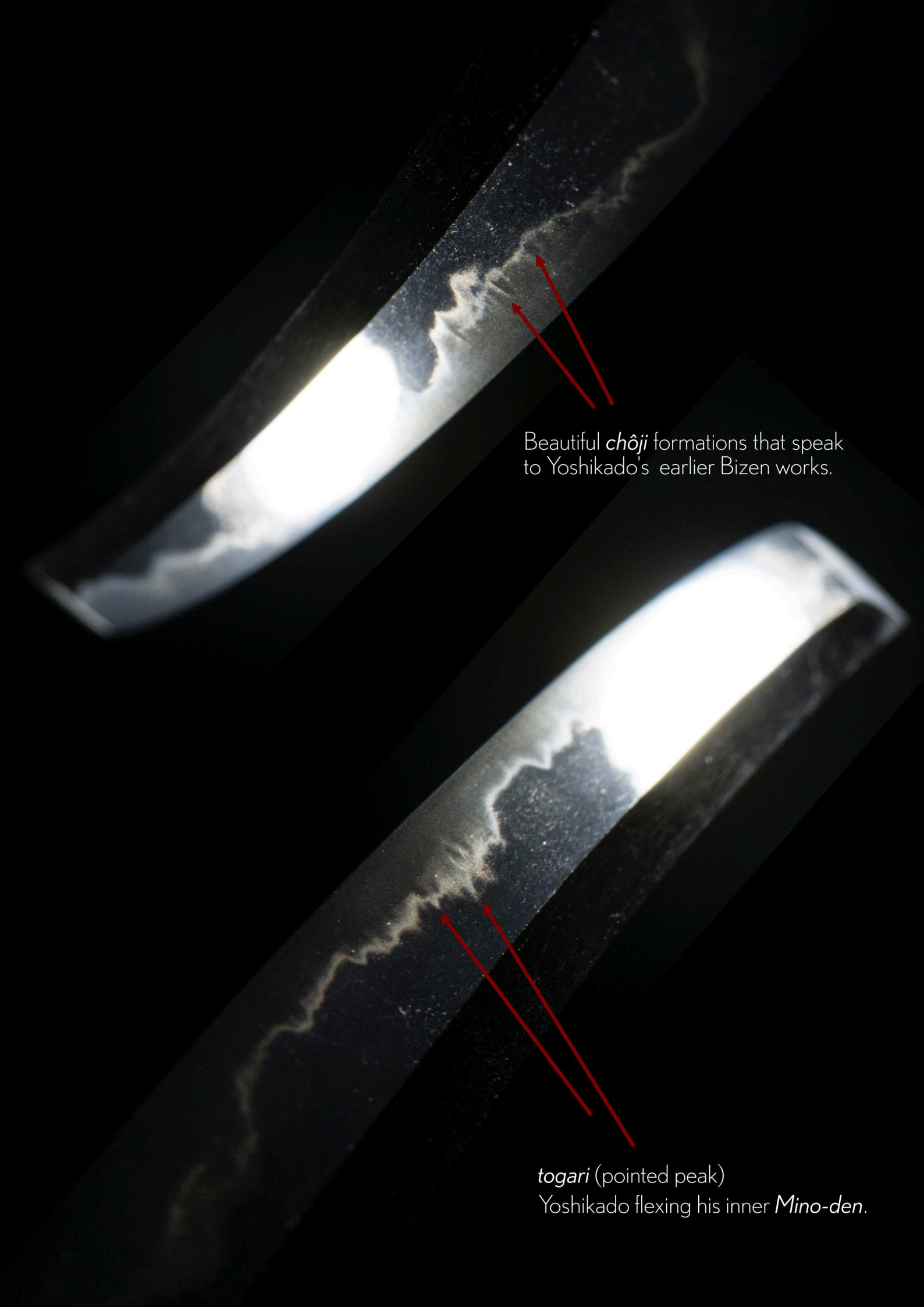




An eclectic ***notare*** mixed with ***midare*** fires forward.

The ***yakidashi*** (start of the ***hamon***) forms a mountain top that reminds one of ***Fuji-san***, the great ***Mount Fuji.***




Beautiful *chôji* formations that speak to Yoshikado's earlier Bizen works.
*togari* (pointed peak)
Yoshikado flexing his inner *Mino-den*.


Well-forged dark swirls of *chikei*
A beautiful wavy *masame-hada* (straight grain) in the *shinogi-ji.*

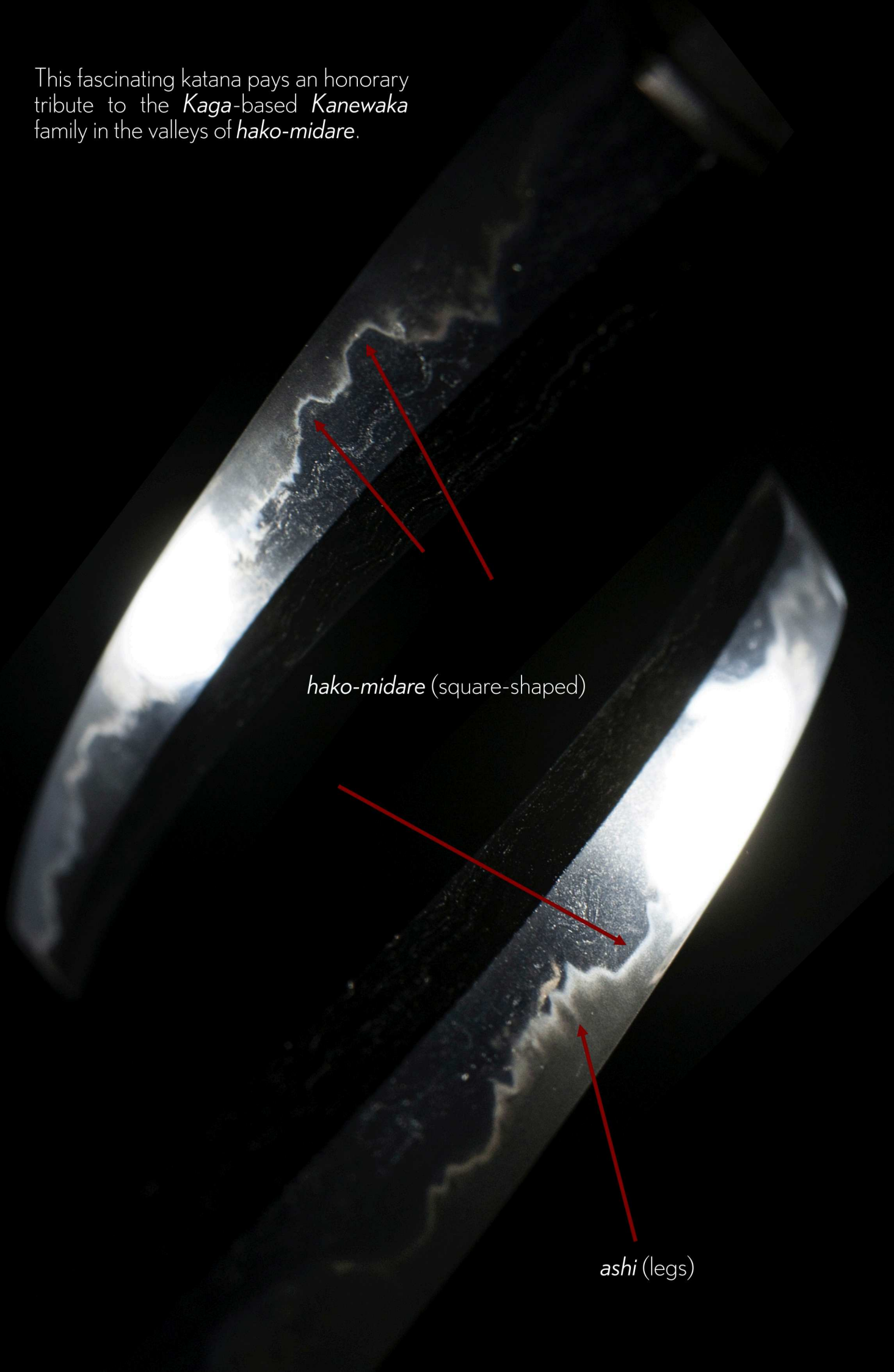


High-contrast view of the impressive channels of ***chikei.***



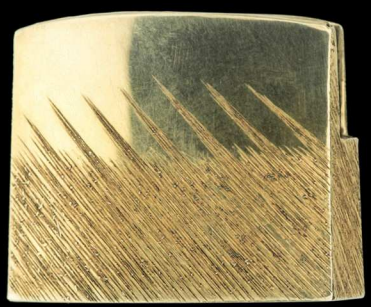
An elegant ***notare hamon*** in ***nie-deki***
(note the visible stream of ***nie*** crystals)

This fascinating katana pays an honorary tribute to the *Kaga*-based *Kanewaka* family in the valleys of ***hako-midare***.






*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold-wrapped ***habaki***
with rainfall file marks


sharp light of the moon



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Meetings are held at our studio near **JR Meguro station** - only minutes away from all major hotels in downtown Tokyo.

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uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKG008

# A MASAMINE KOGATANA

## SIGNED & DATED, GENDAITÔ PERIOD (SHÔWA ERA: FEBRUARY 1984)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Masamine*** *(Sumitani, Living National Treasure)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 7.5cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 0cm **Moto-haba:** 1.43cm **Weight:** 20g |
| **Jihada:** | *Beautiful masame-hada with chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gunome midare with midare-komi mixed with ashi* |
| **Certificate #1-2:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*kogatana and koshirae certified as Authentic)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, koshirae, presentation box, fabric bags, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

***Ryôsanshi Masamine*** (also read *Seihô*) was born *Sumitani Yoichirô* on January 24th 1921. In 1956 he established the forge *Sanryûtei* and was awarded Japan's highest honour of *ningen-kokuhô* (Living National Treasure) in 1981 becoming one of the most influential modern-day swordsmiths. In 1975, he began research into *tôsu* (small knives) modelled after those found in the *Shosoin* Repository. In 1986, he held an exhibition of such small works, and it is believed that this delightfully rare *kogatana* (small blade) was created as part of that research. With a cutting edge of 7.5cm, this miniature masterpiece has been forged in pure *masame-hada* with a bright *gunome-midare hamon* that was polished by a *mukansa* polisher. This unique piece must not be confused with a simple *kozuka* blade, it is wider, has a *habaki* and carries more artistic merit. In fact, the NTHK-NPO informed us that the judges rate this piece as *Yûshûsaku* (MasterWork) level. This little dynamo comes housed in a beautiful *maki-e* decorated koshirae and charming storage box.


Moto-kasane: 3.7mm
Nagasa: 7.5cm
Nakago: 5.0cm
Sori: 0.0cm
Omosa: 20g
Moto-haba: 1.43cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

*Ryôsanshi Masamine* (also read *Seihô)* was born *Sumitani Yoichirô* on January 24th 1921. In 1941, after graduating from *Ritsumeikan* University with a degree in mechanical engineering he began an apprenticeship under *Sakurai Masayuki* - a swordsmith in the lineage of the famous late-Edo period master *Koyama Munetsugu* (固山宗次) - and in 1956 established the forge *Sanryûtei*. He became *mukansa* in 1966 and was awarded Japan's highest honour of *ningen-kokuhô (Living National Treasure)* in 1981 and became one of the most influential modern swordsmiths.

Masamine is best known for the elegant and flamboyant *chôji-midare* hamon pattern, especially the distinctive style known as "*Sumitani chôji*," inspired by the *Bizen Ichimonji* school of the *Kamakura* period. He also favoured classical forms and emphasised both aesthetic beauty and functional integrity. He also played a major role in preserving traditional sword culture by crafting sacred treasure swords for the Ise Grand Shrine's ritual and ceremonial swords for the Imperial Household.

It is noted that around 1975, he began research into *tôsu* (small knives) modelled after those found in the *Shosoin* Repository. In 1986, he held an exhibition of such small works, including *tôsu* with *bachiru* (engraved and dyed ivory) scabbards. It is believed that this delightfully rare *kogatana* (small blade) was created as part of that research.

With a cutting edge of 7.5cm, this miniature masterpiece has been forged in pure *masame-hada* (straight grain) with a bright *gunome-midare hamon* that was polished by a *mukansa* (top-class) polisher. This piece must not be confused with a *kozuka* blade, it is wider, has a *habaki*, and carries more artistic merit. In fact, the NTHK-NPO sword organization informed us that the judges personally loved the blade and rate this piece as *Yûshûsaku* (MasterWork) level.

This little dynamo comes housed in a beautiful *maki-e* decorated *koshirae* and charming storage box.





正 (Masa)

峯 (mine)

作 (saku)

Family name: ***Sumitani***
Swordsmith: ***Masamine*** (first generation)

***ubu-nakago*** (original, unaltered tang)
***keshô-yasurime*** (decorative file marks)



(Kinoe) 甲

(ne) 子

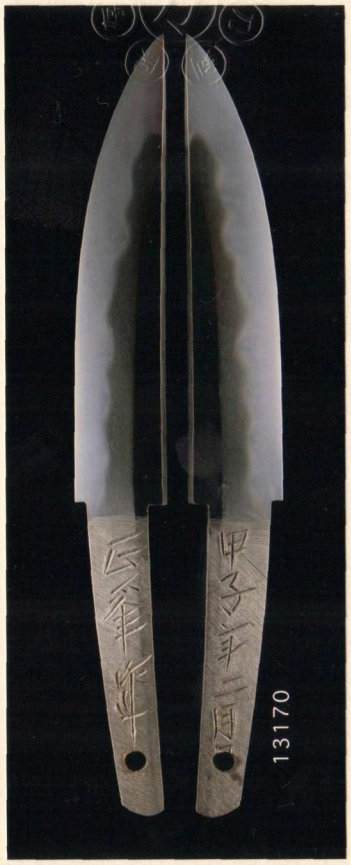
(doshi) 年

(ni) 二

(gatsu) 月

(hi) 日

*Kinoe nedoshi nigatsu hi*
Dated on a day in the second month of the Year of the Rat (February 1984)




| 第一三一七〇号 | |
|---|---|
| 銘文 | 表、正峯作<br>裏、甲子年二月 |
| 造り込み | 菖蒲造り、庵棟、生ぶ中心 |
| 鍛 | 柾目詰む |
| 刃紋 | 互の目小湯付足入る |
| 鋩子 | 乱れ込み掃かけ返る |
| 彫刻 | |
| 中心 | 目釘穴一個　鑢化粧仕舞違い |
| 備考 | |
| 審査員捺印 | |

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

This kogatana was designated as *Authentic*
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

One, Kogatana

*Mei* (signature)
*Masamine saku*
*Kinoe nedoshi nigatsu*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-sun 5-bu (7.5cm)

Issued in 7th year of Reiwa (2025), April 20th

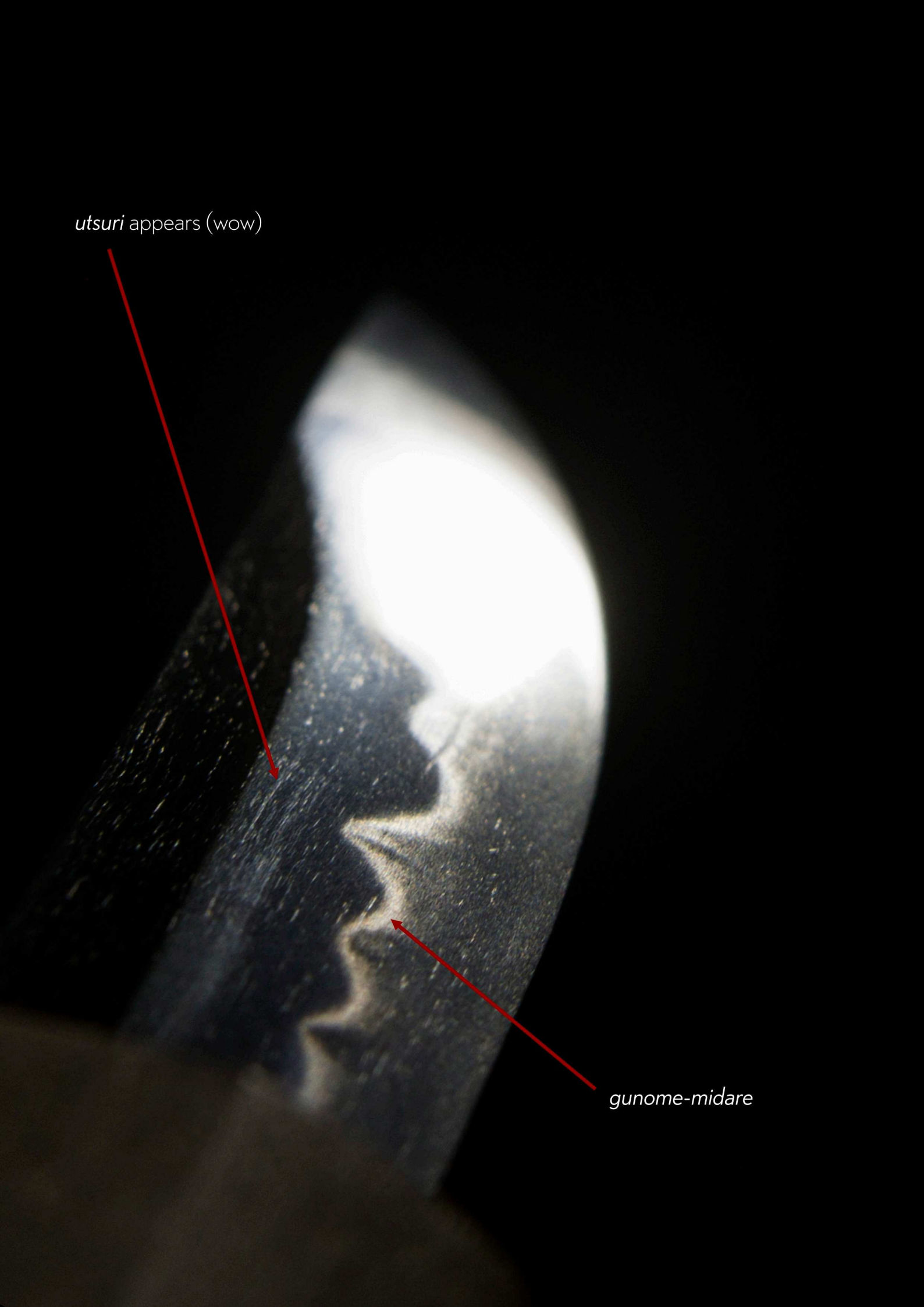
Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)



A flowing *masame-hada* brushes the blade.



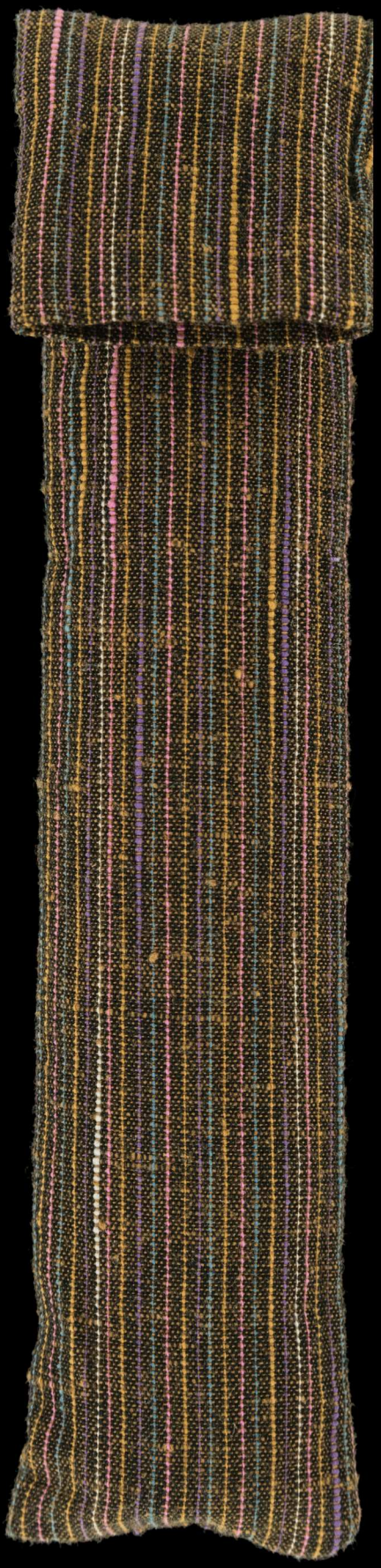
*masame-hada*
(straight grain)


*utsuri* appears (wow)
*gunome-midare*


midare-komi boshi

A star is born.

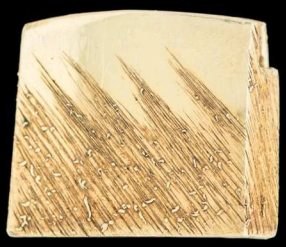






*sayagaki* potential

*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold *habaki* with
rainfall file marks



*Kuro-ronuri*
*kin maki-e saya*
*kogatana-koshirae*
(黒呂塗金蒔絵鞘小刀拵)

*Kogatana-koshirae*
*lacquered in glossy black*
*with gold maki-e decoration*

Crafted during the
Modern period



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*







This ***kogatana*** comes with a lacquered box that is neatly designed to store both the blade and the ***koshirae.*** The box is decorated with ***maki-e*** artwork of a weeping willow and ***sakura***.



Life-size when printed on A4 paper

Happy times





Koshirae bag with floral pattern

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJWA173

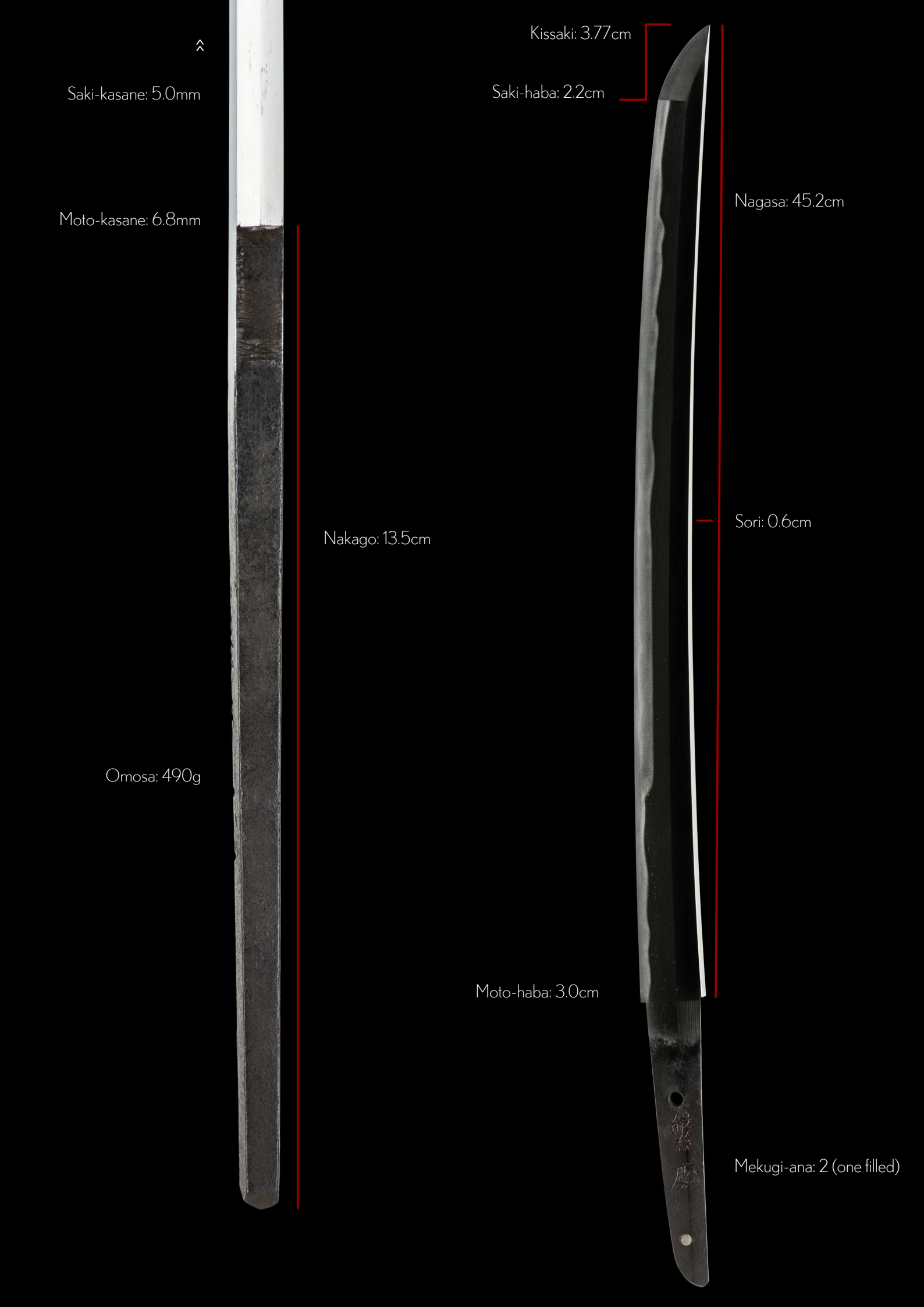
# A HANKEI WAKIZASHI

## SIGNED, SHINTÔ EARLY EDO PERIOD (GENNA ERA: 1615~1624)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Hankei*** *(shodai, first generation)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 45.2cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 0.6cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0cm **Weight:** 490g |
| **Jihada:** | *Rich ô-hada mixed with mokume with plentiful chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gleaming suguha mixed with notare in nie-deki, with kinsuji, sunagashi and ashi* |
| **Certificate #1-2:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword and tsuba Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #3:** | **NBTHK Hozon** *(a fuchi-kashira Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #4:** | **NTHK-NPO Yûshûsaku** (*a sword certified as MasterWork)* |
| **Certificate #5-7:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, menuki & kogai/kozuka certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Saijô-saku** (*ranked as a grandmaster swordsmith*) |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Kanzan-sensei** (*Dr. Satô Kanzan)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, custom koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

Grandmaster swordsmith ***Hankei*** was born *Noda Zenshirô Kiyotaka* in *Mikawa* province. He began his career as a gunsmith in service to *Tokugawa Ieyasu*. Following the death of Ieyasu in 1616, Hankei relocated to *Edo* and transitioned to the art of sword making. Hankei's stylistic inspiration was drawn from *Norishige* with a unique signature that evolved throughout his career, with two primary variations: the "*ro-mata*" signature from his prime years (that this wakizashi features) and the later "*ru-mata*" mei. This exceptional wakizashi with from his formative years is a particularly rare and significant collector's item with a glorious custom koshirae with *Mino* school fittings.


Saki-kasane: 5.0mm
Moto-kasane: 6.8mm
Nakago: 13.5cm
Omosa: 490g
Kissaki: 3.77cm
Saki-haba: 2.2cm
Nagasa: 45.2cm
Sori: 0.6cm
Moto-haba: 3.0cm
Mekugi-ana: 2 (one filled)

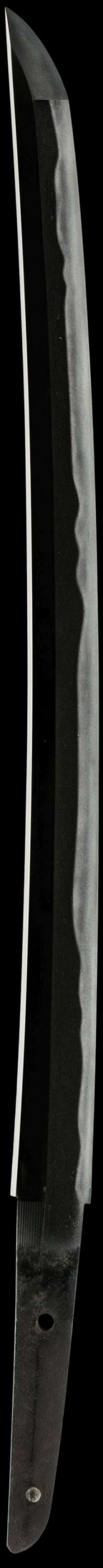
Grandmaster swordsmith *Hankei* was born *Noda Zenshirô Kiyotaka* in *Mikawa* province. He began his career as a gunsmith in service to the *Tokugawa* family with *shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu having* provided him with charcoal in the amount of 1,000 *hyô* every year.

Following the death of *Ieyasu* in 1616, Hankei relocated to *Edo* (Tokyo) and transitioned to the art of sword making. This career shift established him, alongside first generation *Yasutsugu*, as one of the premier swordsmiths of Edo and the *shintô* period.

While historical accounts suggest *Masamune* as Hankei's stylistic inspiration, careful examination of his surviving works indicates he more closely resembles the style of *Norishige*, Masamune's star student.

Though his exact death date remains unknown, it is believed that Hankei was active until at least the mid-*Kan'ei* era (1635~1640). His signature style evolved throughout his career, with two primary variations: the "*ro-mata*" signature from his prime years (that this wakizashi features) and the "*ru-mata*" signature from his later working life.

Hankei holds the prestigious *saijô-saku* (grandmaster) ranking, a distinction awarded to only a select few swordsmiths of the *shintô* period. This exceptional *ubu nakago* wakizashi with from his formative working years is a particularly rare and significant collector's item with beautiful *Mino* school fittings in an autumn theme.





Location: *Edo*
Family name: *Noda*
Swordsmith: *Hankei* (first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*ô-sujikai-yasurime* (diagonal file marks)

繁 (Han)

慶 (kei)

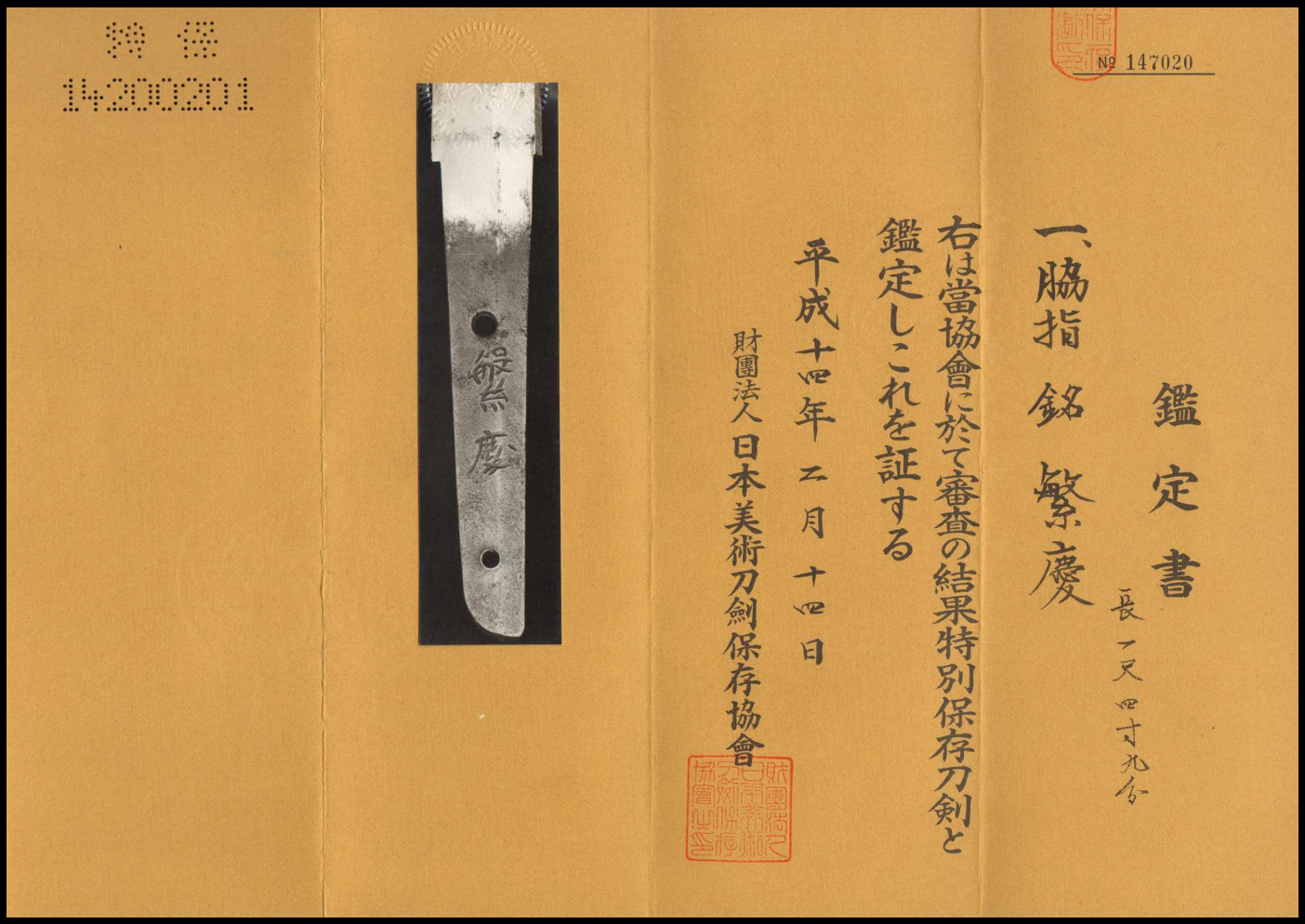
signed in *ro-mata* style



*ro-mata*
(flourishing/golden era)



*ru-mata*
(his latter years)




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

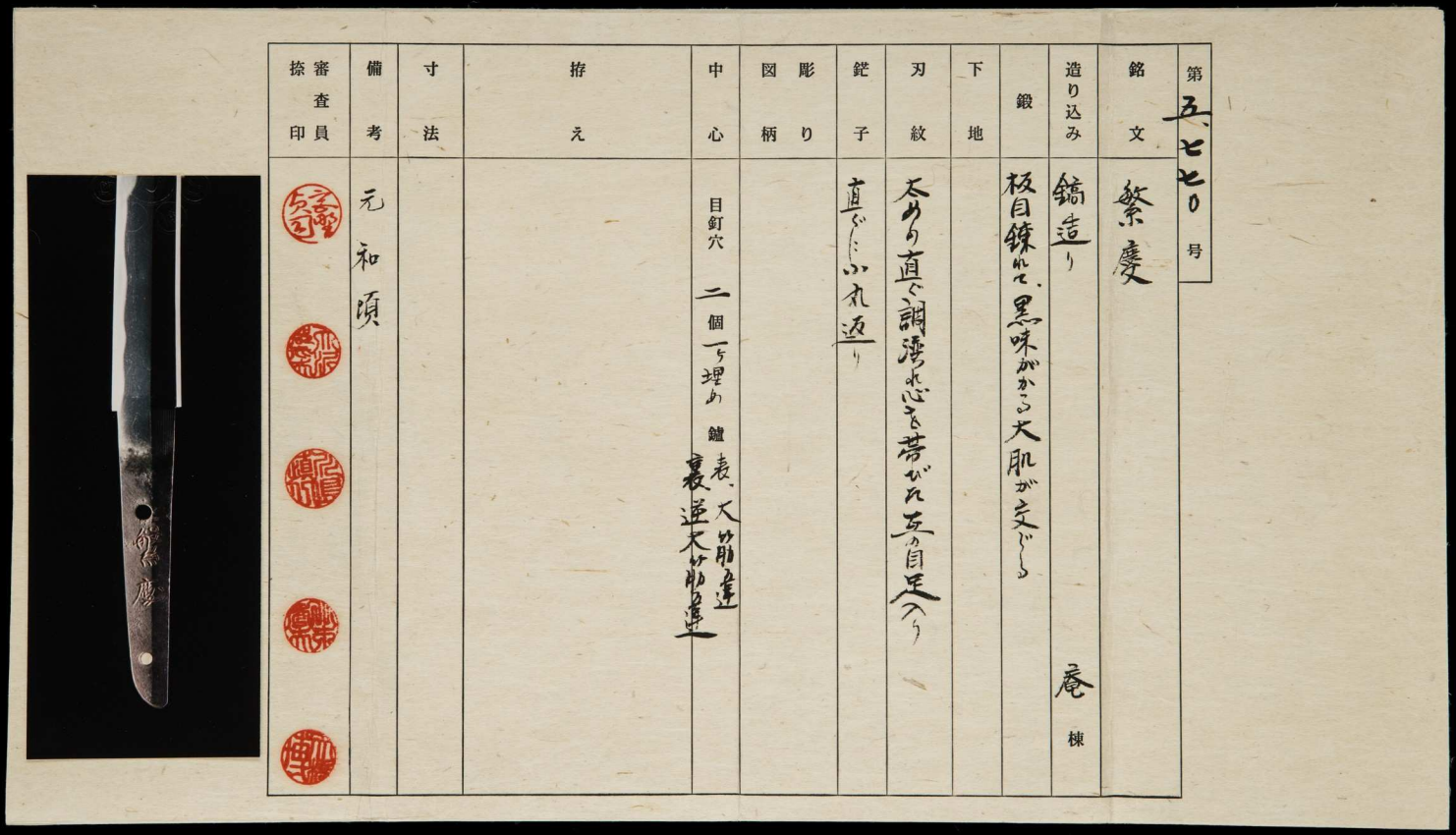
Issued in the 14th year of Heisei (2002), February 14th

One, Wakizashi

*Mei* (signature)
*Hankei*

*Nagasa* (length)
1-shaku 4-sun 9-bu (45.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




# NTHK-NPO Yushusaku
# Certificate of Authenticity

This wakizashi was designated as *Yushusaku* (Highly Excellent)
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

One, Wakizashi

*Mei* (signature)
*Hankei*

*Nagasa* (length)
1-shaku 4-sun 9-bu (45.2cm)

Issued in 26th year of Heisei (2014), July 23rd

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)

This sword has reached the highest level of honour at the NTHK-NPO.
Five judges have stamped their names to the certificate.



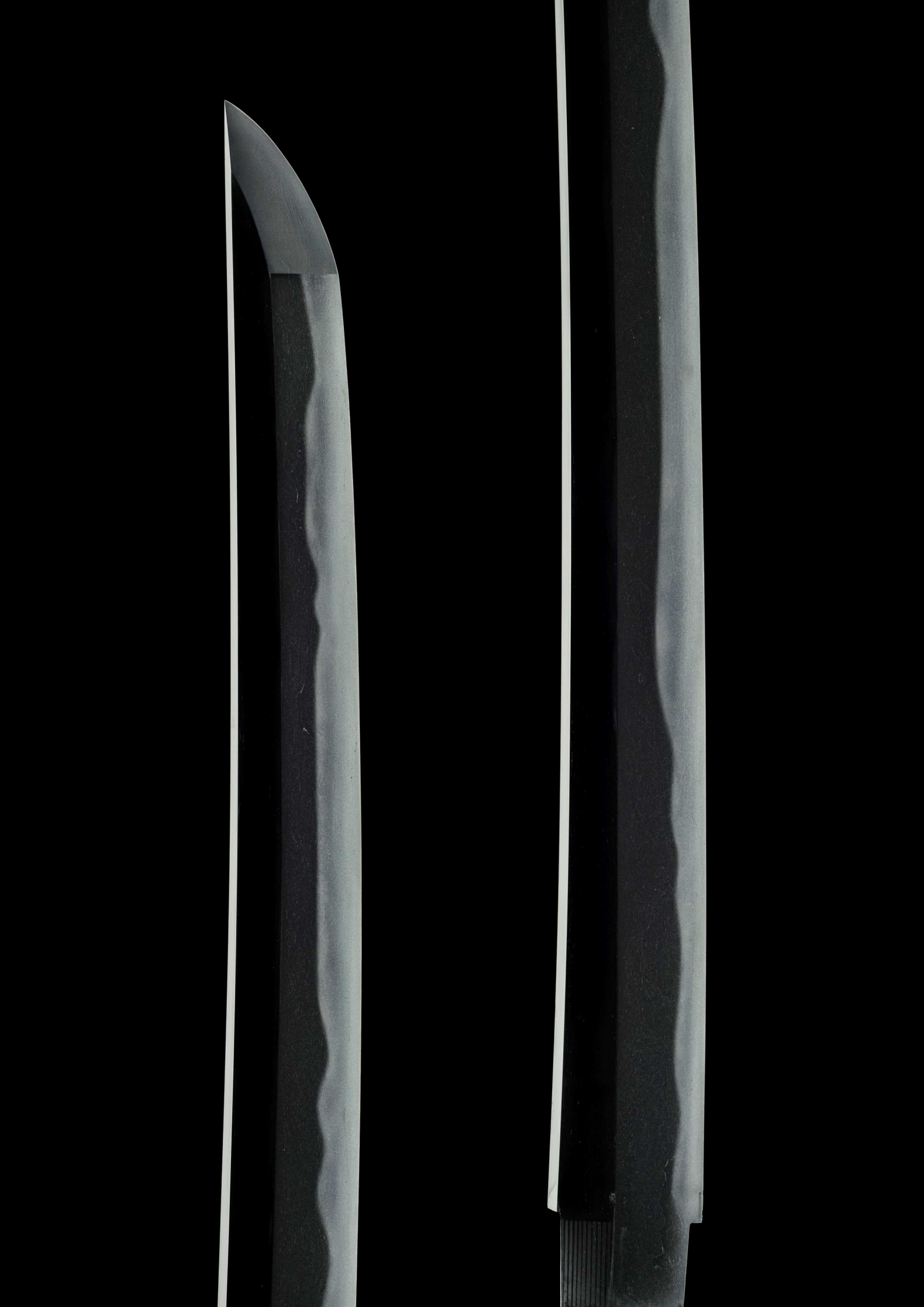
武蔵國繫慶
*Musashi no kuni Hankei*
Hankei from Musashi province

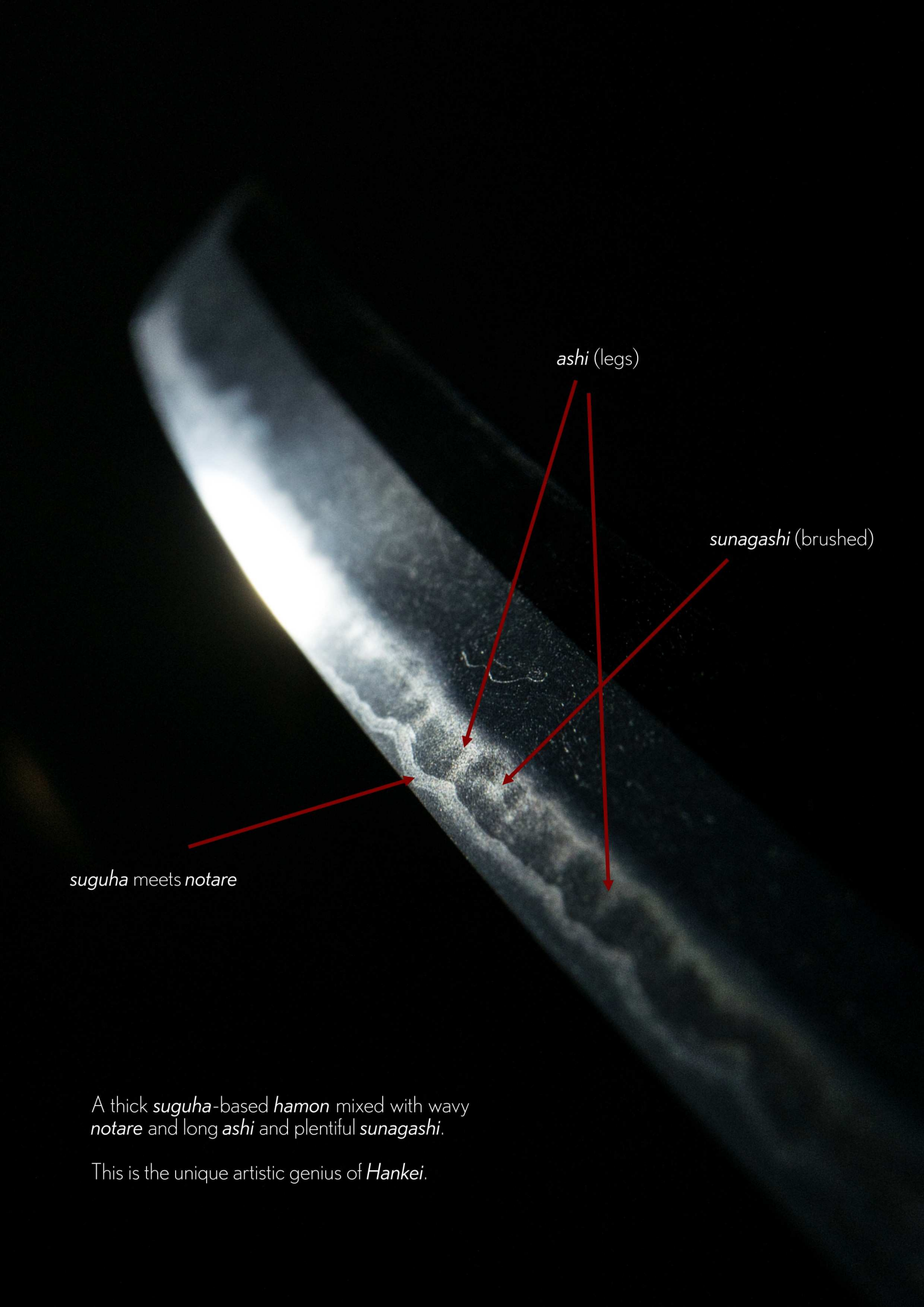
二字晩年作也
*Niji bannen saku nari*
Signed with two characters, crafted in his later years

刃長壱尺弐寸九分有之
*Hachô 1-shaku 4-sun 9-bu kore ari*
Blade length 45.2 cm

昭和癸丑年盛夏寒山誌（花押）
*Shôwa mizunoto-ushidoshi seika Kanzan shirusu + kaô*
Written by Kanzan in the mid-summer in Shôwa era
Year of the Ox (1973) + monogram








A thick ***suguha***-based ***hamon*** mixed with wavy ***notare*** and long ***ashi*** and plentiful ***sunagashi***.

This is the unique artistic genius of ***Hankei***.


*kinsuji* (dark golden line)
sparkling *nie-deki*


*kinsuji*
*ô-hada* (big swirls of grain pattern)



*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

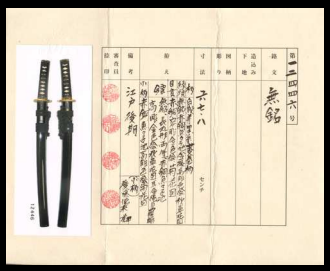


gold ***habaki*** with
rainfall file marks

*Kuro-ro-nuri saya*
*chiisagatana-koshirae*
(黒呂塗鞘小さ刀拵)

*Chiisagatana-koshirae*
*Lacquered in glossy black*

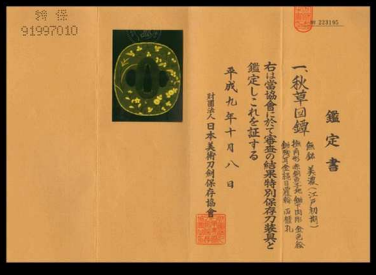
Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



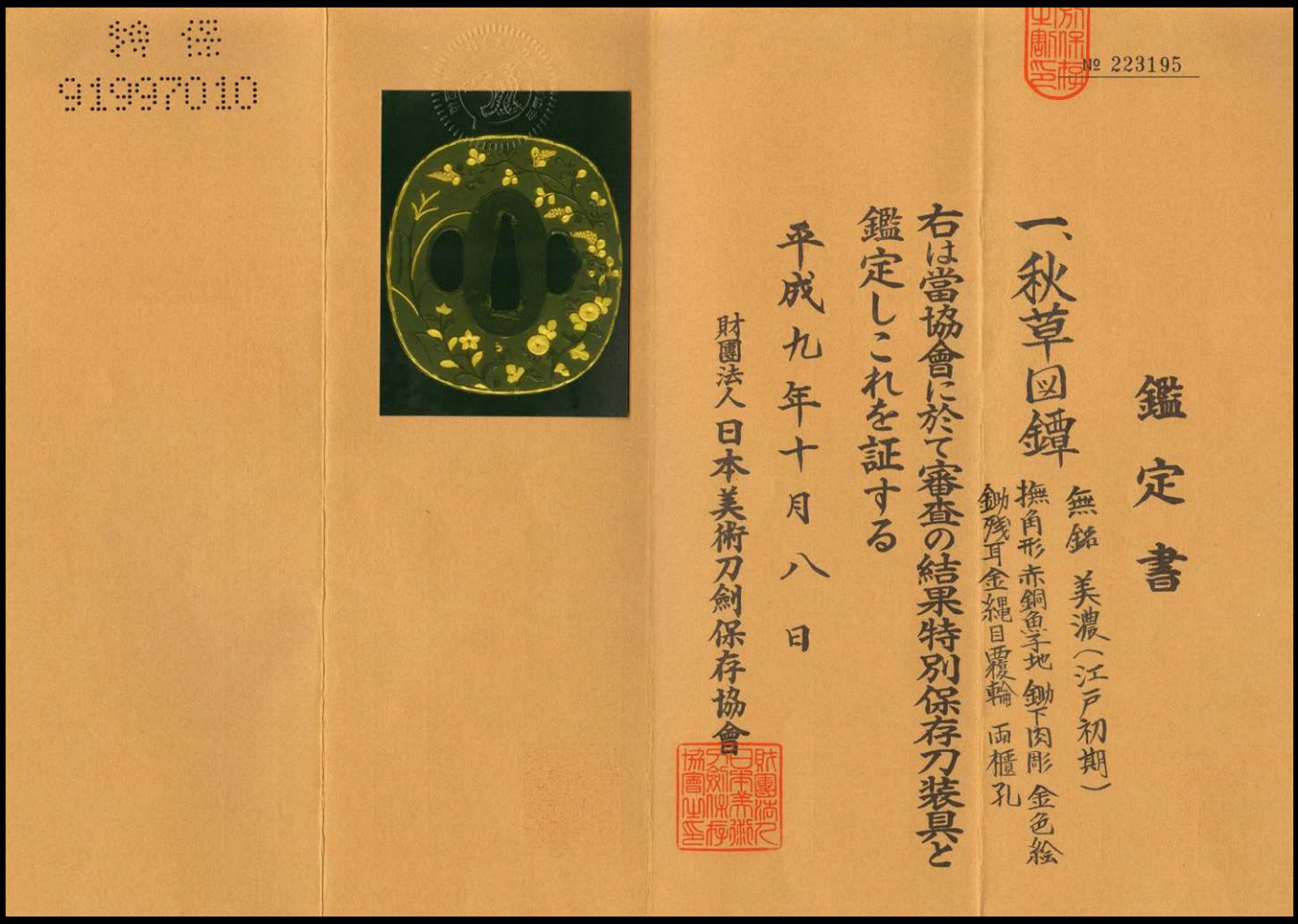
*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*



This beautiful tsuba has been attributed to the esteemed *Mino school* and dated to the early Edo period (1600s), being of similar age to the wakizashi itself. The theme portrayed on the tsuba is of autumn leaves, a specialty of the Mino school and has been certified with NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon.






NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 9th year of Heisei (1997), October 8th

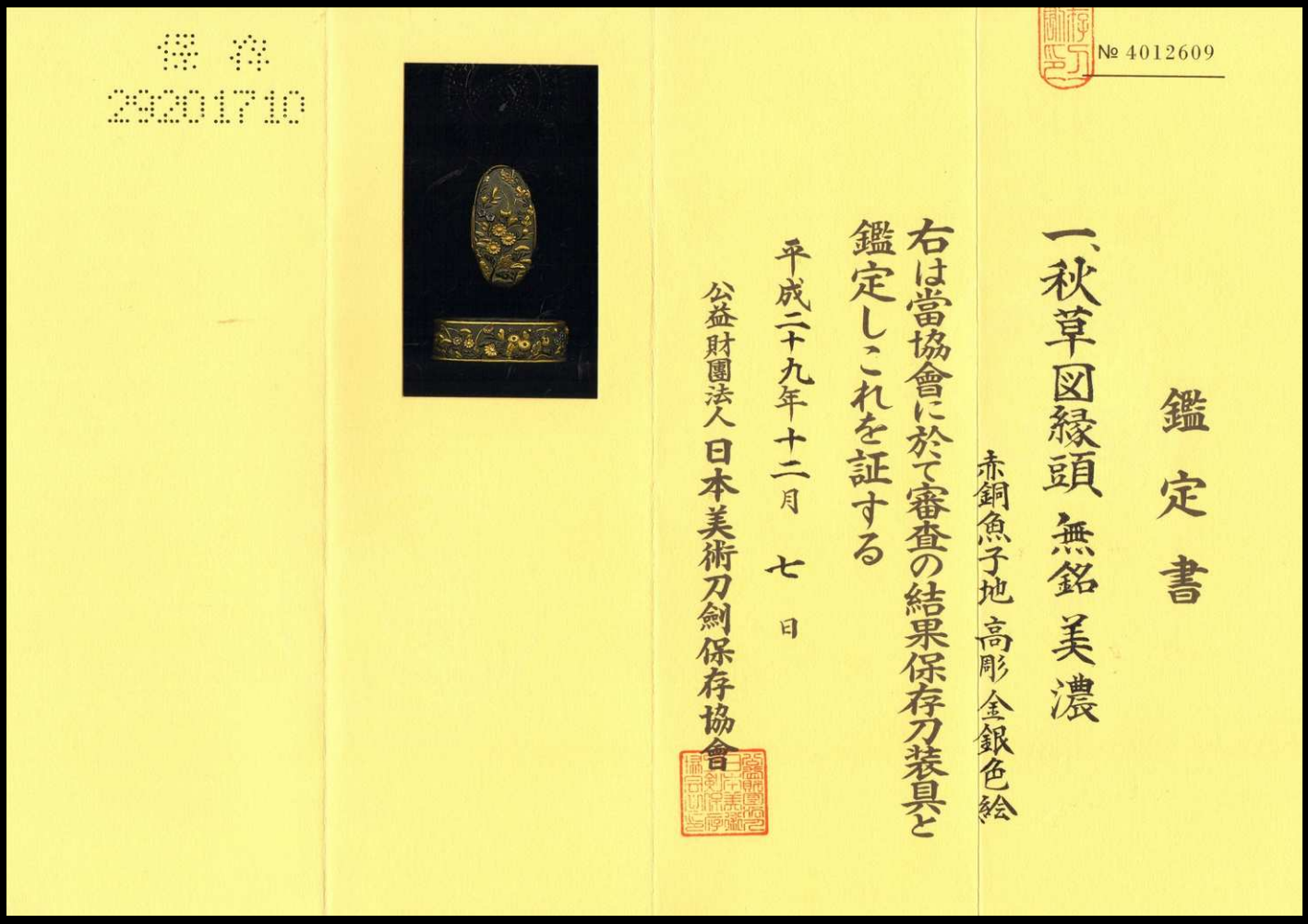
One, Tsuba

*Depicting autumn leaves*

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Mino (Edo-shoki)*

*Angular shape with rounded-off corners, shakudô with nanako ground,*
*relief cut into the ground plate, gold accents,*
*raised rim with golden rope-style rim trimming, two hitsu-ana*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 29th year of Heisei (2017), December 7th

One, Fuchigashira

*Depicting autumn leaves*

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Mino school*

*Shakudô with nanako ground, relief, gold and silver accents*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



*Fuchi-kashira*
attributed to
*Mino school*

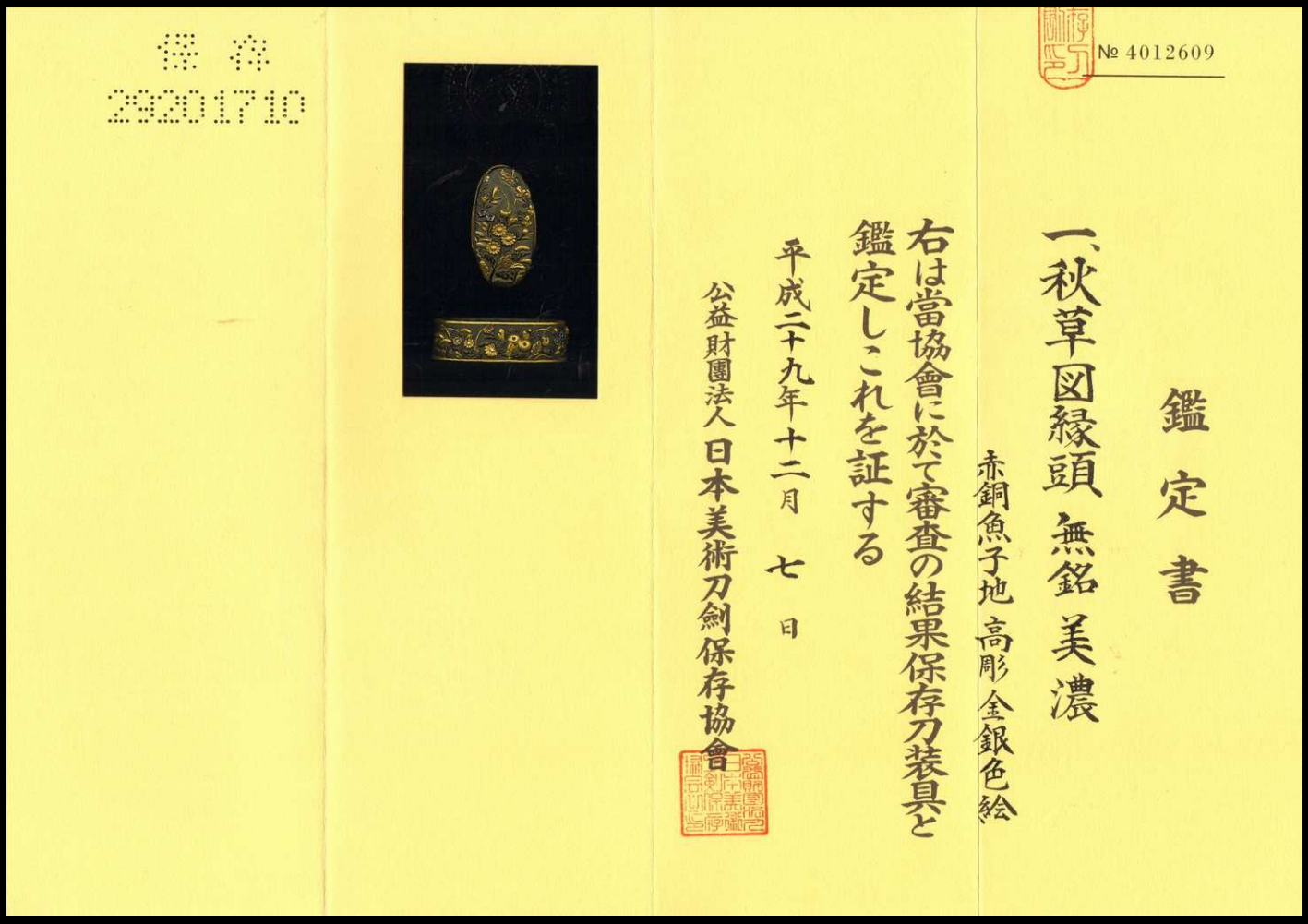
Autumn leaves





*Menuki* (decorative grips on the hilt) carry autumn leaves theme.
These menuki are attributed to the *Mino School* of the Middle Edo period (1700s).






NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 29th year of Heisei (2017), December 7th

One, Fuchigashira

*Depicting autumn leaves*

*Mumei* (unsigned)
*Mino school*

*Shakudô with nanako ground, relief, gold and silver accents*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

*kozuka* (utility knife)



The ***kozuka*** and ***kogai*** were handy tools of the Edo period samurai, both fitted into specially made slots in the ***saya*** (scabbard). The pair display a chrysanthemum theme.



This set was crafted by ***Gotô Etsujô*** from Kaga province. ***Goto Etsujô*** was born in Kyoto in 1642, the second son of ***Goto Teijô*** (the 9th head of the main ***Gotô*** family). He was hired by the ***Maeda family*** and lived in ***Kanazawa*** every other year to craft fittings for the family. He also trained many students and devoted himself to the development of ***Kashû*** craftsmen.



*kogai* (hair pick)

signed ***kogai/kozuka*** set

後 (Go)
藤 (tô)
悦 (Etsu)
乗 (jô)
花押 (kaô)

***Gotô Etsujô + kaô***

Gotô Etsujô + monogram



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



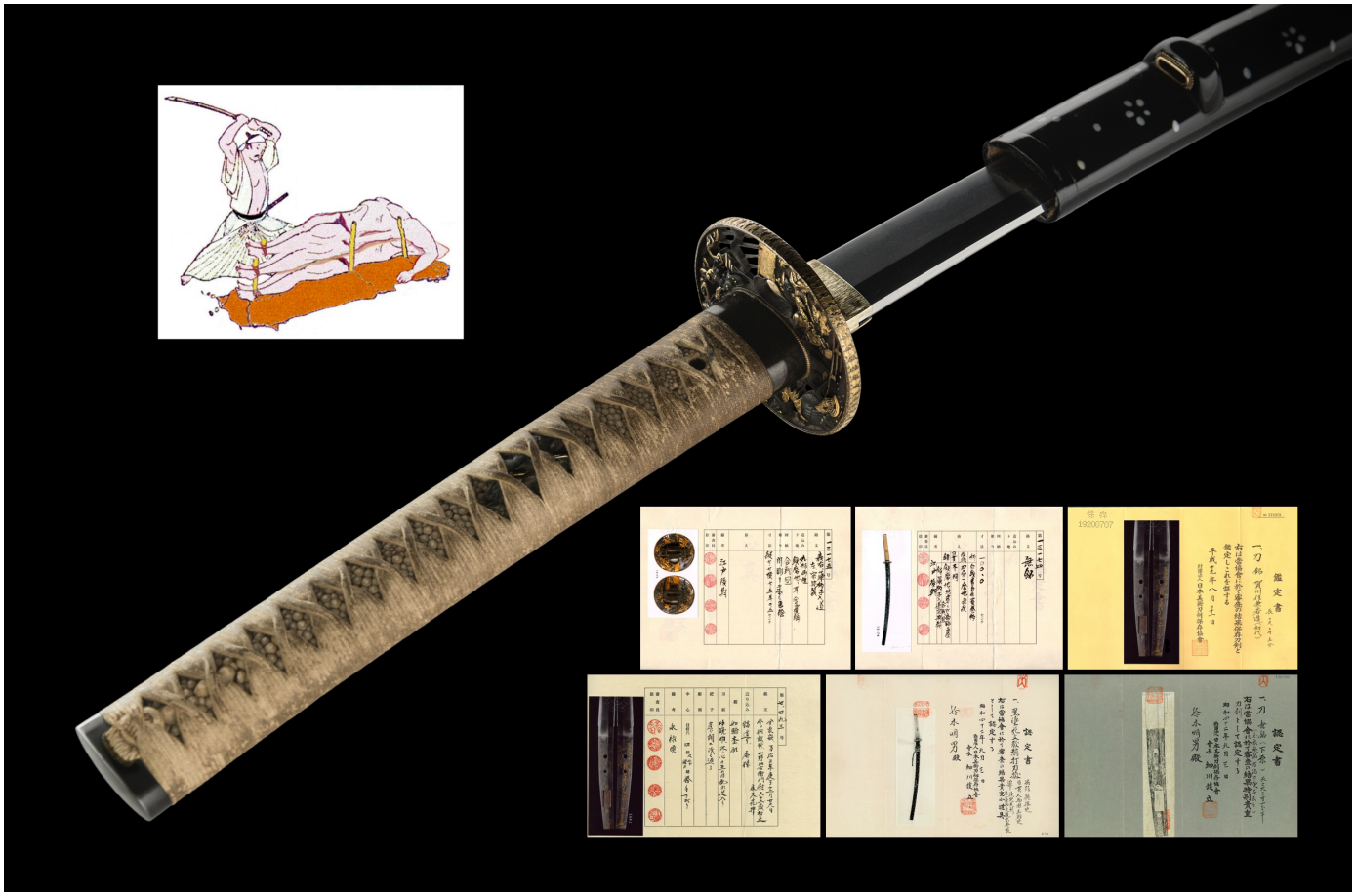
garden party



Congratulations Mike.

Warm regards,
Pablo

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA362

# A YASUSHIGE 'TAMESHIGIRI' KATANA

## UNSIGNED, SUE-KOTÔ MUROMACHI PERIOD (EIROKU ERA: 1558~1570)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Shitahara Yasushige*** |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 70.3cm (*o-suriage*) **Sori:** 1.9cm **Moto-haba:** 2.82cm **Weight:** 660g |
| **Jihada:** | *Stunning mokume-hada mixed with itame, nagare-hada with plentiful chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gunome midare with ko-notare, togari, kinsuji, sunagashi and ashi in nie-deki* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Hozon** *(sword Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-3:** | **NBTHK Kichô and Tokubetsu Kichô** *(koshirae & sword designated as precious)* |
| **Certificate #4-5:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae and tsuba certified as Authentic)* |
| **Fujishiro rank:** | **Chûjô-saku** (*ranked as an above average swordsmith*) |
| **Sharpness**: | **Wazamonô** (*rated as a maker of supremely sharp swords*) |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

This powerful katana has been attributed to *wazamono*-ranked ***Yasushige*** from the *Shitahara* school – official smiths of the *Tokugawa* family from the late Muromachi period. The blade features stunning whirlpools of *mokume, itame* and *nagare-hada* that immediately captures the eye. Beautiful lines of *kinsuji* further rip through the bright *gunome-midare hamon*. This katana was tested by *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* when he was 62-years-old, *severing through three stacked bodies in one stroke*. The result of the test documented in gold inlay. A terrific set of Edo-period koshirae featuring a *Mogarashi Sôten tsuba* with battling samurai accompanies this highly collectible katana.

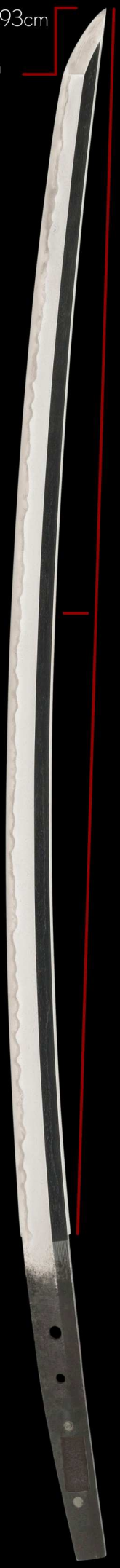


Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Moto-kasane: 5.7mm

Nakago: 18.9cm

Omosa: 660g



Kissaki: 3.93cm

Saki-haba: 1.95cm

Nagasa: 70.3cm

Sori: 1.9cm

Moto-haba: 2.82cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

The *Shitahara* (下原) *school* can trace its roots back five hundred years to swordsmith *Chikashige* (周重) who worked during the *Daiei* period from 1521~1528).

The school flourished with the support of the *Go-Hôjô* clan but after the fall of the clan, they became the official smiths of the *Tokugawa* family, producing swords and spears in the *Hachioji* area in *Tokyo* from the late *Muromachi* period until the end of the Edo period. Interestingly, they were the only school that worked in Tokyo prior to the 1600s and enjoyed the reputation for having produced powerful swords that samurai warrior class could entrust with their lives.

This handsome katana has been attributed to *Yasushige* (康重), *Chikashige*'s eldest son, who received the name "*Yasu*" from *Hôjô Ujiyasu* (北条氏康), the third head of *Go-Hôjô* family. Yasushige's prime working time was during the *Eiroku* era circa 1558~1570.

After taking in its graceful curvature of this fine samurai sword, the eye gets drawn into the stunning whirlpools of *mokume* and *itame-hada* and even *nagare-hada* grain patterns - distinctive *shitahara-hada* - which converge at the blade's central area. Gorgeous chocolatey *chikei* abounds. Beautiful lines of *kinsuji* further rip through the bright *gunome-midare hamon* the full length of the blade.

Backing up the sharp-sword making *wazamono* ranked reputation of *Yasushige*, this katana was tested by *tameshigiri* guru *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* on December 26th, 1660 by severing through *three stacked bodies in one stroke*. The result of the test documented in gold inlay on the nakago of the sword, even providing Nagahisa's age of 62 years at the time of the test. It's important to note that the majority of swords tested by Nagahisa were performed on blades made in the early *shintô* era (1600s) such as those crafted by *Yamato no Kami Yasusada*, so it's relatively rare to have a katana from the Muromachi period to have Nagahisa-certified tameshigiri.

A terrific set of *koshirae* from the late Edo period that features a *Mogarashi Sôten tsuba* with battling samurai accompanies this highly collectible katana.





Location: *Musashi province (Tokyo)*
School: *Shitahara*
Swordsmith: *Yasushige* (first generation)

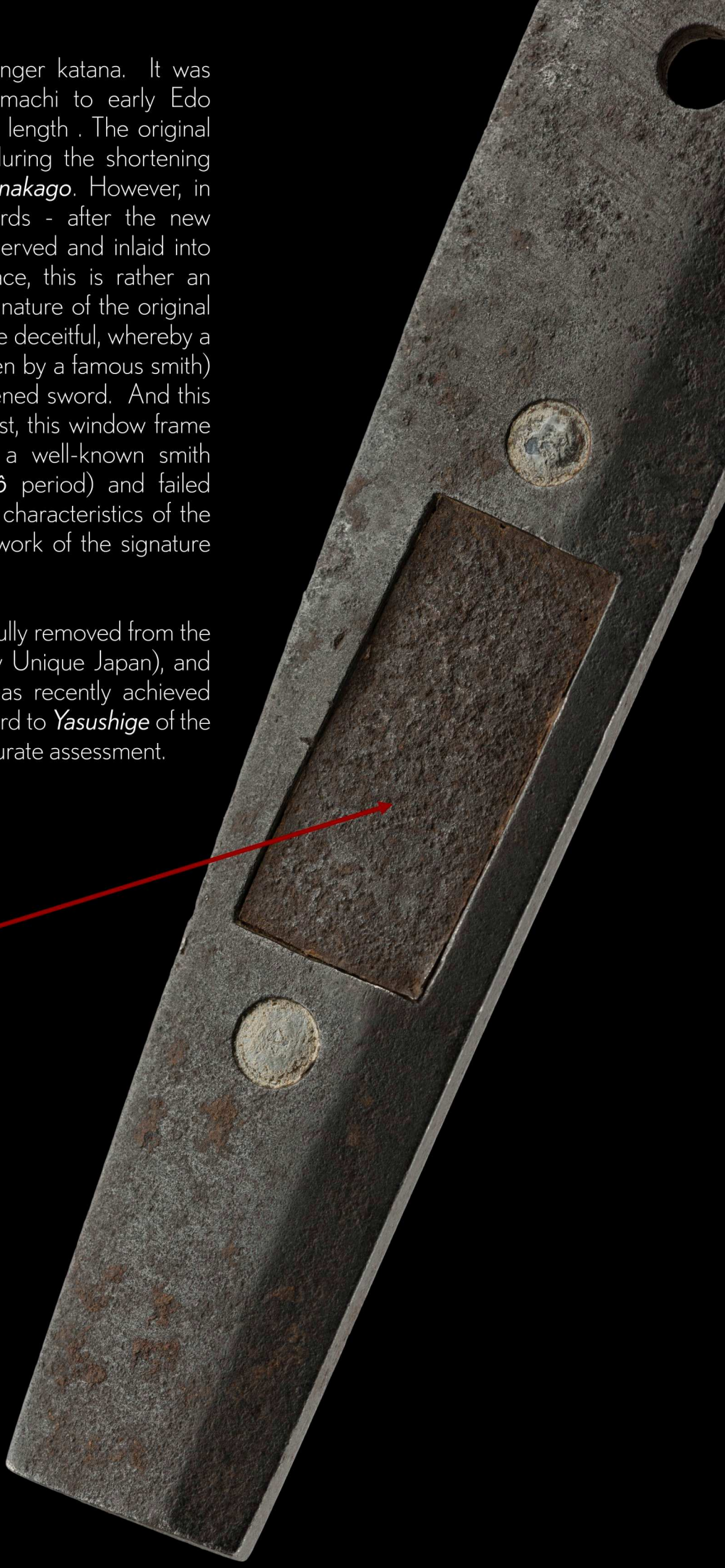
*ô-suriage-nakago* (greatly shortened tang)
*katte-sagari-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

*gakumei window*

(*ura*, reverse)

This sword was once a much longer katana. It was shortened during the late Muromachi to early Edo period to a more practical katana length . The original ***mei*** (signature) is normally lost during the shortening process becoming an ***o-suriage nakago***. However, in ***gaku-mei*** 'framed signature' swords - after the new nakago is formed, the ***mei*** is preserved and inlaid into the 'new' nakago. On the surface, this is rather an honourable act, preserving the signature of the original smith. This process, though, can be deceitful, whereby a signature from another sword (often by a famous smith) could be inlaid into another shortened sword. And this is what happened here. In the past, this window frame would have had a signature of a well-known smith (probably from the ***Nambokuchô*** period) and failed authenticity at the NBTHK, ie the characteristics of the sword did not match the known work of the signature that was in the inlaid window.

Therefore, that signature was carefully removed from the window in the recent past (not by Unique Japan), and resubmitted to the NBTHK. It has recently achieved **NBTHK Hozon** attributing the sword to ***Yasushige*** of the ***Shitahara*** school, a strong and accurate assessment.



A window into **gaku-mei**

*Manji san kanoe-ne jûnigatsu nijûrokunichi*
*Mitsu-dô setsudan Yamano Ka'emon no Jô*
*rokujûsan sai kore o kiru Nagahisa + kaô*

This katana was tested by *Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* by severing through three stacked bodies in one stroke. Test performed on December 26th, 1660 when Nagahisa was 62 years old.



万 (Man)
治 (ji)
三 (san)
庚 (kanoe)
子 (ne)
十 (jû)
二 (ni)
月 (gatsu)
廿 (nijû)
六 (roku)
日 (nichi)

(Mi) 参
(tsu) ツ
(do) 胴
(setsu) 截
(dan) 断

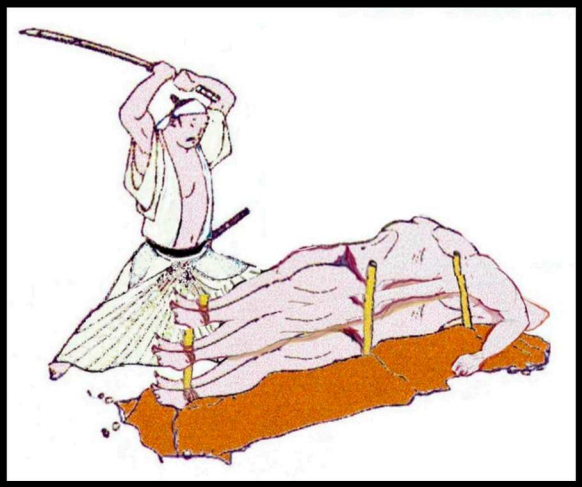
(Yama) 山
(no) 野

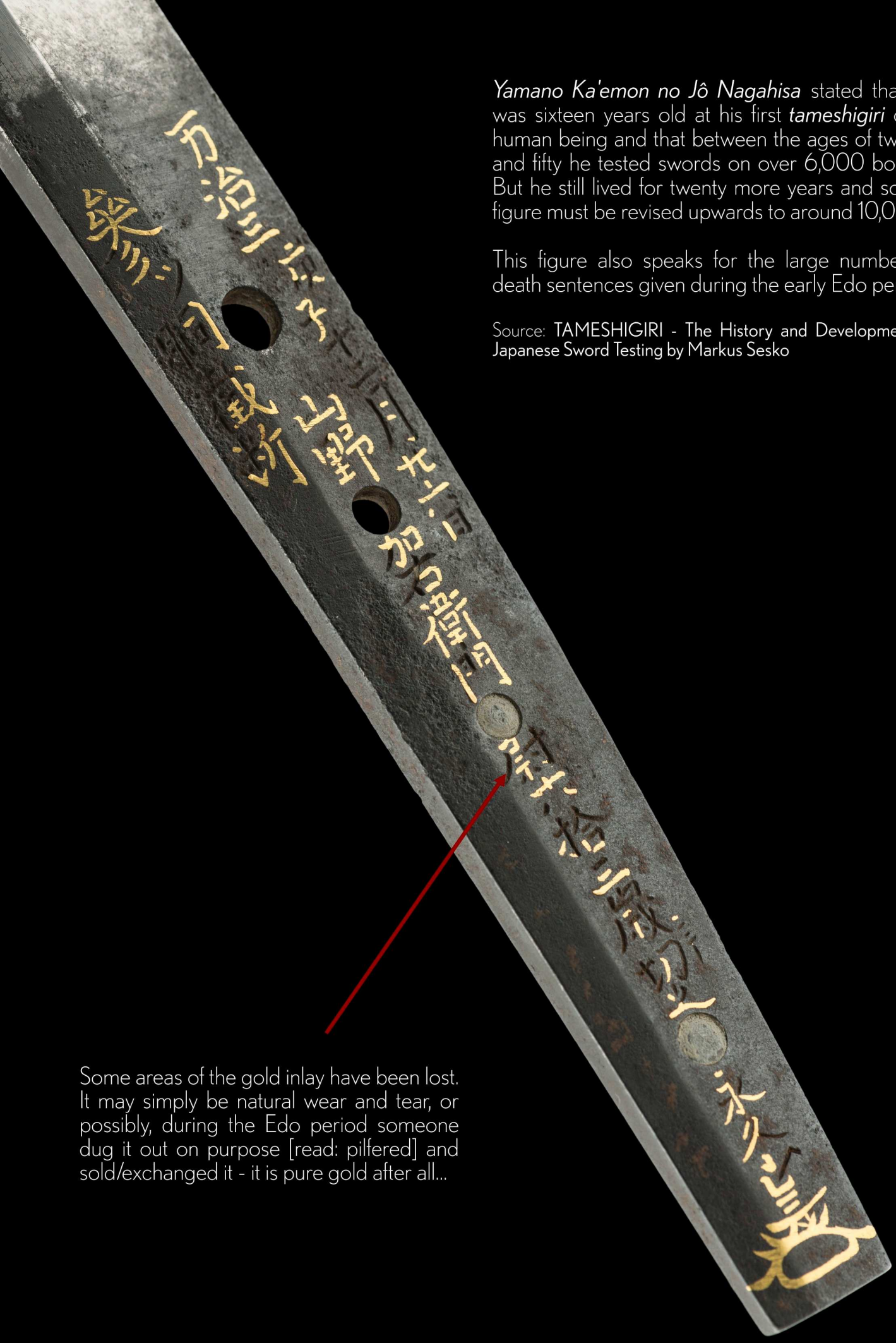
(Ka) 加
(') 右
(e) 衛
(mon (no)) 門

(Jô) 尉
(roku) 六
(jû) 拾
(san) 三
(sai) 歳
(kiru) 切
(kore) 之

(Naga) 永
(hisa) 久

(kaô) 花押



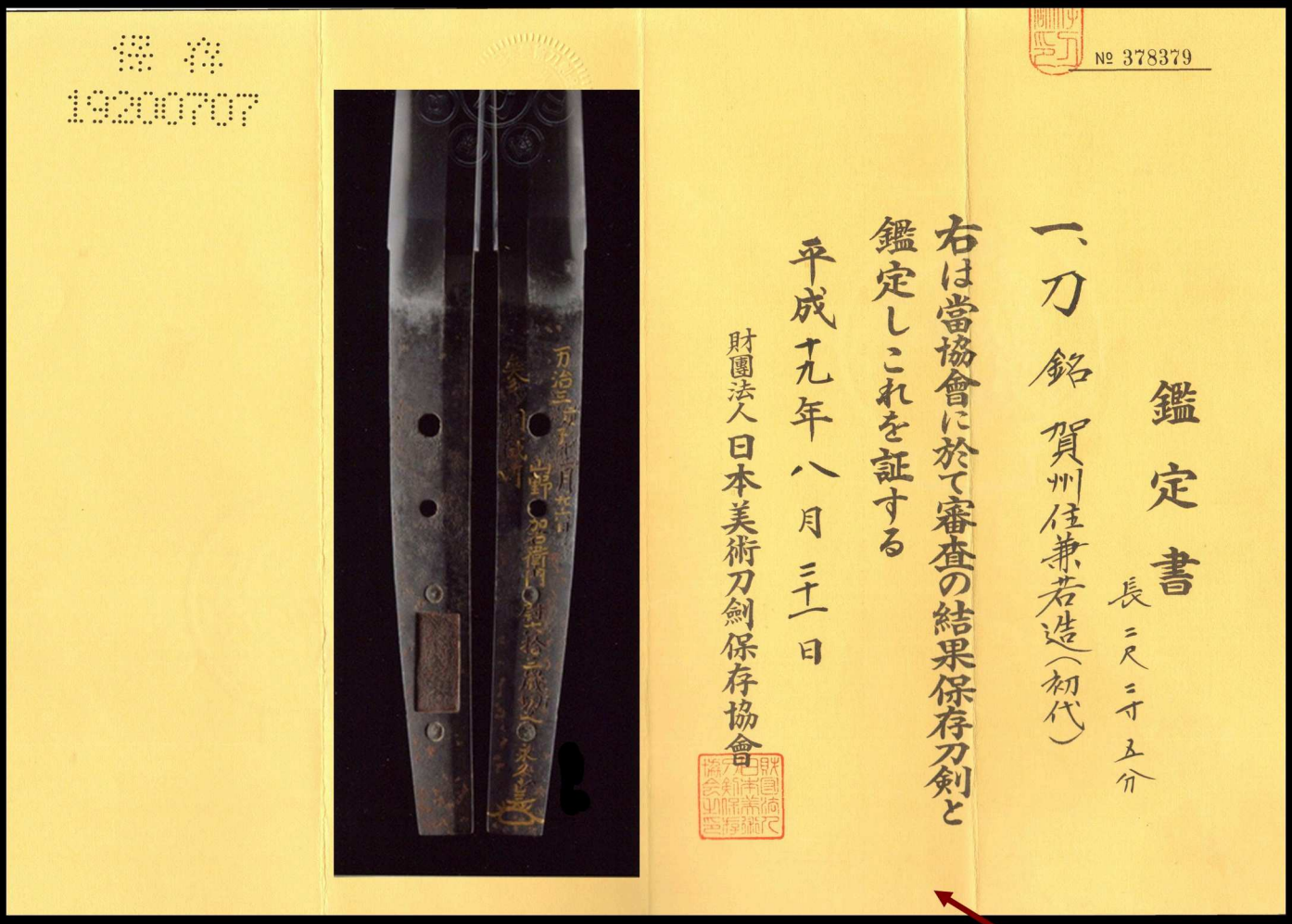


*Yamano Ka'emon no Jô Nagahisa* stated that he was sixteen years old at his first *tameshigiri* on a human being and that between the ages of twenty and fifty he tested swords on over 6,000 bodies. But he still lived for twenty more years and so the figure must be revised upwards to around 10,000!

This figure also speaks for the large number of death sentences given during the early Edo period.

Source: TAMESHIGIRI - The History and Development of Japanese Sword Testing by Markus Sesko

Some areas of the gold inlay have been lost. It may simply be natural wear and tear, or possibly, during the Edo period someone dug it out on purpose [read: pilfered] and sold/exchanged it - it is pure gold after all...




NBTHK Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

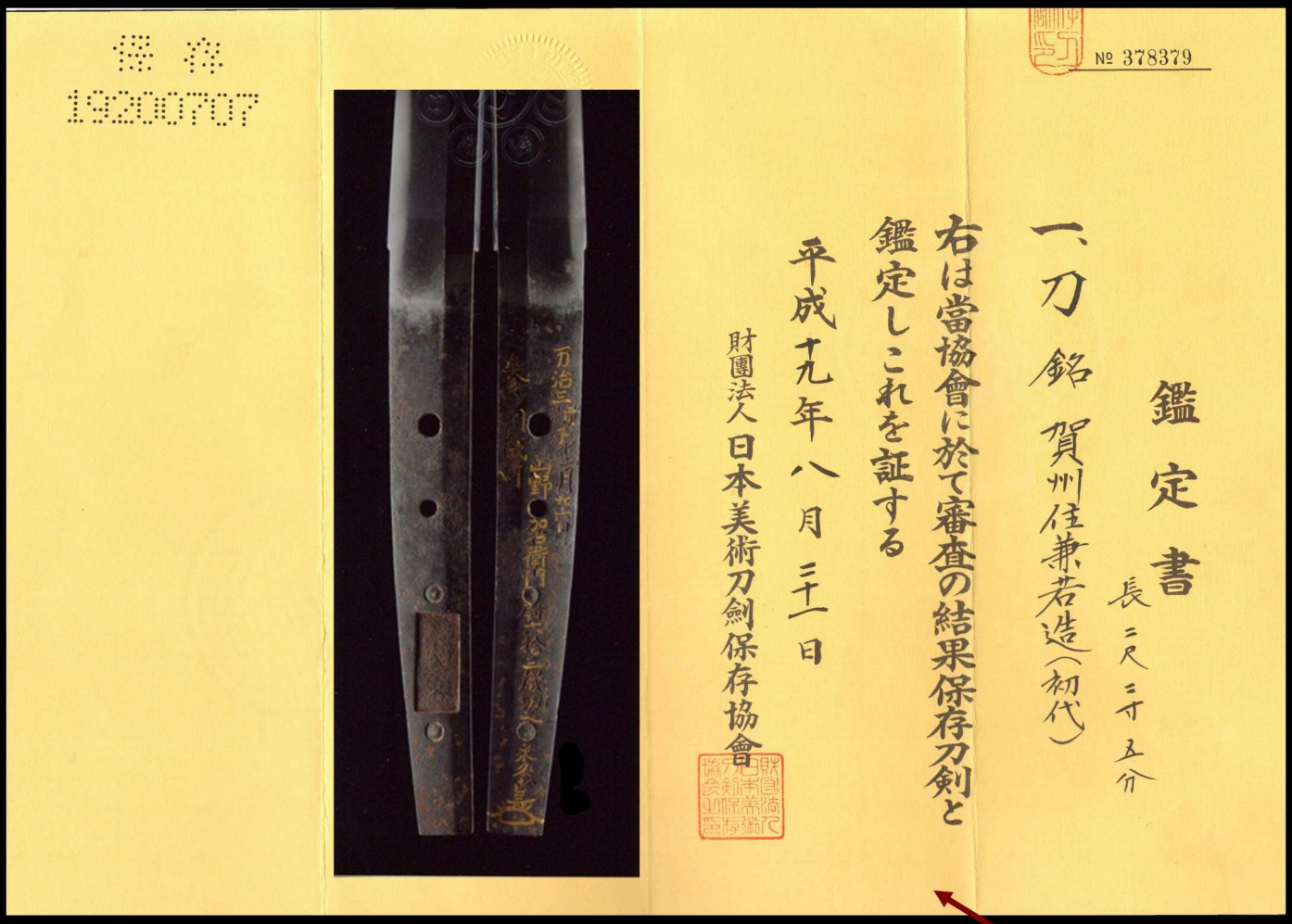
One, Katana

*Mei* (mumei)
*Shitahara Yasushige*

This sword has recently passed NBTHK Hozon and the certificate is arriving soon.

Unique Japan will scan and translate when in our possession.

**As a rule of the NBTHK, any sword made from the Muromachi period onwards (1400~) that is ***unsigned***, the highest level of certification will be NBTHK Hozon. In terms of quality, had this sword been signed it would surely have been granted NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon.




example certificate

# NBTHK Hozon
# Certificate of Designation

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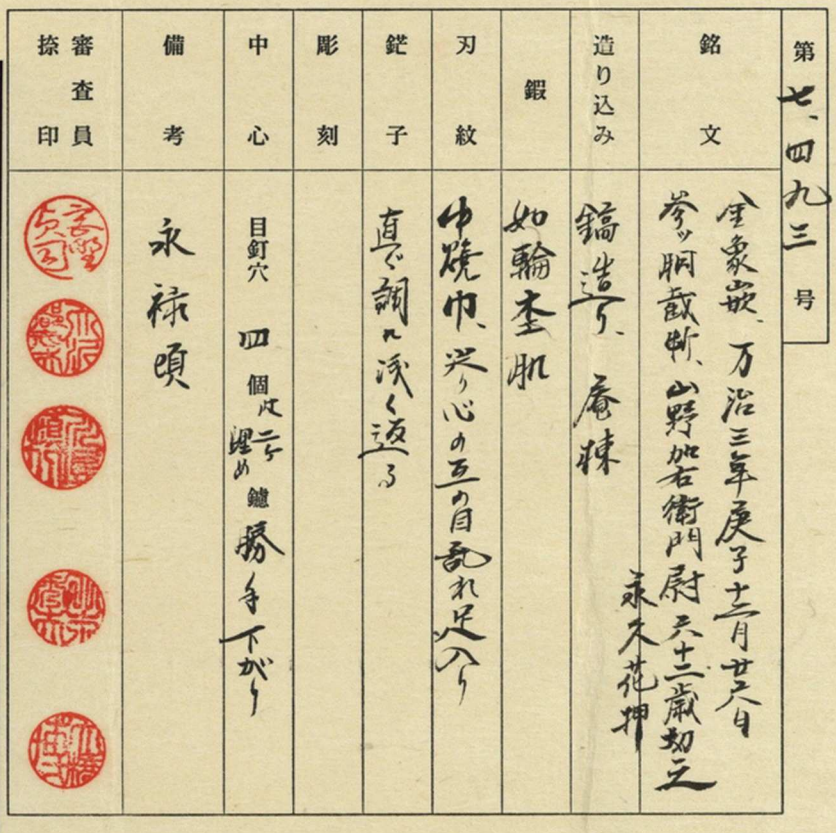



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity

This katana was designated as *Authentic*
by the Non-Profit Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword

One, Katana

*Mumei* (attributed to *Shitahara Terushige*)

*Kinzôgan Manji sannen Kanoe-ne jûnigatsu nijûrokunichi*
*Mitsu-dô setsudan Yamano Ka'emon no Jô rokujûni-sai kore o kiru*
*Nagahisa + kaô*

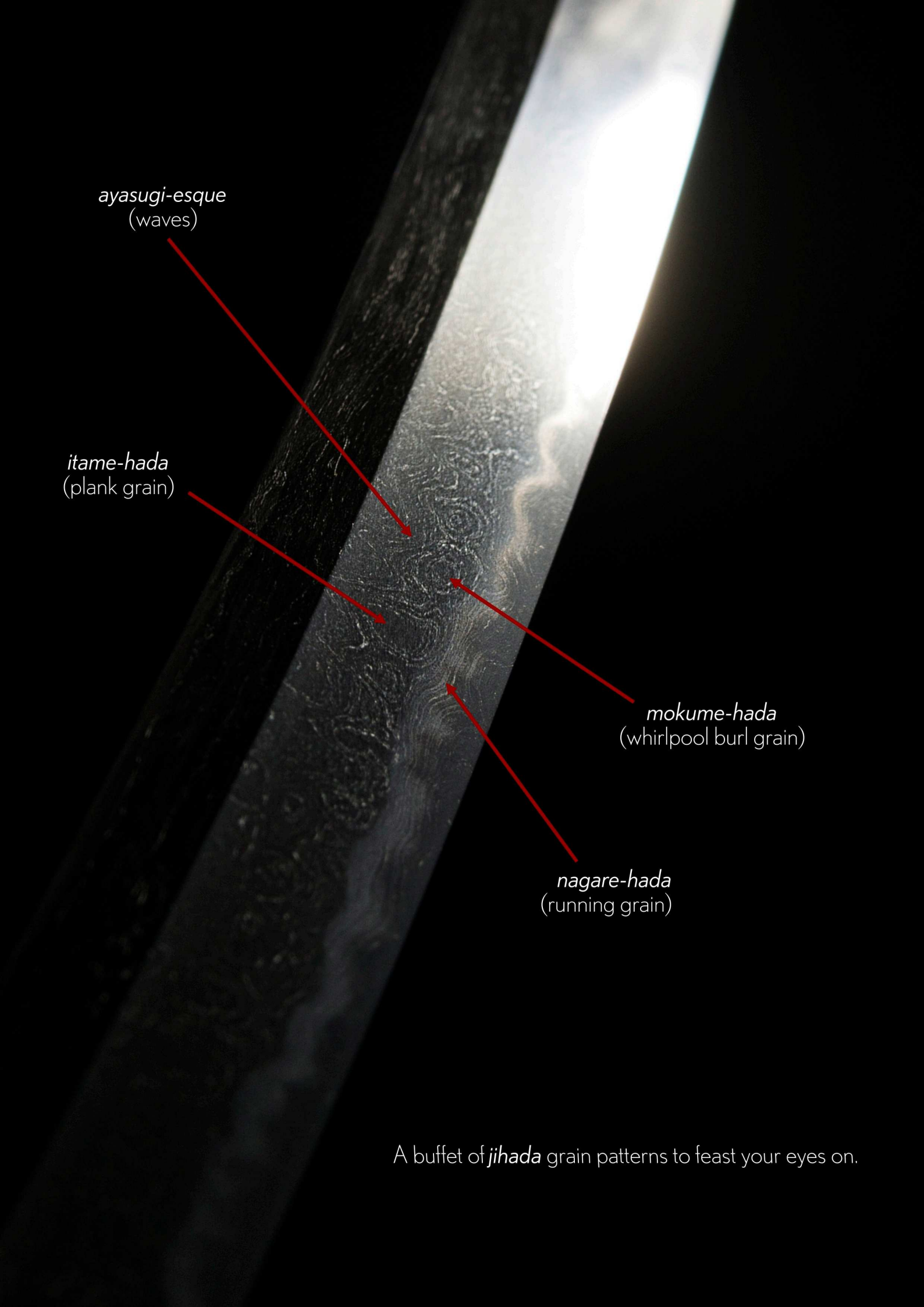
*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu kore ari (70.3cm)

Issued in 28th year of Heisei (2016), March 22nd

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)








A buffet of ***jihada*** grain patterns to feast your eyes on.


A clear and consistent *gunome-midare* with pointed *togari* and *ashi* (legs).
*togari*
*ashi*




Impressive lines of *kinsuji* and brushed *sunagashi* thread through the *gunome-midare hamon.*

There is a stormy aliveness to this sword that speaks to its turbulent late Muromachi period origins.



*Kaen-boshi* (candlelit)

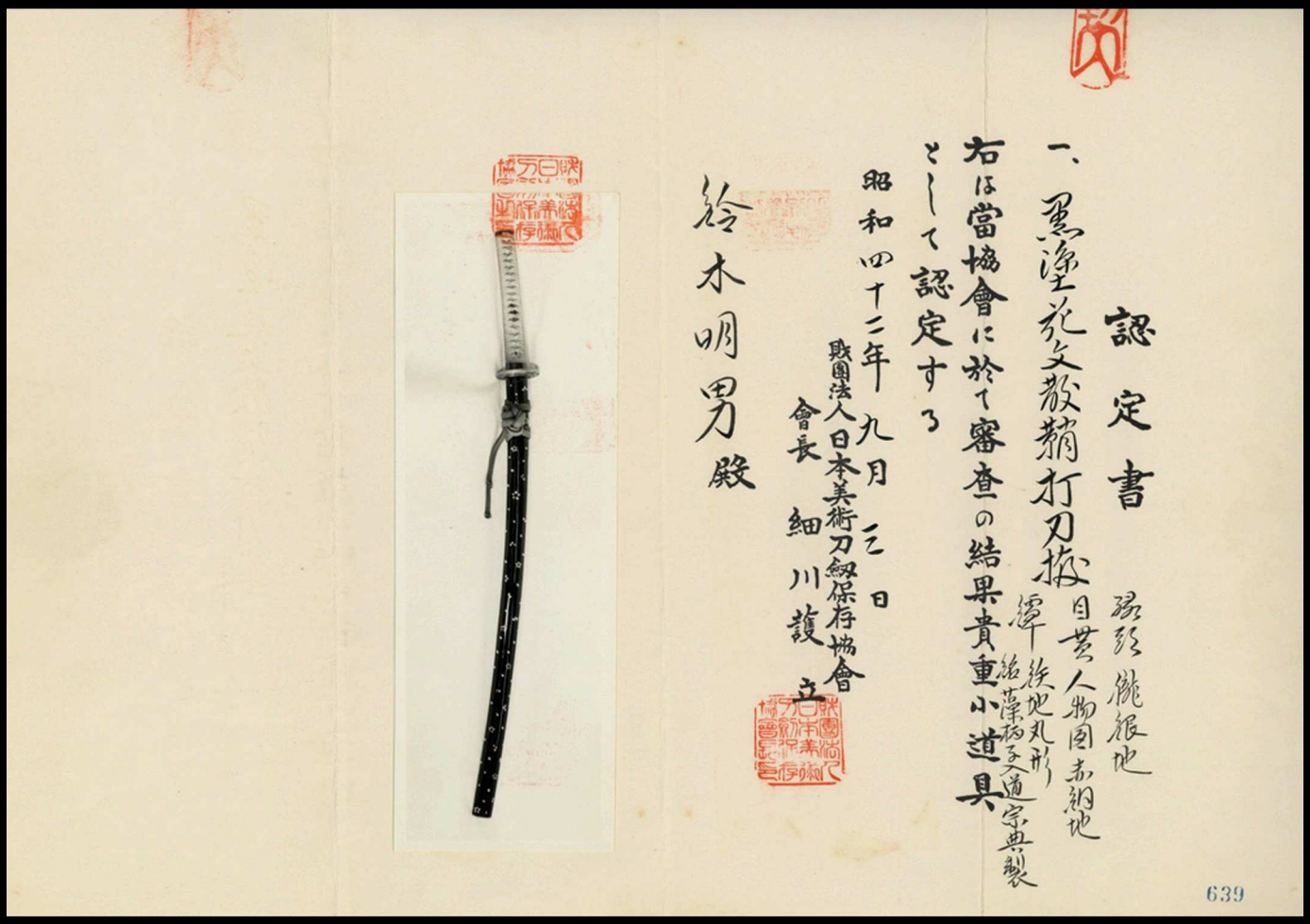


sayagaki potential

*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)



gold ***habaki*** with
copper ground




NBTHK Kichô
Certificate of Designation

A koshirae designated as *Precious*
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword

Issued in the 42nd year of Showa (1967), September 3rd

One,

*Uchigatana-koshirae lacquered in black with flying flowers pattern*

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

(This is a very early NBTHK certificate issued many years
before modern NBTHK Hozon & Tokubetsu Hozon.)



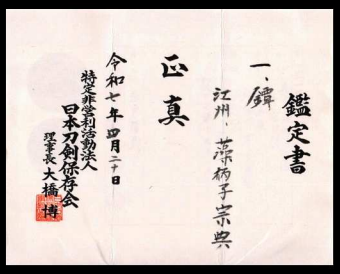
flower petals flying free...

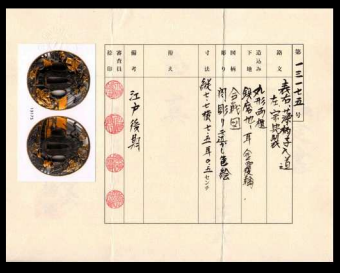


*Mogarashi Sôten* worked in *Hikone*, *Ômi* Province, crafting fabuously detailed *Mino*-inspired carvings.

Famous for his autumn grass designs and dramatic samurai battle scenes, his densely carved, richly inlaid style became known as *Ômi-bori* and gained popularity even in distant Edo, modern day Tokyo.

This piece shows not only warriors in combat but also includes a phoenix in the lower left – likely symbolizing enduring military fortune.




藻 (Mo)
柄 (gara)
子 (shi)
入 (Nyû)
道 (dô)
(Sô) 宗
(ten) 典
(tsukuru) 製



(reverse)


samurai battleground

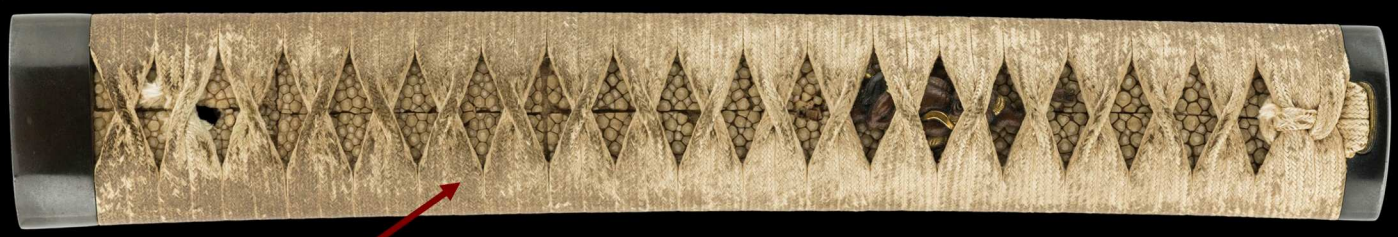


## *Shôki: The Demon Queller*

***Shôki*** (known as Zhong Kui in China) was a beloved demon-hunting deity who rose to fame in ***Tang*** dynasty China and later became popular in Japan. Legend says he visited the sick ***Emperor Xuanzong*** in a dream, explaining he was a scholar who took his own life after failing imperial exams. Grateful for proper burial by a previous emperor, ShÔki vowed to battle mischievous demons. The emperor recovered instantly and had Shôki painted just as he appeared in the vision.

During Japan's Edo period, families hung Shôki images during Boys' Festival, sometimes painted red to ward off smallpox. He is usually shown carrying a sword and wearing a court official's cap. Shôki is known as "the demon queller" for his ability to vanquish, exorcise, and even control ***oni*** (demons) and other demons. He is so feared by oni that even his image is said to scare them away. The demons he defeats sometimes become his servants. It is said that he commands/controls 80,000 demons.





A splendid ***tsuka*** (hilt) with beautifully preserved silk braiding from the Edo period (200 years old)





*Shôki on the hunt*





A pure *shibuchi fuchi-kashira.*

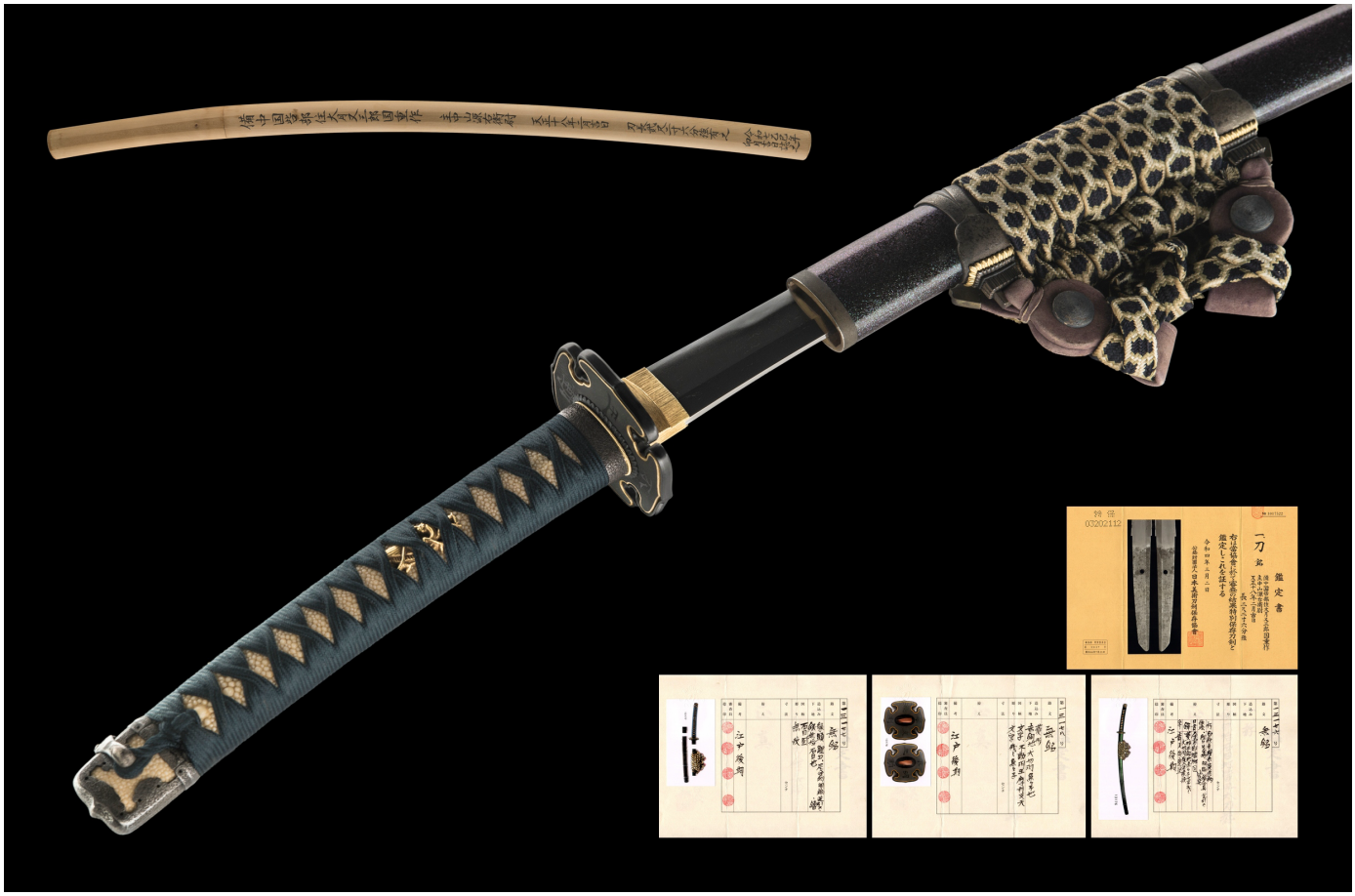
*Shibuichi* is an alloy made up of approximately 3/4 copper and 1/4 silver. The alloy became more popular with samurai during the second half of the Edo period when this set of koshirae was created. Its understated elegance is very samurai, and matches the overall aura of the koshirae. It also takes great skill to work with shibuichi as the material is harder and more brittle than *shakudô*.





Vintage koshirae bag
(Japanese maple leaf design)

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com



ITEM# UJKA477

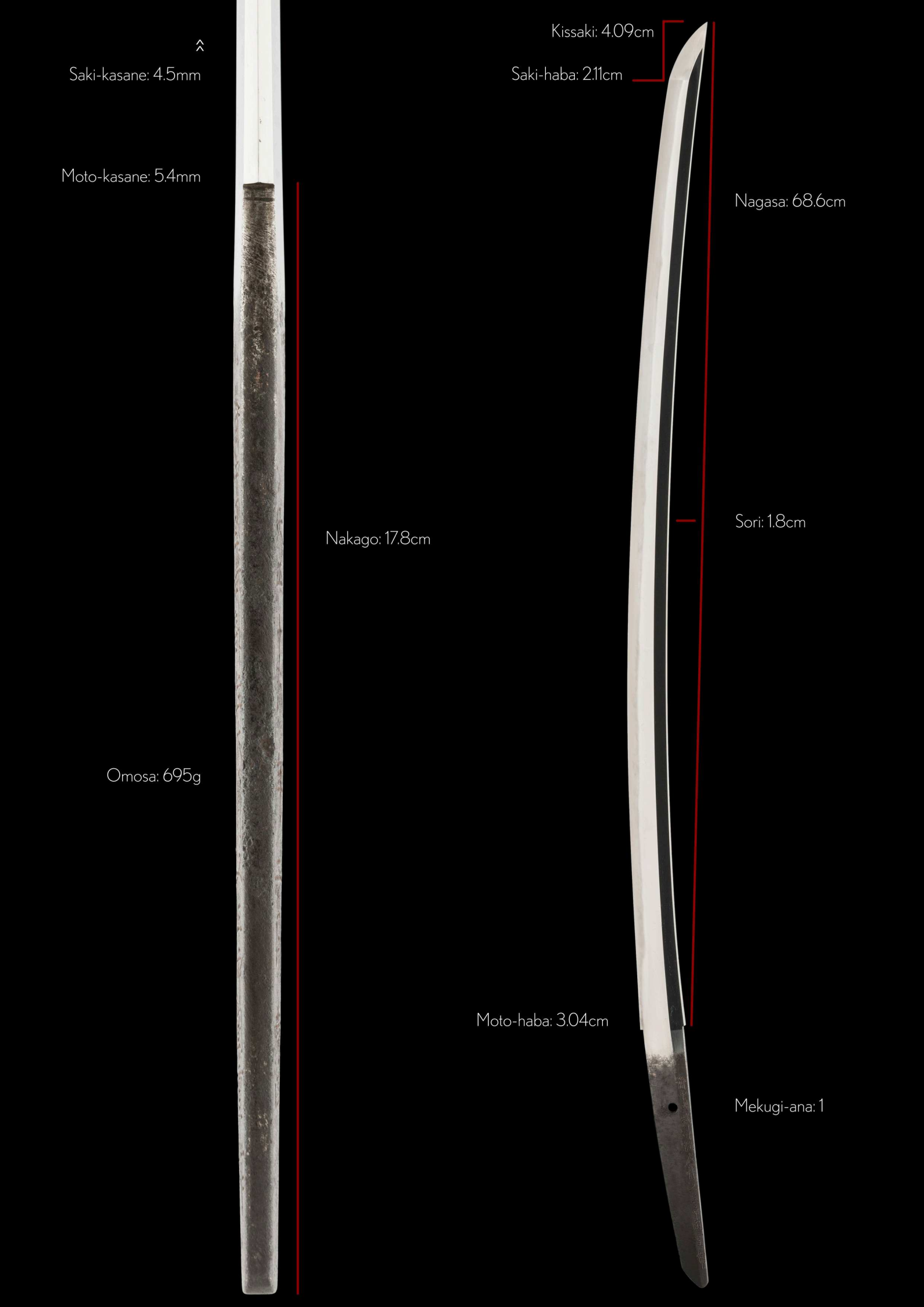
# A KO-MIZUTA KUNISHIGE KATANA

## SIGNED, SUE-KOTÔ MOMOYAMA PERIOD (TENSHÔ ERA: FEBRUARY 1590)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Swordsmith:** | ***Bitchû no kuni Azae-jû Ôtsuki Matasaburô Kunishige saku*** *(third generation)* |
| **Measurements:** | **Length:** 68.6cm (*ubu*) **Sori:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 3.04cm **Weight:** 695g |
| **Jihada:** | *Well-forged mokume-hada mixed with itame with plentiful chikei* |
| **Hamon:** | *Gunome chôji-midare mixed with with yô and long ashi* |
| **Certificate #1:** | **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** *(sword and tsuba Especially Worthy of Preservation)* |
| **Certificate #2-4:** | **NTHK-NPO Kanteishô** (*koshirae, tsuba& soroi kanagu certified as Authentic)* |
| **Authentication:** | **Sayagaki by Kanzan-sensei** (*Dr. Satô Kanzan)* |
| **Included:** | Shirasaya, Edo tachi koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, printed description |

# SOLD

The *Ko-Mizuta* school began when *Kunishige* of the *Bingo Tatsufusa* school moved to *Bitchû* around *Eishô* period (1504~1521). Their work was favoured by warlords in *Chûgoku,* praised for their sharpness. Since then, the school flourished throughout the *shintô* period and produced many master smiths. Although a number of *tantô* by the *Ko-Mizuta* school remain, it is rare to find a katana still in existence. This splendid katana was crafted by ***Sandai Kunishige*** and commissioned for *Nakayama Gen'ue no Jô*, likely a vassal of a warlord from *Bitchû* province, and further dated to February 1590 during the famed *Momoyama* period. A well-forged swirling *mokume-hada* with exceptional falling *yô* (leaves) gives this curvy blade an elegant presence. Sword is housed in a lovely *tachi koshirae* with matching silver fittings and a powerful *Esoteric Buddhist Fudo Myô-ô tsuba.*


Saki-kasane: 4.5mm
Moto-kasane: 5.4mm
Nakago: 17.8cm
Omosa: 695g
Kissaki: 4.09cm
Saki-haba: 2.11cm
Nagasa: 68.6cm
Sori: 1.8cm
Moto-haba: 3.04cm
Mekugi-ana: 1

The *Ko-Mizuta* (古水田) school began when *Kunishige* (国重) of the *Bingo Tatsufusa* (備後辰房) school moved to *Bitchû* around Eishô period (1504~1521).

Their work was favoured by warlords in *Chûgoku* region, praised for their sharpness. Since then, the school flourished throughout the *shintô* period and produced many master smiths.

Although a number of *tantô* by the *Ko-Mizuta school* remain, it is rare to find a katana still in existence.

This fine katana was crafted by *sandai* (third generation Kunishige whose real name *Ôtsuki Sahyô*, oldest son of the second generation Kunishige. Sandai Kunishige initially worked in *Bitchû Matsuyama* but later moved in the second year of *Tenshô* era to *Azae* village.

As chiseled on the *nakago*, we know that this sword was commissioned by *Nakayama Gen'ue no Jô*. No personal record was found of him but he must have been a vassal of a warlord around Bitchû province.

All told, this curvy katana by Kunishige in a fine *tachi koshirae* is a rare find from the Ko-Mizuta school crafted during the famed Momoyama period.

The Momoyama period, also known as the Azuchi-Momoyama period, lasted from 1568 to 1600 and marked the unification of Japan under the leadership of *Oda Nobunaga* and his successor *Toyotomi Hideyoshi.* This era was characterised by significant political changes, the construction of impressive castles, and a flourishing of the arts.





Location: *Azae village in Bitchû province*
Family name: *Ôtsuki*
Secular name: *Matasaburô*
Swordsmith: *Kunishige* (first generation)

*ubu-nakago* (original, unaltered tang)
*katte-sagari-yasurime* (slanting file marks)

備 (Bi)

中 (tchû, no)

國 (Kami)

砦 (Tachibana)

部 (Yasu)

住 (ju)

大 (Ô)

月 (tsuki)

又 (Mata)

三 (sa)

郎 (buro)

国 (Kuni)

重 (shige)

作 (saku)

*Shu Nakayama Gen'ue no Jô*
*Tenshô jû hachinen nigatsu kichijitsu*

Sword crafted for *Nakayama Gen'ue no Jô*
Dated on a lucky day in the second month in the eighteenth year of *Tenshô* era (February 1590)



(Ten) 天
(shô) 正
(jû) 十
(hachi) 八
(nen) 年
(ni) 二
(gatsu) 月
(kichi) 吉
(jitsu) 日

主 (Shu)
中 (Naka)
山 (yama)
源 (Gen)
右 (u)
衛 (e, no)
尉 (Jô)




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 4th year of Reiwa (2022), March 2nd

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)
*Bitchû no kuni Azae-jû Ôtsuki Matasaburô Kunishige saku*
*Shu Nakayama Gen'ue no Jô*
*Tenshô jûhachinen nigatsu kichijitsu*

*Nagasa* (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 6-bu kyô (68.6cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)




備中國呰部住大月又三郎国重作
*Bitchû no kuni Azae jû Ôtsuki Matasaburô Kunishige saku*
Crafted by Ôtsuki Matasaburô Kunishige, a resident of Azae in Bitchû province

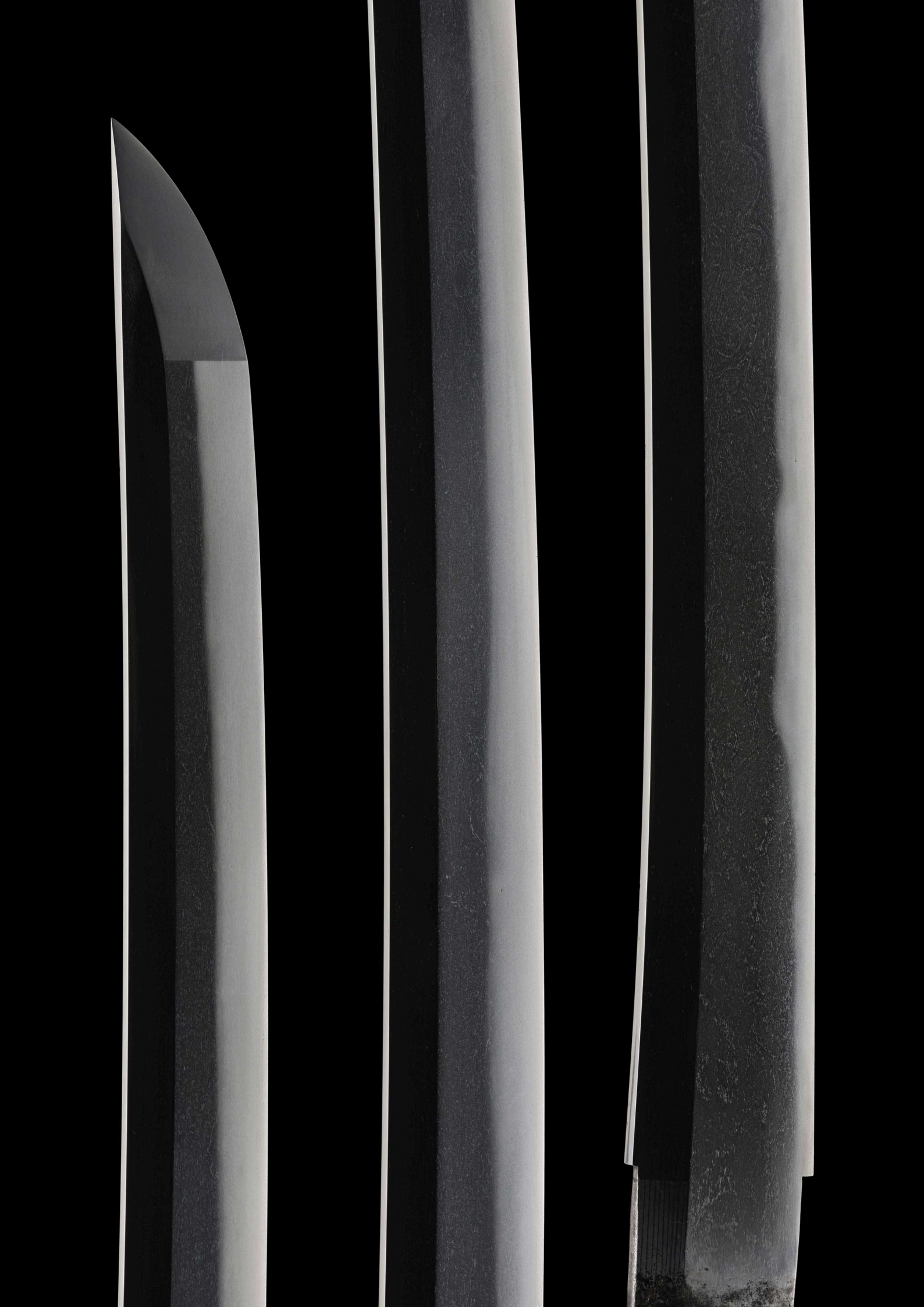
主中山源右衛尉
*Shu Nakayama Gen'e no Jô*
For Nakayama Gen'e no Jô

天正十八年二月吉日
*Tenshô jûhachinen nigatsu kichijitsu*
On a lucky day in the second month in the 18th year of Tenshô era (February 1590)

刃長貳尺二寸六分強有之
*Hachô 2-shaku 2-sun 6-bu kyô kore ari*
Blade length 68.6 cm

令和七乙巳年卯月吉日誌之
*Reiwa nana kinoto-midoshi Uzuki kichijitsu kore o shirusu*
Written on a lucky day in the fourth month in the seventh year of Reiwa era during the Year of the Snake (April 2025)








A striking ***gunome-midare hamon*** pattern that starts with a thick ***chôji*** at the base of the blade, evolving into wisps of flames and a tight ***ko-gunome*** with plenty of ***yô*** (leaves) at the top third ***monouchi*** area of the katana.


*Momoyama* elegance.




*Shirasaya*
(protective scabbard)

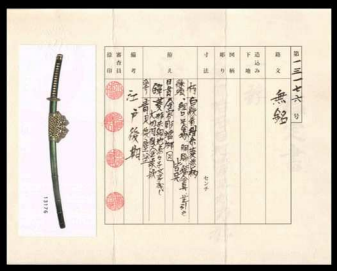


gold *nijû-habaki*
with file marks

*Ginmuku ishime-ji kaigu*
*tachi-koshirae*
(銀無垢石目地皆具太刀拵)

*Tachi-koshirae*
*with matching silver fittings*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1868)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho*
*Certificate of Authenticity*



*Tachi-o*: A cord used to attach a ***tachi*** to the waist. Flat leather cords of approximately three meters in length or braided cords with a ***kikkô*** (tortoise shell) pattern are most commonly used.

The samurai would wear the ***koshirae*** by attaching it through the ***obitori*** and wrapping it around his waist. When on display, the ***koshirae*** is tied in a beautiful ***tachi-musubi*** knot.




*obitori*

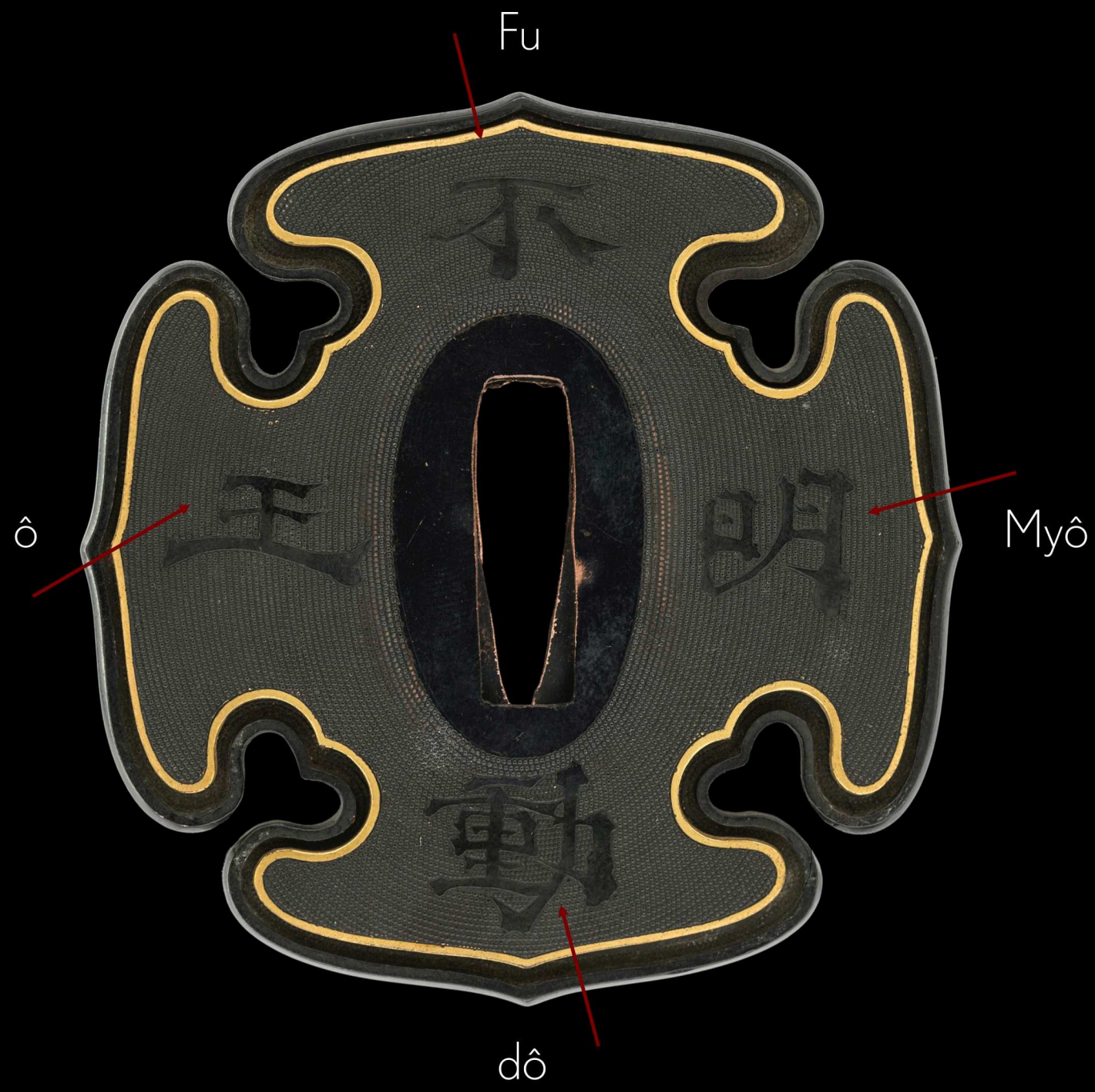


*Fuchi-kashira*
attributed to
*Tachi Kanagu-shi*
(Late Edo period 1780~1868)

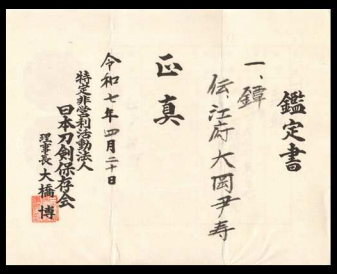
This metal fitting on the pommel is called ***sarude*** (monkey hand).

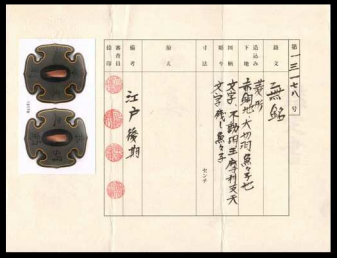
The name is originally derived from the fact it looks like a monkey holding hands. In time, ***sarude*** began to look like actual hands.






This fine tsuba was crafted by *Ô-oka Tadatoshi*. He studied under *Ôoka Masatoshi*, an official craftsman of *Owari Tokugawa* family. It is in *aoi-gata* shape, a traditional style for tachi koshirae.



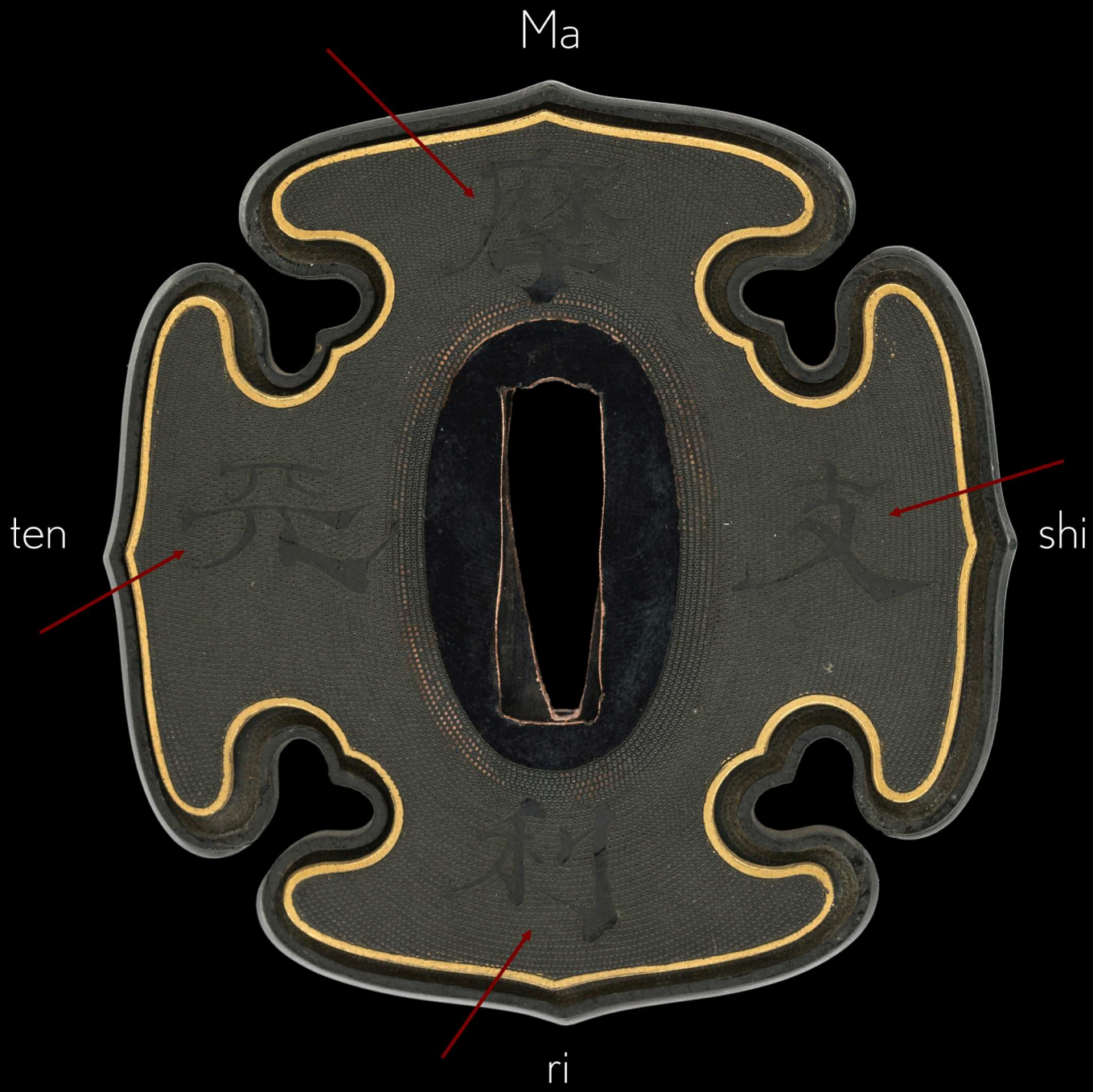





*Fudo Myô-ô* is one of five great Myoo's worshipped by Esoteric Buddhism, and considered to be the deity that subdues demons.

Fudo was worshipped by warriors and they placed Fudo on their sword fittings.

(reverse)




(reverse)



*Marishiten*, or Marici, meaning "Ray of Light," is a Buddhist deity and bodhisattva associated with light and the Sun. Marici is considered as a goddess of war.

She is also depicted in Buddhist paintings, usually riding a galloping boar, holding a bow a spear.

Marishiten is often worshipped alongside *Hachiman Daibosatsu* as the guardian deity of warriors who pray to her for divine power to avert all kinds of misfortunes.





A ***kamakiri*** (praying mantis) forms the ***menuki.***
There is a legend called "Axe of Mantis," in which a praying mantis raised its front legs to confront a horse-drawn carriage, epitomising "***the weak challenging the strong***."
A favourite motif especially during the Edo period.





Koshirae bag

service@uniquejapan.com
uniquejapan.com

# Arigato!

Thank you for downloading our catalogue.
We look forward to serving you.



*I have been doing a good amount of hiking with Barney recently and here we take a break by a reservoir near Rochford in Essex. Barney is enjoying the end of my ham and cheese wrap!*

Please join our VIP mailing list to be informed of recently acquired swords.

Email us at service@uniquejapan.com

uniquejapan.com