



ITEM# UJKA475

CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

A SHODAI MASAHIRO KATANA

SIGNED, SHINTÔ PERIOD (KAN'EI ERA: 1624~1644)

Swordsmith:	<i>Hizen no Kuni Kawachi Daijô Fujiwara Masahiro (shodai, first generation)</i>
Measurements:	Length: 73.8cm (<i>machi-okuri</i>) Sori: 1.7cm Motohaba: 2.93cm Weight: 755g
Jihada:	<i>Ko-mokume leading to Hizen konuka-hada, thick nie-deki, utsuri and ji-nie</i>
Hamon:	<i>Gorgeous gunome chôji-midare with kinsuji, sunagashi, yô, ashi, tobiyaki</i>
Certificate #1:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #2:	NBTHK Tokubetsu Kichô (Especially Precious, once owned by Ôfuji Hiroshi)
Certificates #3-5:	NTHK-NPO Kanteishô (<i>koshirae, fuchi-kashira and tsuba certified as Authentic</i>)
Fujishiro:	Jô-saku (a superior swordsmith)
Sharpness:	Wazamonô (rated as a maker of sharp swords)
Included:	Shirasaya, dragon-themed koshirae, kit, booklet, printed description

\$18,000

Maestro *Hizen* swordsmith **Shodai Masahiro** was the son of *Yoshinobu* who, in turn, was the adopted son of the *saijô-saku* grandmaster *Shodai Tadayoshi*. This long katana with elegant curvature is tightly forged with *ko-mokume hada* and is blessed with light *utsuri*. A vivid *gunome chôji midare* hamon clusters into *jûka chôji* with *yô* and textbook *sunagashi*. Its beautiful set of *koshirae* oozes class with a signed *tsuba* by *Sen'eishi Kanenori*, showcasing an awesome cloud dragon that's ready to strike. The *Nara Toshimitsu fuchi-kashira*, depicts a glorious full moon resting beside Mount Fuji beneath a cloud dragon. From blade to *koshirae*, this is an inspiring samurai sword built around a single, coherent idea, that the journey of life rewards being in the present.



Saki-kasane: 4.2mm

Moto-kasane: 6.3mm

Omosa: 755g

Kissaki: 2.96cm

Saki-haba: 1.94cm

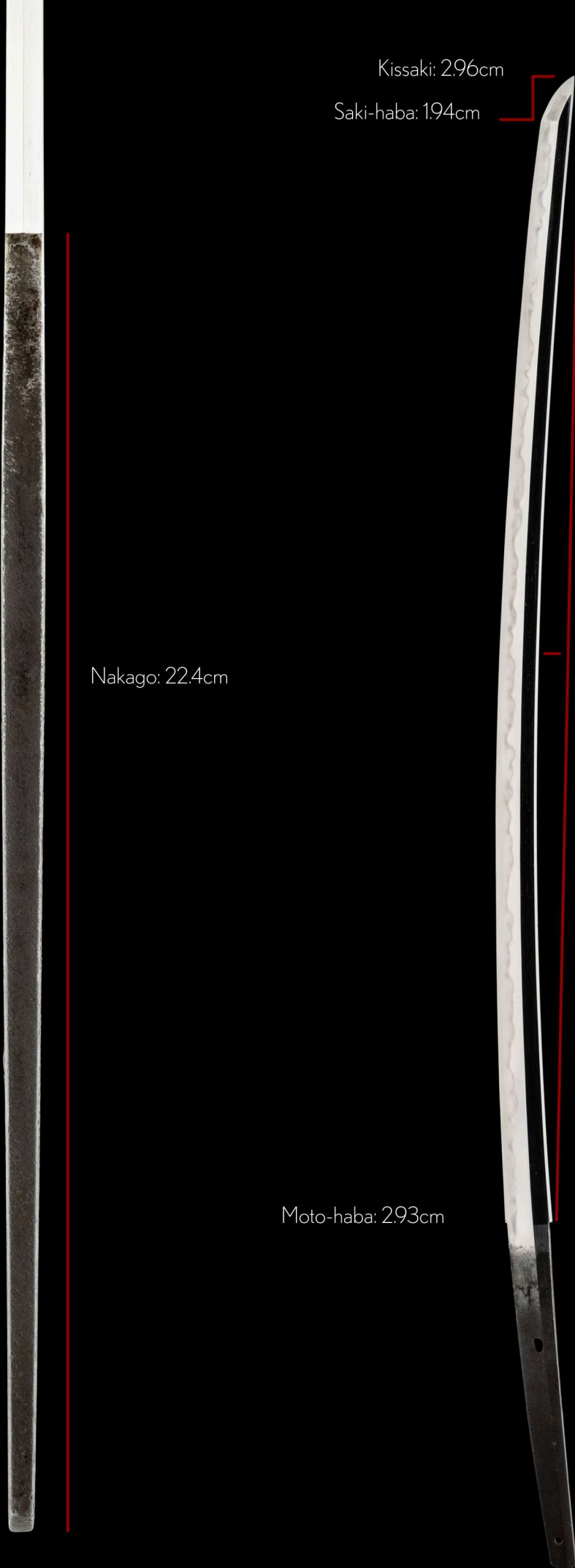
Nakago: 22.4cm

Moto-haba: 2.93cm

Nagasa: 73.8cm

Sori: 1.7cm

Mekugi-ana: 2



Kawachi Daijô Masahiro is one of those figures who sits just outside the main spotlight of the *Hiizen* school yet outshines almost everyone in it. He was the grandson of the grandmaster *shodai Tadayoshi*, founder of the entire Hiizen tradition, and originally signed his blades as *Masanaga* - until the *daimyô* of *Saga* domain himself intervened. *Nabeshima Katsushige* was so struck by the young smith's talent that in 1625, when Masahiro was just nineteen years old, he personally commanded him to change his name. And, well, so he did.

Masahiro was regularly called upon to serve as mentor and substitute smith for the main *Tadayoshi* lineage - and historical records suggest the *Nabeshima* clan held him in even higher favour than the main line itself. Masahiro held the title of *Kawachi Daijô* and the rankings of *jôsaku* (a superior smith) and *wazamono* (maker of sharp swords) which will soon be made readily apparent why. His son, by the way, *nidai Masahiro* held the title of *Kawachi no Kami*.

This long katana measures approximately 74.0cm in length, elegant curvature with a fine, tightly forged *ko-mokume hada* with the gift of a light *utsuri*. The hamon takes you on a genuine journey, a lively *gunome chôji midare* that clusters into *jûka chôji* at the midway point and opens into long *ashi* as it climbs toward the tip, accompanied throughout by thick *nie*, *kinsuji*, and textbook *sunagashi*. This is a hamon that rewards a slow look, revealing something new at every stage of the climb. Naturally the blade is accompanied by an NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate.

The *koshirae* is formal and classical, built around a black-toned palette unified by a *shakudô* ground and a dragon theme carried across every fitting. The *tsuba*, signed by *Sen'eishi Kanenori*, shows a captivating cloud dragon with its eyes locked, ready to strike. The *fuchi-kashira*, a signed work of *Nara Toshimitsu*, sixth generation head of the Nara school, depicts a glorious full moon resting beside *Mount Fuji* beneath a cloud dragon, a composition that recalls *Hokusai's* own *Dragon Crossing Mount Fuji*. The *menuki*, also worked in *shakudô* as dragons, are left partly exposed beneath the *hishimaki* wrap so their carving can be fully appreciated. From blade to *koshirae*, this is an inspiring samurai sword built around a single, coherent idea, that the journey of life rewards being in the present.



Location: *Hizen province*

Title name: *Kawachi no Kami* (Lord of Kawachi province)

Family name: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Masahiro* (1st generation)

machi-okuri-nakago (cutting edge modified slightly)

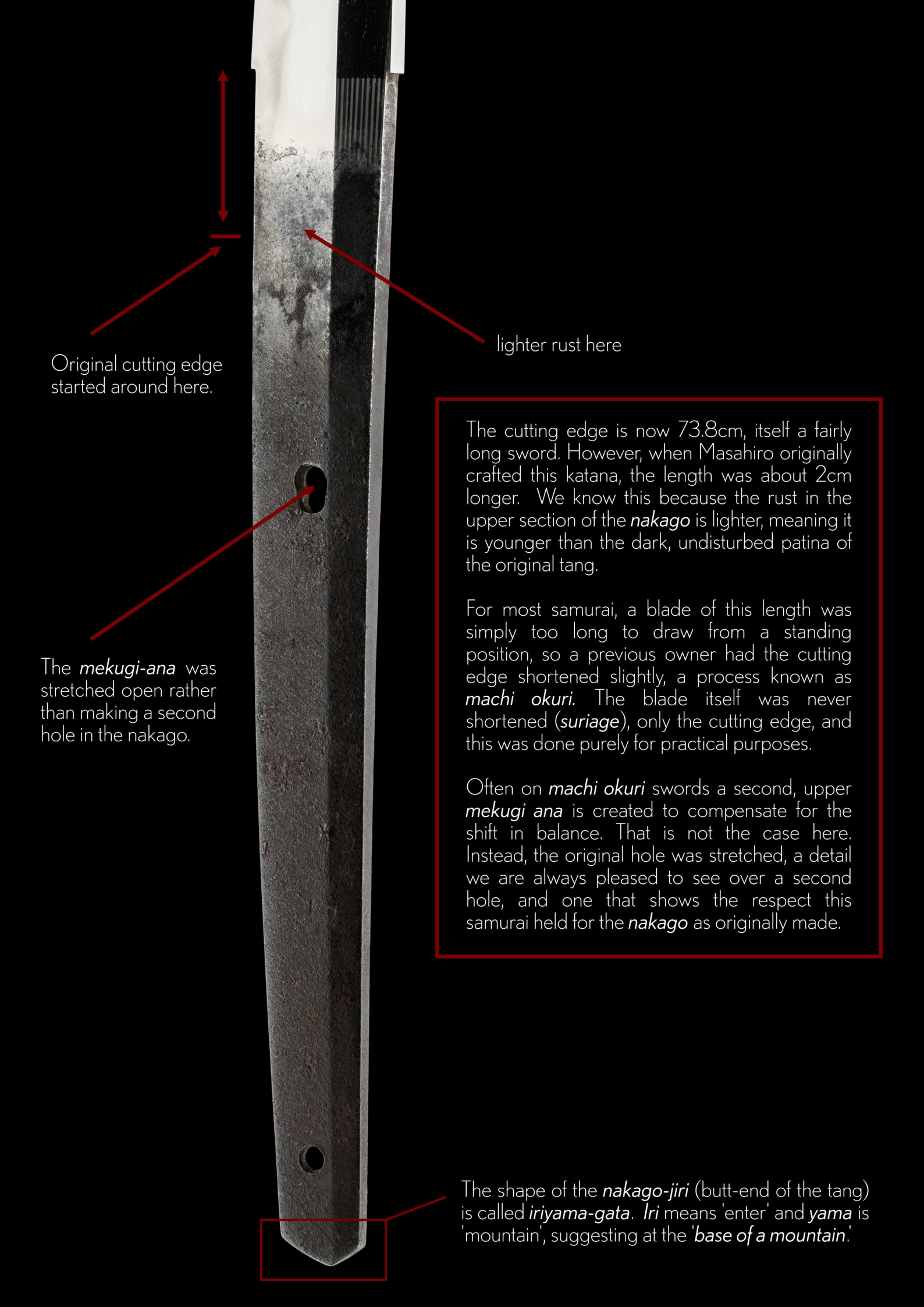
katte-sagari-yasurime (slanting file marks)

(Hi) 肥
(zen, no) 前
(kuni) 國
(kawa) 河
(chi) 内
(Dai) 大
(jô) 掾
(Fuji) 藤
(wara) 原
(Masa) 正
(hiro) 廣

In addition to the standard *mekugi ana*, a hole is placed at the very bottom of the *nakago* to accommodate a reinforcing *hikae mekugi*, a spare peg.

This was primarily fitted for *tameshigiri*, test cutting. It tells us plainly that this was never a sword made for ceremony alone. It was built with genuine cutting performance in mind, made to be used, and worn by a samurai who expected it to perform in real combat if called upon.





Original cutting edge started around here.

lighter rust here

The *mekugi-ana* was stretched open rather than making a second hole in the nakago.

The cutting edge is now 73.8cm, itself a fairly long sword. However, when Masahiro originally crafted this katana, the length was about 2cm longer. We know this because the rust in the upper section of the *nakago* is lighter, meaning it is younger than the dark, undisturbed patina of the original tang.

For most samurai, a blade of this length was simply too long to draw from a standing position, so a previous owner had the cutting edge shortened slightly, a process known as *machi okuri*. The blade itself was never shortened (*suriage*), only the cutting edge, and this was done purely for practical purposes.

Often on *machi okuri* swords a second, upper *mekugi ana* is created to compensate for the shift in balance. That is not the case here. Instead, the original hole was stretched, a detail we are always pleased to see over a second hole, and one that shows the respect this samurai held for the *nakago* as originally made.

The shape of the *nakago-jiri* (butt-end of the tang) is called *iriyama-gata*. *Iri* means 'enter' and *yama* is 'mountain', suggesting at the 'base of a mountain.'

特 保
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No 1021486

鑑定書

一 刀 銘 肥前国河内大掾藤原正広

長 二尺四寸三分

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀劍と
鑑定しこれを証する

令和五年十二月十五日

公益財団法人日本美術刀劍保存協會



肥前国河内大掾藤原正広

東京都教育委員会
第 177721 号
昭和48年5月8日

NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon
Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 5th year of Reiwa (2023), December 15th

One, Katana

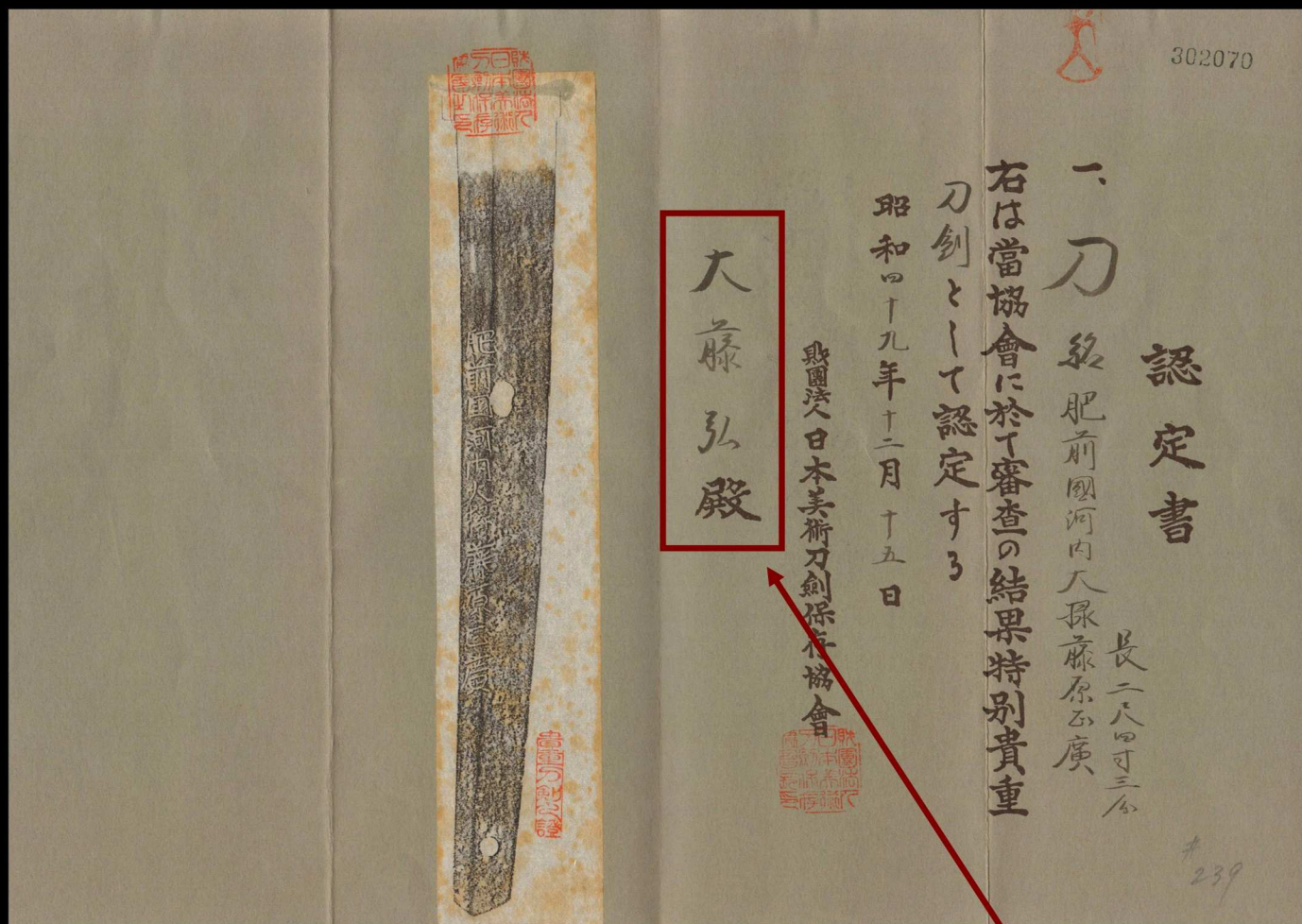
Mei (signature)

Hizen no kuni Kawachi Daijō Fujiwara Masahiro

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 4-sun 3-bu (73.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



For Mr. Ōfuji Hiroshi

NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 49th year of Showa (1974), December 15th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Hizen no kuni Kawachi Daijō Fujiwara Masahiro

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 4-sun 3-bu (73.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

211-283

刀剣と歴史

第495号

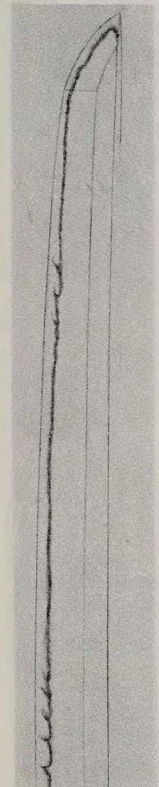
江戸物特集号

江戸物の作風	吉川 俊	9
江戸物あれこれ	三 嶋 青 山	26
江戸刀工遺跡めぐり	福 永 雄 雄	31
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昭和52年1月

日本刀剣保存会発行

Tôken to Rekishi (Sword and History)
published January 1977
NTHK-NPO



第 1 間

五十点以上林藍雪、後藤孝一、今野繁雄、石山 一、小西孝雄、水谷彰男、小野田彰。

○年間を通じての成績優秀者（敬称略）

最優秀賞（年六回、全間正解、十八点）宮野貞司（東京）、大藤弘（東京）。

優秀賞 十七点 徳永 勲（東京）、岡崎茂昭（東京）、島崎 勝（東京）、市川正三（愛媛）、吉川 隆（愛媛）、同 十六点 水谷彰男（神奈川）、石山 一（神奈川）、藤村 晃（愛媛）、重岡徳和（愛媛）。十五点 小松米作（静岡）、城之内正衛（神奈川）。

四九五号の出題

第一問 長二尺三寸九分、反り七分五厘、本造り、庵棟、小切先で尋常な太刀姿、腰もとで強く反り、先反りがつく。鍛えは小板目に大板目流れてまじり、肌立ち。ところで

入札成績（敬称略）

六十点 宮野貞司、鈴木 寛、大藤 弘、徳永 勲、城之内正衛、島崎 勝、小松米作。

五十五点 市川正三、吉川 隆、高井鏡夫、藤村 晃、重岡徳和、岡崎茂章、白石誠治。

ればその代表工である正弘と見るのが誌上では常識で当然の結果と云えます。ほかに虎徹が相当数ありました。本刀の作風からいって誌上鑑定ではこれまたやむをえないものです。虎徹ですと総体の作風に一段と強さと冴えがあり、作風の説明もこの点を強調するものです。細かい点では、虎徹の見所として刃文を区下深く（中心まで）焼きこむ、銚子の状態などを異にします。

ほかに兼重、安定、康継など越前系江戸物観が多くあり、いづれもごもつともなものでした。

今回の一号は類品の少ない難刀で、ためにほんどが一号で失格し、大半が成績発表の五十点以下で終わっております。

最優秀賞（年六回、全間正解、十八点）宮野貞司（東京）、大藤弘（東京）。

The former owner of this blade, at the time its earlier certificate of appraisal was issued, was Ôfuji Hiroshi (大藤弘).

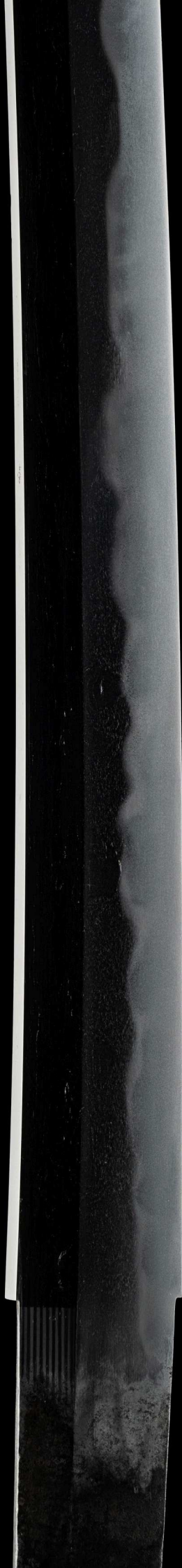
Ôfuji was a member of the NTHK-NPO from the 1970s through the 1980s, and repeatedly submitted swords to the *nyûsatsu kantei kai*, bidding appraisal meetings organized by the association. At the meeting held in 1977, he achieved a perfect score, answering every question correctly. Only two participants managed this that year, Ôfuji and Miyano Teiji (宮野貞司), who would later go on to serve as chairman of the NTHK. This alone speaks to the depth of his connoisseurship.

According to those who knew him, Ôfuji served as president of a road construction company, and was, by all accounts, a passionate and dedicated sword collector. Among the blades he submitted to these appraisal meetings were a number from the *Bizen Osafune* school, including works by Norimitsu, Yasumitsu, and Sukesada.

He is also credited as a contributor to scholarly publications such as *Mino to Taikan* and *Nihontô Zuikan*, a sign that researchers in the field relied on him, both for his knowledge and for the resources of his own collection.

Ôfuji-san has since passed away.



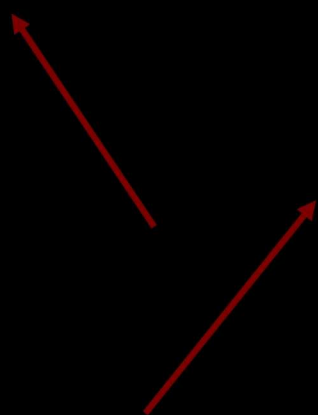


A close-up, symmetrical view of two katana blades pointing towards each other. The blades are dark, and the light-colored, wavy hamon patterns are clearly visible along their edges. The background is black, making the blades stand out.

Masahiro takes you on a
journey with this katana.

At basecamp, the *gunome-
chôji-midare hamon* starts the
climb, the kind of first steps
that promise more to come.

At the mid-way point, the hamon
clusters beautifully in parts, best
described as *jûka-chôji*
(overlapping flowers)



jûka-chôji sections

As we head to the summit, the hamon opens up, taking in the fine view.

long *ashi* (legs)

The bright *gunome-chôji-midare* stretches impressively far across the blade's surface.

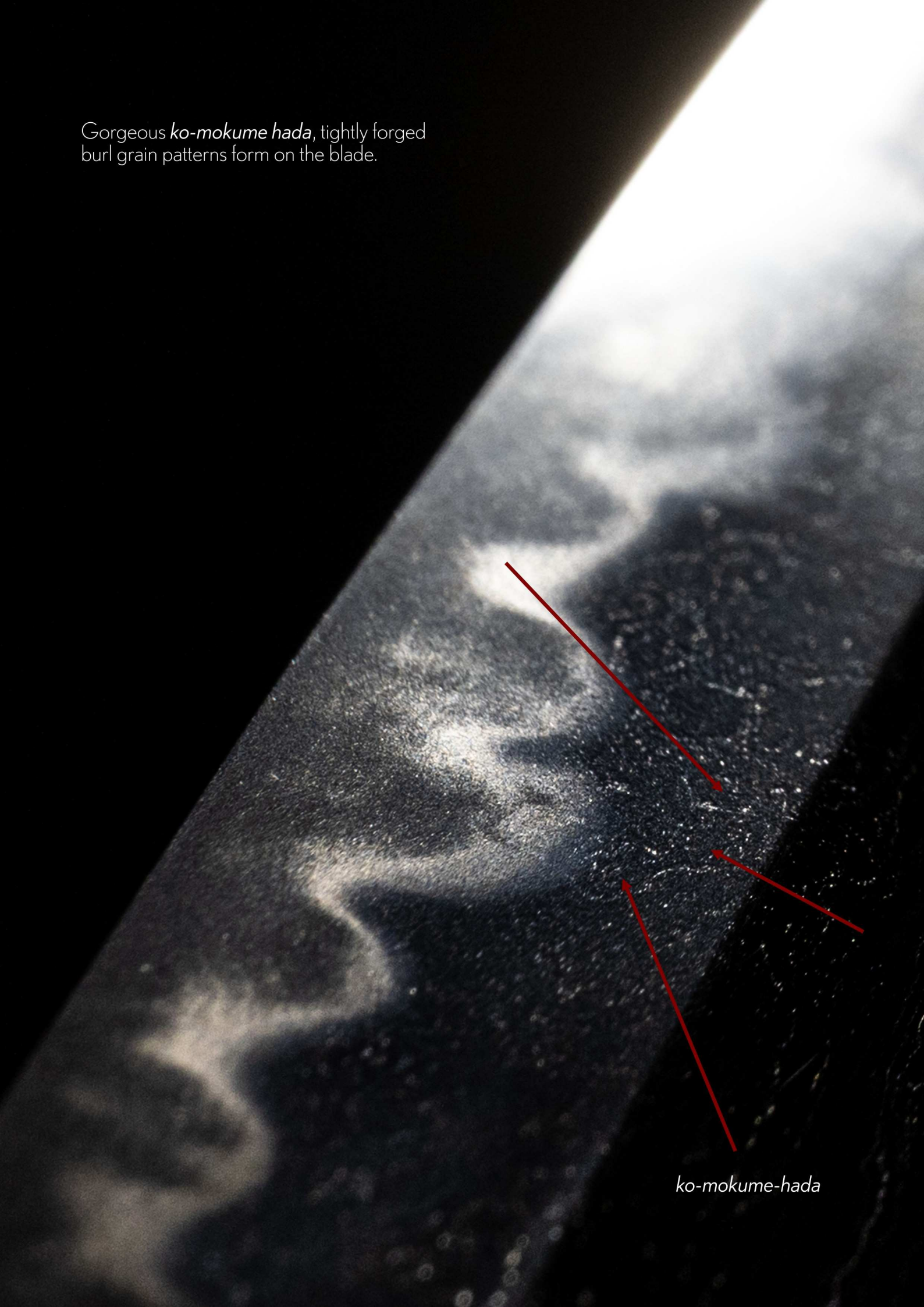
The raw intensity of peak performance.

Life on the edge.

nie crystals



Gorgeous *ko-mokume hada*, tightly forged
burl grain patterns form on the blade.



ko-mokume-hada



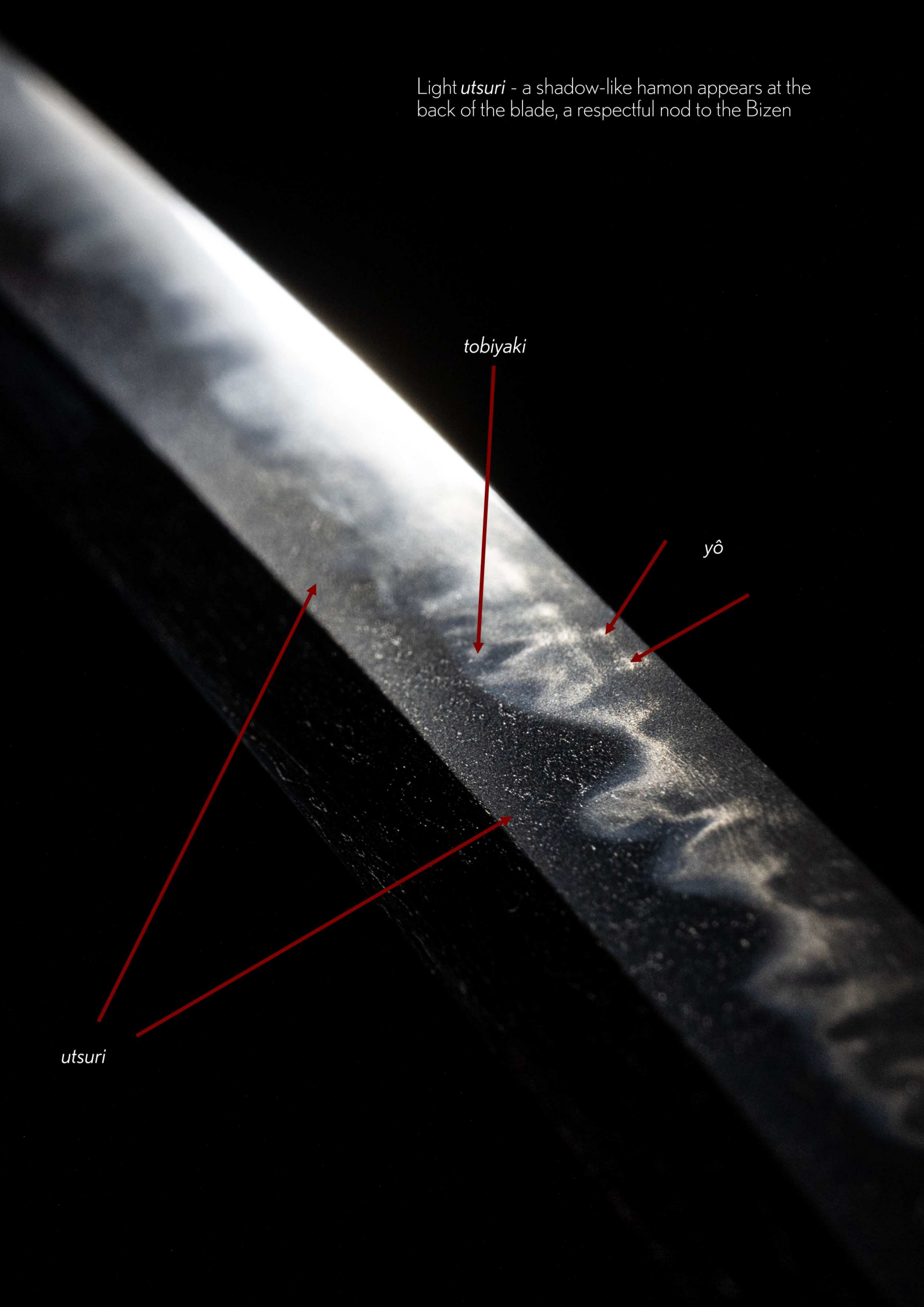
There is *sunagashi*, and then there is *sunagashi*...

Light *utsuri* - a shadow-like hamon appears at the back of the blade, a respectful nod to the Bizen

tobiyaki

yô

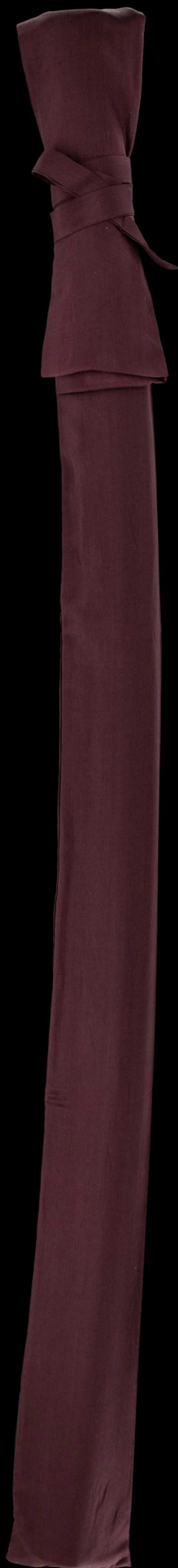
utsuri



Yô are 'leaves', tempered spots in the *yakiba*,
hardened area of the blade. A subtle touch
of masterful artistry well-worth noticing.

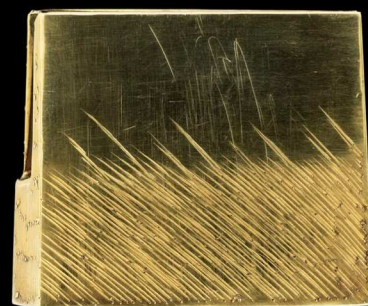
yô, says hello





sayagaki potential

Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)

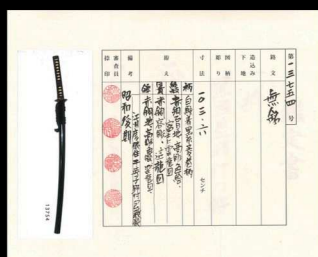


gold *habaki* with
falling rain file marks

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

*Uchigatana-koshirae
lacquered in glossy black*

Crafted during the
Late Shôwa period
(1970~1989)



NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity



Dragon focused.

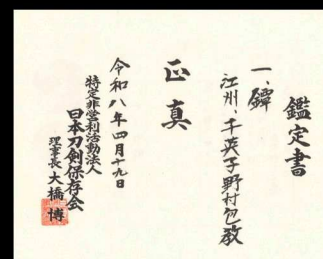
(Sen) 千
(ei) 英
(shi) 子
(No) 野
(mura) 村
(Kane) 包
(nori) 教
(tsukuru) 製

(Gô) 江
(shû) 羽
(Hiko) 彦
(ne) 根
(jû) 住



Sen'eishi Kanenori worked as a metalsmith around the *Kyôhô* era (1716~1736). Born in *Ômi* province, he trained under *Mogarashi Sôten*, and his design sense and quality of carving stood on par with, or even surpassed, his teacher's.

This splendid *tsuba* is worked in *shakudô*, evenly covered with *nanako* (dots) and carries a dynamic yet precisely executed cloud dragon. A dragon on a *shakudô* ground was one of the most formal, luxurious designs of its time, lending the black *koshirae* a status befitting a *daimyô* or one of his senior retainers.



Eyes locked, ready to strike.





(reverse)



Fuchi-kashira

Depicting Mt. Fuji, a full moon, and a cloud dragon

This wonderful *fuchi-kashira* is the work of *Nara Toshimitsu*, sixth generation head of the *Nara* school. *Toshimitsu* produced numerous *fuchi-kashira* and *tsuba*, and *shakudô ishime ji* like this piece is typical of his style. Among the artists of his school, a relatively large number of his works survive today. According to *Kanô Natsuo*, a metalworker of the *Meiji* era who held the rank of Imperial Household Artist, Toshimitsu was known for designs of generous, expansive character, often dynamic in composition, with many works deserving of high praise.

The *fuchi kashira* depict a full moon resting beside Mount Fuji, together with a cloud dragon. The motif of Mount Fuji was highly popular in its day and remains difficult to find on fittings today. The combination of Fuji and a dragon recalls one of *Katsushika Hokusai*'s most celebrated works, "*Dragon Crossing Mount Fuji*."



Nara Toshimitsu



Dragon crossing Mt. Fuji
Katsushika Hokusai (1760~1849)



The *tsuka* is wrapped in white *samekawa* with black *tsuka ito* in *hishimaki* style, the format regarded as the most formal under the *Tokugawa shogunate* during the Edo period.



The striking *menuki* are worked beautifully in *shakudô*, depicting dragons.

They are positioned so the dragon's centre breaks free of the wrap, a bolder, more dynamic presence that lets the fine detail of the carving be fully appreciated.



肥前国河内大掾藤原正広

肥 (Hi)
前 (zen, no)
国 (kuni)
河 (Kawa)
内 (chi)
大 (Dai)
掾 (jô)
藤 (Fuji)
原 (wara)
正 (Masa)
広 (hiro)

Tsunagi

A handcrafted duplicate wooden sword blade that holds together the *koshirae* when the blade is resting in *shirasaya*.

肥前国河内大掾藤原正広



Gold brocade koshirae bag

ARIGATO!

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