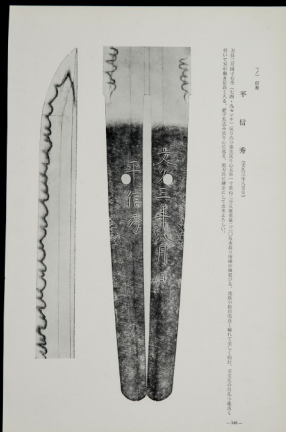


# JAPANESE SWORD CATALOGUE 21.5

## SPECIAL SHINSHINTO EDITION

FIRST RELEASED:  
JUNE 8/2015



(COVER PHOTO)

ITEM# UJKA157

A KURIHARA NOBUHIDE KATANA  
IN EDO-PERIOD KOSHIRAE

LENGTH: 74.9CM  
DATED: AUGUST 1863

NBTHK TOKUBETSU HOZON  
FEATURED IN PRESTIGIOUS  
SHINSHINTO TAIKAN BOOK  
OF TOP REFERENCE SWORDS

# ANTIQUE JAPANESE SWORDS FOR SALE (VOLUME 21.5)

RELEASED: JUNE 8, 2015 TO VIP CLIENTS ONLY

UPDATED: JULY 8, 2015

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN DESCRIPTIONS AND IMAGES OF GENUINE ANTIQUE JAPANESE SWORDS THAT WERE SOLD IN CATALOGUE 21.

THIS IS OUR FIRST SPECIAL SHINSHINTO CATALOGUE.

THIS IS A REFERENCE DOCUMENT.

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**Konnichiwa Everyone!**

I hope you are all *genki* (healthy and happy).

I am particularly excited about this Japanese sword catalogue for you all to enjoy. Given the particular interest shown for the Kawai Hisayuki Daisho recently featured on our website, Catalogue 21 is an exclusive focus on the remarkable **Shinshinto period**.

**In this edition are four highly collectible swords by four master smiths of their generation.** The four swordsmiths are *Suishishi Masahide*, *Taikei Naotane*, *Taira Nobuhide* and *Shimizu Hisayoshi*.

*The Shinshinto Period* (~1780-1876) is a term that refers to swords made between the *Shinto* (1596-1780) and the *Haitorei* (high-toh-ray) Sword Abolishment Edict of 1876 that forbid the wearing of Samurai swords in public by the newly formed Meiji government.

The word *Shinshinto* literally means “new new sword”. The start of the period is closely associated with the *fukkuto* (foo-koo-toh) movement pioneered by Suishinshi Masahide. The *fukkuto* initiative is the phrase used to describe **a revival of old koto-era forging traditions of the late Heian and Kamakura period (987~1337).**

It marks an important time for collectors of Japanese swords as it rejuvenated the art of Japanese sword making through dedicated *individual efforts* to recreate the masterpieces of the past.

Each one of these swords is a piece of artistic mastery. It is essential to recognize is that each sword is the result of creative diligence, patience and a **resounding faith in one’s intuition**.

Every strike of the steel, every fold, every second the sword is heated has a direct cause and a certain result on the outcome of the sword. The best swordsmiths trusted their own intuition and experience that they were on the right path. We all live in a world of cause and effect.

*A sword is a pure object made with only natural elements. The enlightened smith understands that he is working with nature, not above it, completely immersed within it. True masters align themselves with the laws of nature and are clear in what they want to achieve. They are intensely aware of every move they make, adjusting their creation as they commit forward.*

Having the great pleasure of working with magnificent clients from all over the world, I am convinced that creating a successful life is just like crafting one’s own Samurai masterpiece.

Thank you to all who have joined our VIP email list, your passion energizes me. Please contact me at [service@uniquejapan.com](mailto:service@uniquejapan.com) become part of it too!

Feel the history and create your history.

Warm regards,



Pablo Kuntz  
June 2015



*A recent family holiday photo from Mallorca!*

## INDEX OF JAPANESE SWORDS & FITTINGS

ITEM#	SWORDSMITH & TYPE	CM	CERTIFICATE	ERA / PERIOD	PRICE
ujwa174	A MASAHIDE WAKIZASHI	53.2	Tokubetsu Kicho	Dated February 1810	<b>SOLD</b>
ujta033	A NAOTANE TANTO	29.4	Tokubetsu Hozon	Dated February 1834	<b>SOLD</b>
ujka157	A NOBUHIDE KATANA	74.9	Tokubetsu Hozon	Dated August 1863	<b>SOLD</b>
ujka154	A HISAYOSHI KATANA	72.9	NTHK Yushusaku	Dated August 1863	<b>SOLD</b>

ALL PRICES ARE IN US DOLLARS

To access previously sold swords in Catalogue 20, please copy and paste this link:  
<http://tinyurl.com/uj-catalogue-20-sold>

## 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.

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WE ACQUIRE SWORDS ON A REGULAR BASIS AND CAN SOURCE SWORDS FOR COLLECTORS SEEKING A SPECIFIC SMITH AND/OR SCHOOL.

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EMAIL US AT [SERVICE@UNIQUEJAPAN.COM](mailto:SERVICE@UNIQUEJAPAN.COM)

DOMO ARIGATO!  
PABLO

*A recently completed Tanba no Kami Yoshimichi wakizashi koshirae project in a theme of cranes, waves and a very proud peacock on the kashira.*







ITEM# UJWA174

## A SUISHINSHI MASAhide WAKIZASHI

SIGNED, SHINSHINTO PERIOD (10TH YEAR OF BUNKA, FEBRUARY 1810)

**Swordsmith:** *Suishinshi MASAhide*  
**Location:** Musashi province (modern-day Tokyo)  
**Measurements:** **Length:** 53.2cm (ubu)    **Curvature:** 0.8cm    **Moto-haba:** 3.1cm  
**Saki-haba:** 2.1cm    **Moto-kasane:** 7.6mm    **Saki-kasane:** 5.1mm  
**Weight of blade:** 600 grams

**Hamon:** *Gunome midare hitatsura with intense nie-kuzure, tobiyaki and sunagashi*  
**Jihada:** *O-itame*  
**Certificate:** **NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho** (a sword designated as Especially Precious by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)  
**Fujishiro:** *Saijo-saku* (ranked as a grandmaster swordsmith)  
**Included:** Shirasaya, sword fabric bag, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, printed care guide, registration and export paperwork  
**Koshirae:** Potential custom koshirae project

**SOLD** (a custom koshirae is being built for this sword)

## Suishinshi Masahide

When reviewing the Shinshinto period, one must always begin a conversation with the formidable giant of his time, *Suishinshi Masahide* (pronounced *Mah-sah-hee-day*).

Considered to be the father of the Shinshinto period, Masahide mourned the disappearance of the old traditional Koto methods and advocated for their restoration. This was the seed that was to blossom into the *fukkuto* movement.

The force of his claim was so influential that numerous sword smiths within the country came to study under him. His school soon became the largest in the history of blade making. There were about 200 students, perhaps more, during the lifetime of the school.

Born in 1750 at Akayu in Dewa province, Masahide apprenticed under *Yoshiteru* of the *Shitahara Group* in Musashi province (Tokyo) and changed his birth name of *Suzuki Saburo Iyehide* to *Terukuni*. At the age of 25 he became a retained of Lord Akimoto and changed his name a third time to *Kawabe Masahide* and used *Suishinshi* as a craft name.

Rated *Sai-josaku* (grandmaster swordsmith) of which there are only three in the Shinshinto period (*Sushinshi Masahide*, his star student *Taikei Naotane* and *Kiyomaro*), Masahide became prolific in several traditions when forging blades.

He began his career in the Yamashiro tradition from Kyoto in about 1780 to 1790, then moved on to recreate the masterpieces of the Soshu tradition in 1790 to 1800, and then successfully copied the works of *Tsuda Echizen no Kami Sukehiro* and his iconic *toranba hamon*. He completed his 50-year illustrious career in the Bizen tradition.

What made him *Suishinshi* so remarkable was that he shared his sword-making discoveries and methods generously through books and personal coaching. The Japanese sword world owes an immense debt of gratitude to such a passionate and selfless artist.

## The sword

This wakizashi is a masterclass of *Suishinshi Masahide* forging in the Soshu tradition. It is an *utsushi-mono* (faithful replica) of the genius swordsmith *Masamune* – a Soshu founding father from the golden age of swordmaking in the Kamakura period.

Dated February 1810, the blade proudly exhibits a glorious *hitatsura hamon*. This is a sword that has been quite literally cooked to perfection. It's completely alive in your hands with copious amounts of *nie* crystals bursting with life all over the blade.

The *tobi-yaki* (hardened spots) are like small islands swimming in a swell of oceanic activity.

In quintessential Soshu form, this long wakizashi is wide with a shallow curvature. It is a healthy and vigorous sword – it feels like a katana – a veritable gladiatorial work of art. In addition, the sword has Masahide's *koku'in* nakago stamp affirming to its authenticity.

The following pages paint a visual story of the sword. It is a prime candidate for a custom koshirae project. However, like all great collectible swords, it can be enjoyed solely in her shirasaya too. Please inquire for further photos, insight and details upon ownership.

Saki-kasane: 5.1mm

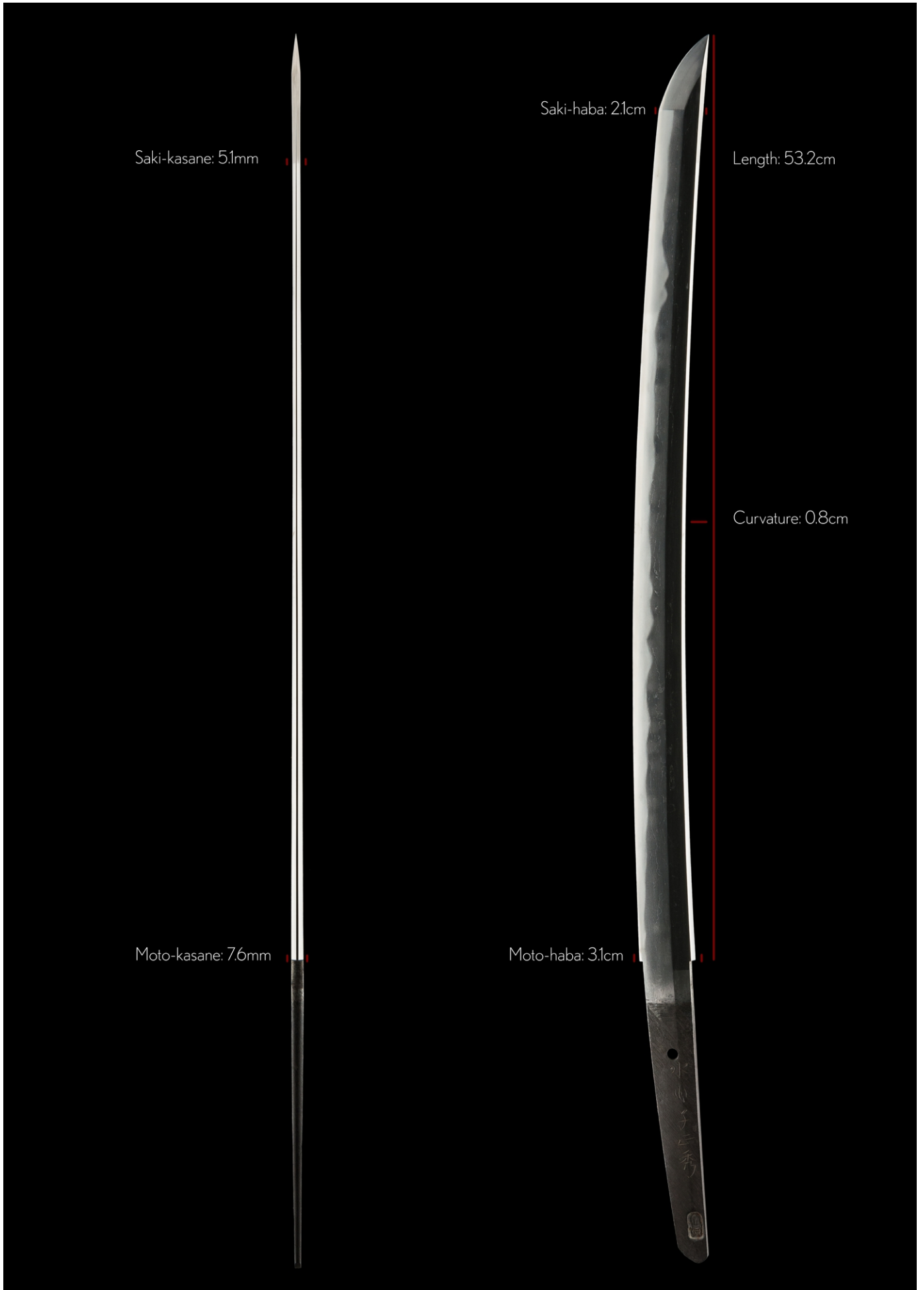
Saki-haba: 21cm

Length: 53.2cm

Curvature: 0.8cm

Moto-kasane: 7.6mm

Moto-haba: 31cm









Sui

shin

shi

Masa

hide

*roku'in* stamp



Masahide developed  
his unique *koku'in*  
stamp from the  
characters for "*hide*"  
(日天).

日 is the kanji for *sun*  
天 is the kanji for *heaven*

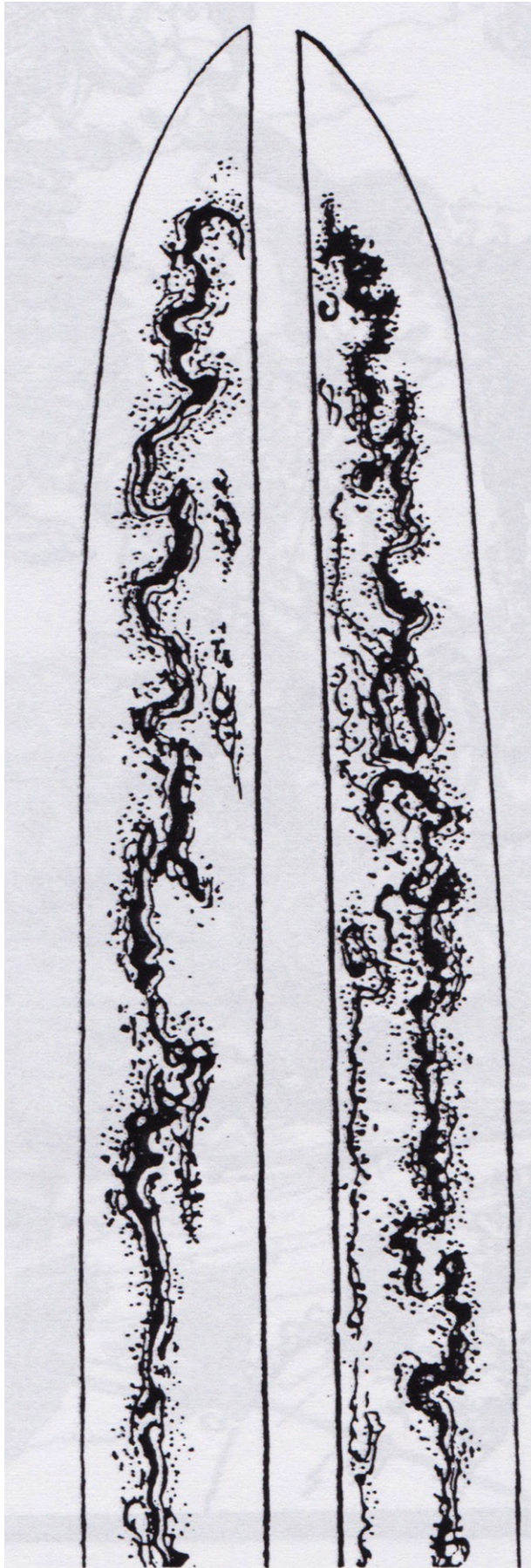
He used this official seal  
from 1806 onwards.



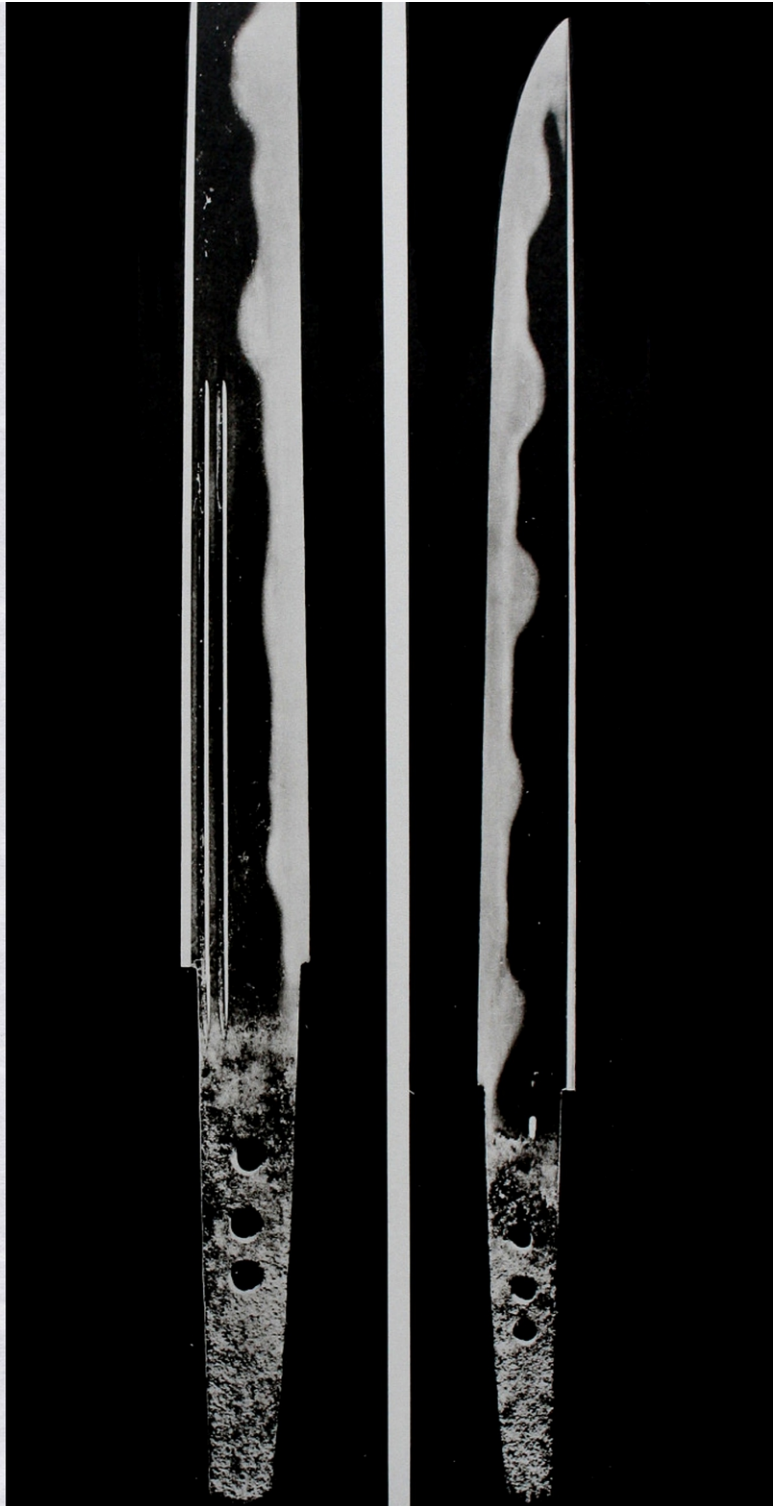
Bun  
ka  
7  
nen  
2  
gatsu  
hi

Masahide dated this wakizashi on a day during the second month in the 7th year of Bunka era (February, 1810)





Masamune 正宗 Sagami



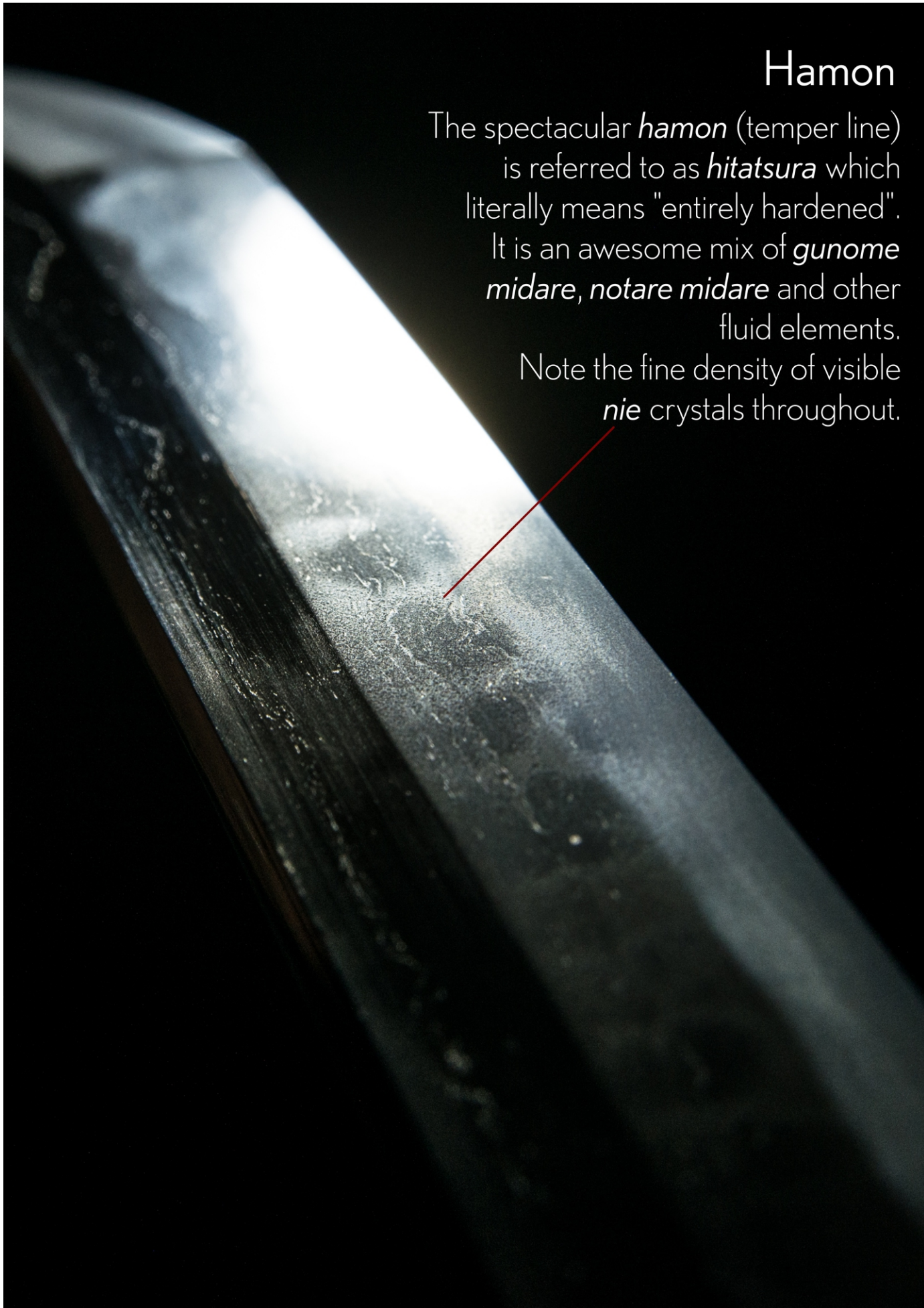
## Goro Nyudo Masamune

Suishinshi Masahide set out to create an *utsushimono* - a respectful tribute - by recreating a masterpiece of Japan's most iconic swordsmith *Goro Masamune* from the late Kamakura period. Above is an *oshigata* of a *Masamune hitatsura* blade and a tanto known as *Hyuga Masamune*.

*Oshigata source: The Soshu School of Swordsmiths by Yasu Kizu*



## Hamon



The spectacular *hamon* (temper line) is referred to as *hitatsura* which literally means "entirely hardened". It is an awesome mix of *gunome midare*, *notare midare* and other fluid elements. Note the fine density of visible *nie* crystals throughout.

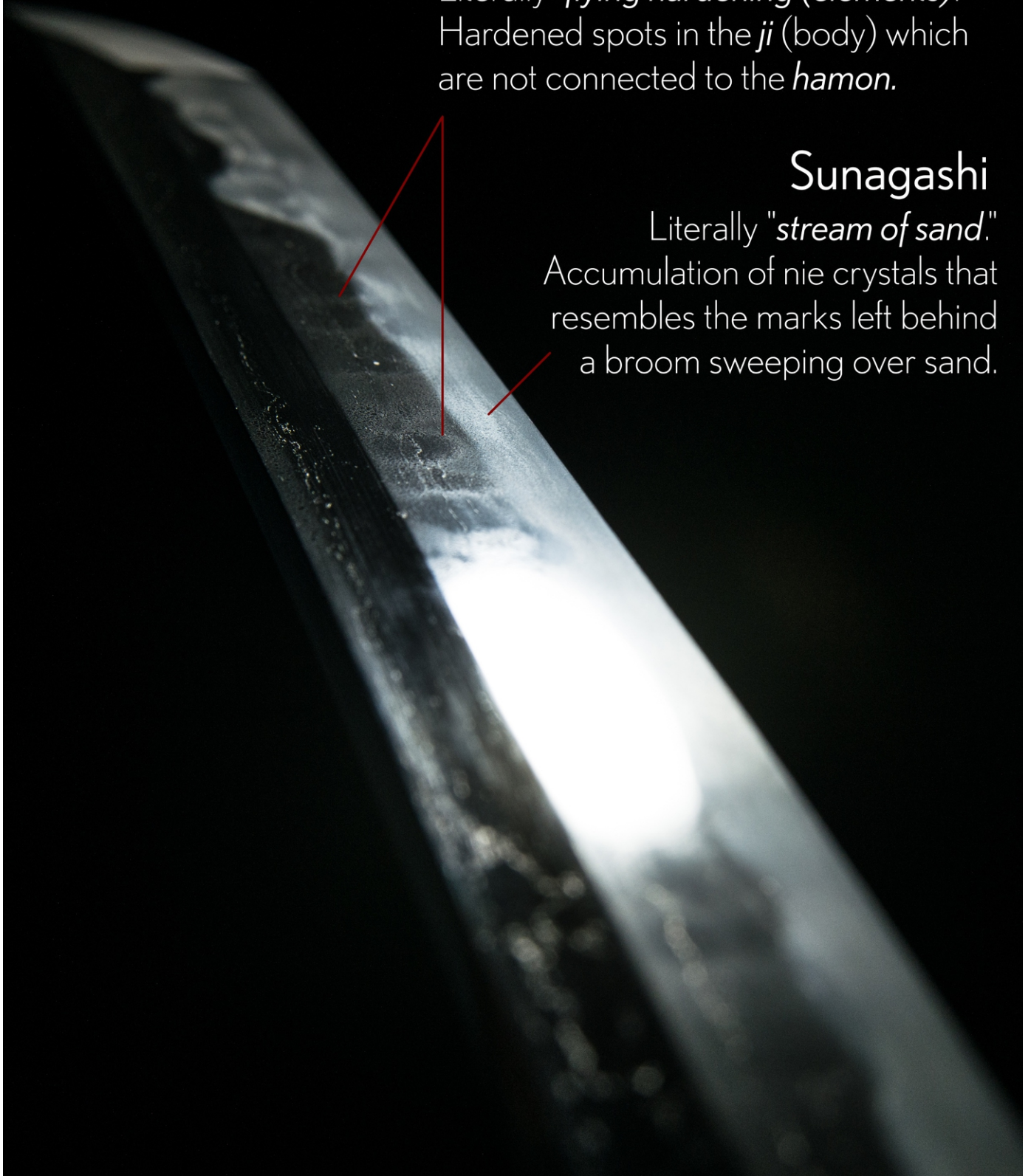


## Tobiyaki

Literally "*flying hardening (elements)*."  
Hardened spots in the *ji* (body) which  
are not connected to the *hamon*.

## Sunagashi

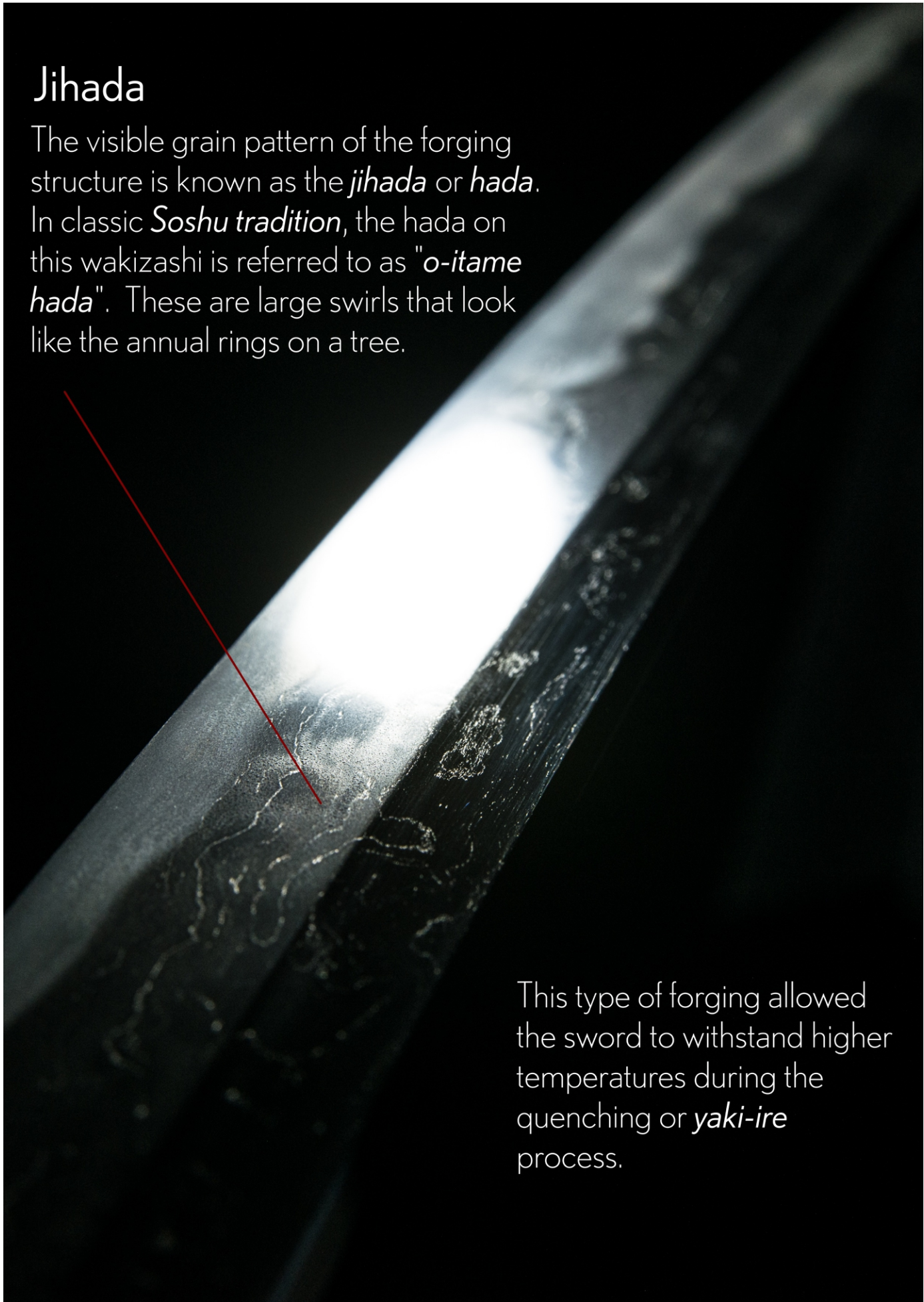
Literally "*stream of sand*."  
Accumulation of nie crystals that  
resembles the marks left behind  
a broom sweeping over sand.





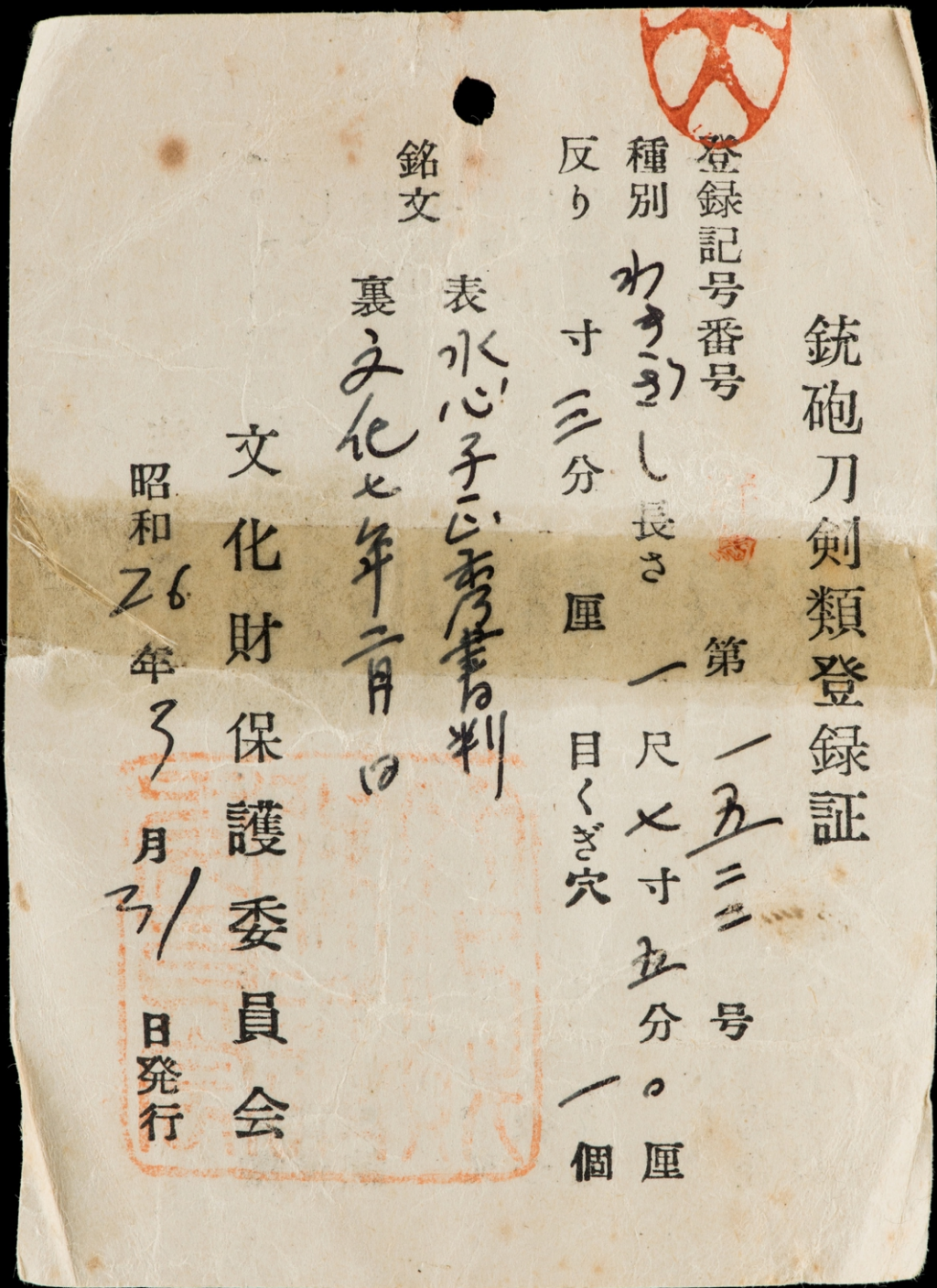
## Jihada

The visible grain pattern of the forging structure is known as the *jihada* or *hada*. In classic *Soshu tradition*, the hada on this wakizashi is referred to as "*o-itame hada*". These are large swirls that look like the annual rings on a tree.



This type of forging allowed the sword to withstand higher temperatures during the quenching or *yaki-ire* process.





This is the *torokusho* (registration card) for the Masahide wakizashi. Note that the card was registered in the 26th year of (1951), on March 31.

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

The serial number is just 1522, one of the very first swords registered in Japan.





## NBTHK Tokubetsu Kicho Certificate of Designation

(a sword designated as *Especially Precious*  
by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)

Issued in the 50th year of Showa (1975), October 11th

One, Wakizashi

*Mei* (signature)

*Suishinshi Masahide (kao)* (omote, front)

*Bunka 7 nen 2 gatsu-bi* (ura, back)

*Nagasa* (length)

1-shaku 7-sun 4.5-bu (53.2cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)





ITEM# UJTA030

## A TAIKEI NAOTANE TANTO

SIGNED, SHINSHINTO PERIOD (5TH YEAR OF TENPO, MID-SPRING 1834)

**Swordsmith:** *Taikei NAOTANE*  
**Location:** Musashi province (modern-day Tokyo)  
**Measurements:** **Length:** 29.4cm (ubu)    **Curvature:** 0.2cm    **Moto-haba:** 2.7cm  
                          **Saki-haba:** 2.4cm    **Moto-kasane:** 4.5mm    **Saki-kasane:** 2.4mm  
**Weight of blade:** 189 grams

**Hamon:** *Ko-notare with kinsuji, ashi, and sunagashi*  
**Jihada:** *Uzumaki-hada (whirlpool) with stunning chikei*  
**Certificate:** **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)  
**Fujishiro:** *Saijo-saku* (ranked as a grandmaster swordsmith)  
**Included:** Shirasaya, sword fabric bag, habaki with kamon, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, printed care guide, registration and export paperwork  
**Koshirae:** Potential custom koshirae project

**SOLD** (an aikuchi-koshirae is being built for this sword)

## Taikei Naotane

One of the most accomplished Shinshinto swordsmiths *Shoji Minobe Naotane* was born in Yamagata City, Dewa province, in 1779. His family must surely have been Samurai class for he carried the family name Shoji at a time when the vast populace did not have a surname.

It was, in fact, not until 1870 that everyone in Japan was required to have a surname.

As a young man, he left the northern country for Edo (Tokyo) and becoming an apprentice of Suishinshi Masahide. He quickly mastered the methods taught and selected *Taikei* as his crafting name. Like Suishinshi, *Lord Akimoto of Tatebayashi* retained and employed him in Kozuke province.

In 1821, Naotane received the title of *Chikuzen Daijo*, and again in 1848, the title of *Minosuke*. Naotane became so skillful that he catapulted himself to become the most important smith in the school taking over leadership when Masahide and his son both died in 1825.

As his sensei, Taikei Naotane was ranked as *Saijo-saku*, a grandmaster swordsmith. His talents are said to have surpassed his master's achievements.

Like his teacher Masahide, Naotane favoured the reintroduction of old methods of swordmaking over modern practicality. He was successful in all traditions, especially the Bizen and Soshu disciplines.

His unique *uzumaki-hada*, literally “whirlpool surface grain on the steel” was to become one of his signature trademarks. It is certainly one of the most beautiful patterns steel has ever had the joy of becoming sculpted into.

Naotane was very active, producing blades for about 55 years from 1800 to 1856. He died on February 22nd, the 5th year day of Ansei, 1858, at the age of 79.

## The sword

A genuine tanto by Taikei Naotane is a treasured find. He did not make many of them. A tanto is a symbol of artistocracy, a dagger that serves as a physical and spiritual amulet.

Everything about this artistic creation is first class. As with Masahide's wakizashi, this sword is a masterpiece in Soshu-inspired swordcrafting finesse.

What first strikes the senses are the glowing amounts of *chikei* (dark lines of nie crystals in the body) that serve to form the *uzumaki-hada*. Words are hard to describe such beauty. One can easily, and rightly should, spend hours admiring its captivating charm. This is pure talent.

Dated to 1834 during the Tenpo era, this time frame is considered Naotane's most prolific. Note the *Fujiwara Sagari kamon* and whirlpool mark on the *habaki*. This is a sword that was certainly owned by a notable family that could acquire such a prestigious work of art.

As it is sheathed in shirasaya only, building an *aikuchi tanto koshirae* would be a wonderful idea to consider. Or take of her just as she is. It is a sword that will bring immense joy and fulfillment to an appreciative home. A photo essay continues on the following pages.

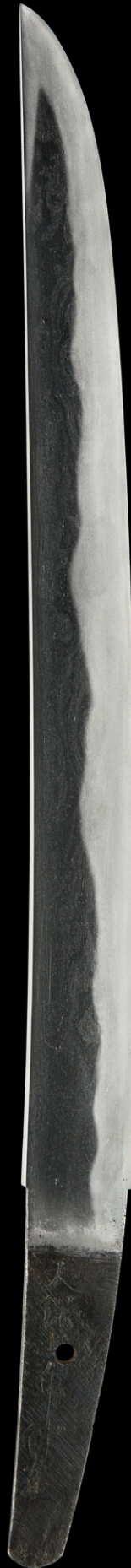
Saki-kasane: 2.4mm

Moto-kasane: 4.5mm

Length: 29.4cm

Curvature: 0.2cm

Moto-haba: 2.7cm





This tanto was crafted  
by *Taikei [Naotane]*  
with his personal seal of  
authenticity.

There are many variances  
of his signature over the  
55 years that he worked.

*Tsukuru* (made by)

*Tai* (big, large, grand)

*kei* (jubilation, rejoice, congratulate)

*kao* (official seal)

This tanto was signed by  
Taikei Naotane in the  
second month of the lunar  
calendar (Choshun)  
during the 5th year of  
Tenpo era (1834).

*Choshun* translates to  
around "mid-spring".

*Ten*  
*po*

*5*  
*nen*

*Chu*  
*shun*







## Hamon

The temper line (*hamon*) on the blade is a gentle *notare* (undulating wave) in *nie-deki*. *Nie-deki* is a term that refers to a hamon that is primarily made up *nie* - visible crystals that look like twinkling stars.

## Kinsuji

Meaning "gold lines", *kinsuji* are, in fact, short brilliant black lines of *nie* that appear inside the hamon. It is a desired trait of Soshu tradition blades and features prominently on this tanto by *Naotane*.





## Chikei

Literally meaning "*shadow(s) in the steel*", *Chikei* are beautiful black gleaming lines of *nie* crystals in the *ji* (body) of the sword that are highly prized.

This tanto is bursting with *chikei*, a hallmark that is the mastery of *Taikei Naotane*.

## Uzumaki-hada

Uzumaki means "*whirlpool*". *Naotane* was a master of this magnificent surface grain formation in which large *itame* wood-grain patterns swirled in unison to create a whirlpool effect on the blade.



# Habaki

The tanto is secured inside its shirasaya by a beautiful gold-wrapped *habaki* (collar) with two distinctive insignias on either side.



*Sagari mon*

This is the famous *kamon* (family crest) of the Fujiwara clan dating to the Yamato period (668AD).

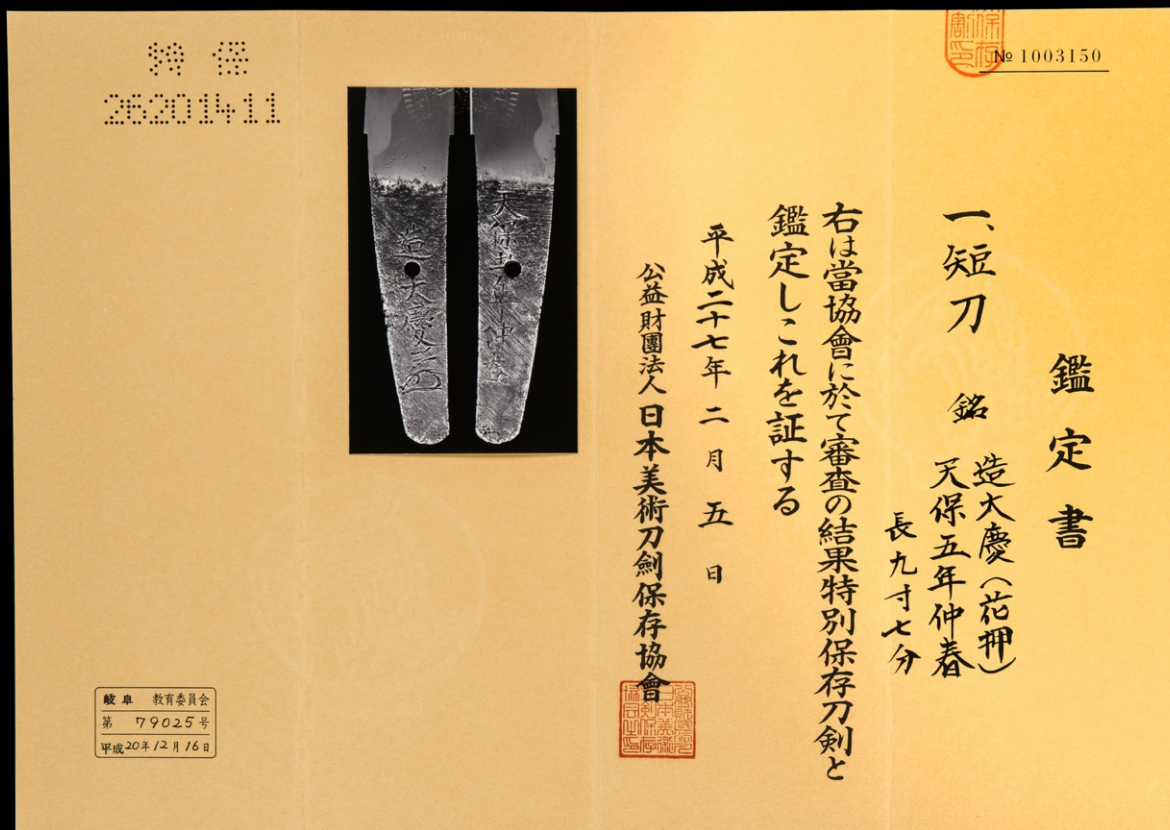
The design is of a wisteria flower, highly treasured among nobility in Japan for centuries. This emblem suggests the sword was held by a notable family. The habaki is original to the tanto.



## *Whirlpool (uzumaki)*

The flip side of the *habaki* is a respectful and playful reference to the crafting standards of Taikei Naotane.

As his unique *jihada* is known as *uzumaki-hada* (whirlpool), this symbol essentially says that this *habaki* will forever be paired with this blade (and this family). A classy touch.



## 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), February 5th

One, Tanto

*Mei* (signature)

*Tsukuru Taikei (kao)* (omote, front)

*Tenpo 5 Chushun* (ura, back)

*Nagasa* (length)

9-sun 7-bu (29.4cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)



# Steps to Building Your Own Koshirae

*Many fine antique Samurai swords today come stored only in a shirasaya.  
A shirasaya acts like a humidior, protecting the steel for the long term.  
Just as the Samurai would have custom ordered during the Edo Period  
we can build a traditional set of outdoor koshirae (sword mounts) for your sword.*

## Step 1: Choose your sword (find the sword that chooses you)



## Step 2: Select your antique fittings & colours (decide on a theme that speaks to you and your sword)



## Step 3: Patience...

(it takes about 3-6 months to build as it is handmade by master craftsmen in Japan)

Total production cost ranges from \$2,500 ~ \$5,000

Please speak to a member of the Unique Japan team to get started!





ITEM# UJKA157

## A KURIHARA NOBUHIDE KATANA

SIGNED, SHINSHINTO PERIOD (3RD YEAR OF BUNKYU, AUGUST 1863)

**Swordsmith:** *Taira NOBUHIDE*  
**Location:** Musashi province (modern-day Tokyo)  
**Measurements:** **Length:** 74.9cm (ubu)    **Curvature:** 1.7cm    **Moto-haba:** 3.1cm  
**Saki-haba:** 2.5cm    **Moto-kasane:** 6.8mm    **Saki-kasane:** 5.0mm  
**Weight of blade:** 875 grams

**Hamon:** *Gunome-midare with sunagashi, kinsuji, ashi*  
**Jihada:** *Beautiful ko-itame hada*  
**Published:** **Shinshinto Taikan by Iimura** (sword is listed on page 348)  
**Certificate #1:** **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)  
**Certificate #2,3,4:** **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (full koshirae & tsuba & fuchi-kashira all designated as Important by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)  
**Fujishiro:** *Jojo-saku* (ranked as a highly superior swordsmith)  
**Included:** Edo period koshirae, shirasaya, sword fabric bag, sword stand, etc.

**SOLD**

## Kurihara (Taira) Nobuhide

Nobuhide was born *Kurihara Kenji* in Echigo province on the shores of the Sea of Japan north central to the country. His first apprenticeship was that of a sickle smith in *Tsukigatamura* in Echigo.

Nobuhide travelled to Kyoto to become a mirror-maker (*kagami-shi*) in 1829. In 1850, at age of 35, he became a student of legendary Shinshinto swordsmith master Kiyomaro.

His apprenticeship was to last only two years, when normally five or ten years was the average. Striking it out on his own so soon was a reflection of his familiarity of forging steel as a sickle smith that he had acquired prior to his tenure under Kiyomaro's tutelage.

In 1865, Nobuhide received the title *Chikuzen no Kami* in Kyoto. He made a few blades in Osaka two years later signing Nobutaka in his early years.

Blades of Nobuhide have been found from 1855 to 1878. He was the most celebrated student of Kiyomaro and his skill is regarded as equal to his sensei. His *hataraki* (activity in the hamon) is even considered to be superior.

Kurihara Nobuhide was also one of the finest *horimono* engravers of the Shinshinto period. A number of his swords have gone on to achieve Juyo Token status.

Nobuhide died on January 25th 1880 at the age of just 66. It is said that he returned to Echigo province to continue crafting mirrors after the *Haitorei Edict* of 1876.

## The sword

It brings us great pleasure to introduce one of Nobuhide's greatest sword-making accomplishments. A katana of heroic proportions, this is a sword that exhibits a cutting edge of 74.9cm fully adorned in a beautiful Edo-period koshirae. It dated to August 1863.

So magnificent is this signed sword by *Taira Nobuhide* that it is featured in the highly esteemed *Shinshinto Taikan* reference book of the finest swords from the time period.

From *nakago* to *kissaki*, this is a katana of sheer brilliance. First and foremost, the *jigane* is a gorgeous densely packed *ko-mokume*. It's clear why Nobuhide was such an accomplished mirror maker. It gives the sword a profound sense of strength and vitality to its core.

The *hamon* is a dazzling *gunome midare* made in the style that Nobuhide was known to create. On the pages that follow note the bluish tinge on the steel of the sword. This is a mark of the highest quality. Everything about this sword was made to exacting standards. The graceful *nakago* alone is a work of art, with its precise file marks confidently rendered.

The splendid *koshirae* sword fittings sing in harmony with the katana. The *fuchi-kashira* crafted by *Mino Mitsushige* carries an elaborate carving in the design of *kamakiri*, the praying mantis, symbolizing the moral duty of the Samurai to maintain peace in the Edo period.

Along with NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certification for the blade, there are a further **three** certificates of authenticity by the NTHK-NPO for the koshirae. This is a Samurai sword.

Saki-kasane: 5.0mm

Moto-kasane: 6.8mm

Saki-haba: 2.5cm

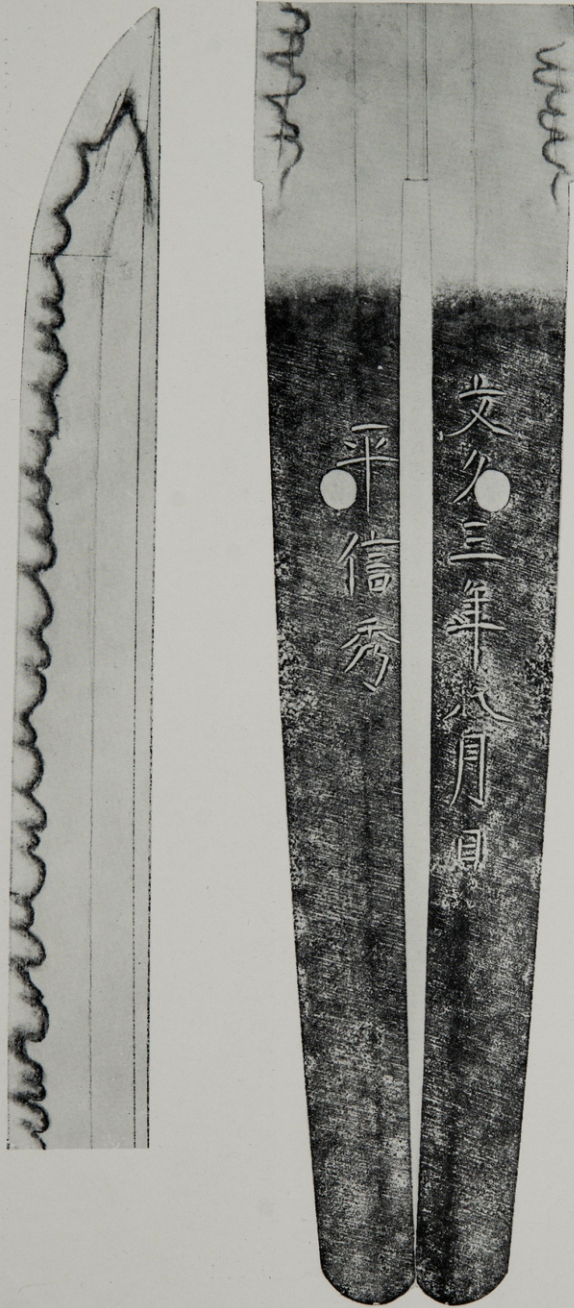
Length: 74.9cm

Curvature: 1.7cm

Moto-haba: 3.1cm







刃長二尺四寸七分(七四・九センチ) 反り六分強先反り心元巾一寸重ね二分五厘重量二〇匁本造り庵棟中鋒延びる、地鉄小板目肌良く練れて美しく約む、刃文互の目乱小鈍良く付いて刃中働き足良く入る、銚子乱込み尖り心に返る、地刃共に健全にして出来よろしい。

(ノ) 信秀  
平 信 秀  
(文久三年八月日)

This katana masterpiece by *Taira (Kurihara) Nobuhide* is featured in the prestigious *Shinshinto Taikan* reference book by *limura Yoshifume*, first published in the 1960s. The book contains coveted works by notable smiths from the Shinshinto period with *oshigata* and blade details.

新々刀大鑑

This katana was crafted  
by *Taira Nobuhide*.  
An elegant 3-character  
signature.



*Taira*  
*Nobu*  
*hide*

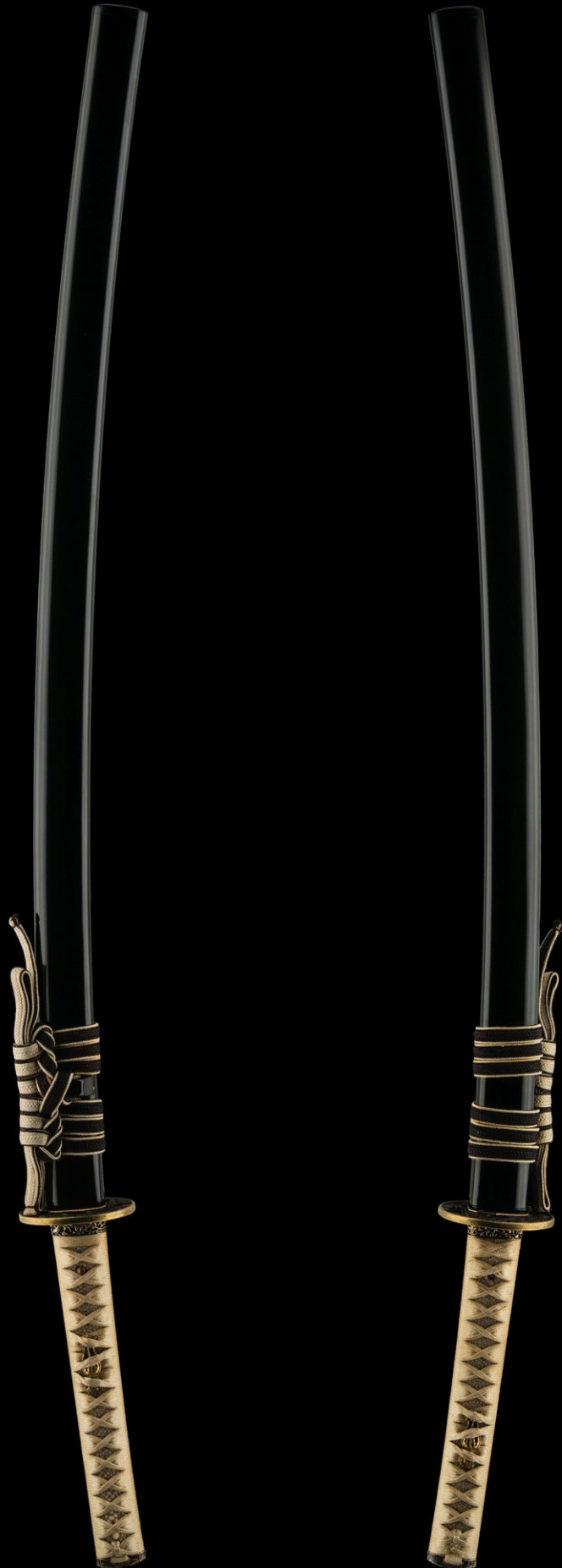


This katana was signed by  
*Taira Nobuhide* in the 8th  
month during the 3rd year  
of the Bunkyu era.

This translates to  
August 1863.

*Bun*  
*kyu*  
*3*  
*nen*  
*8*  
*gatsu*  
*hi*







Traditional brocade *katana bukuro* (bag) that is signed on the lining



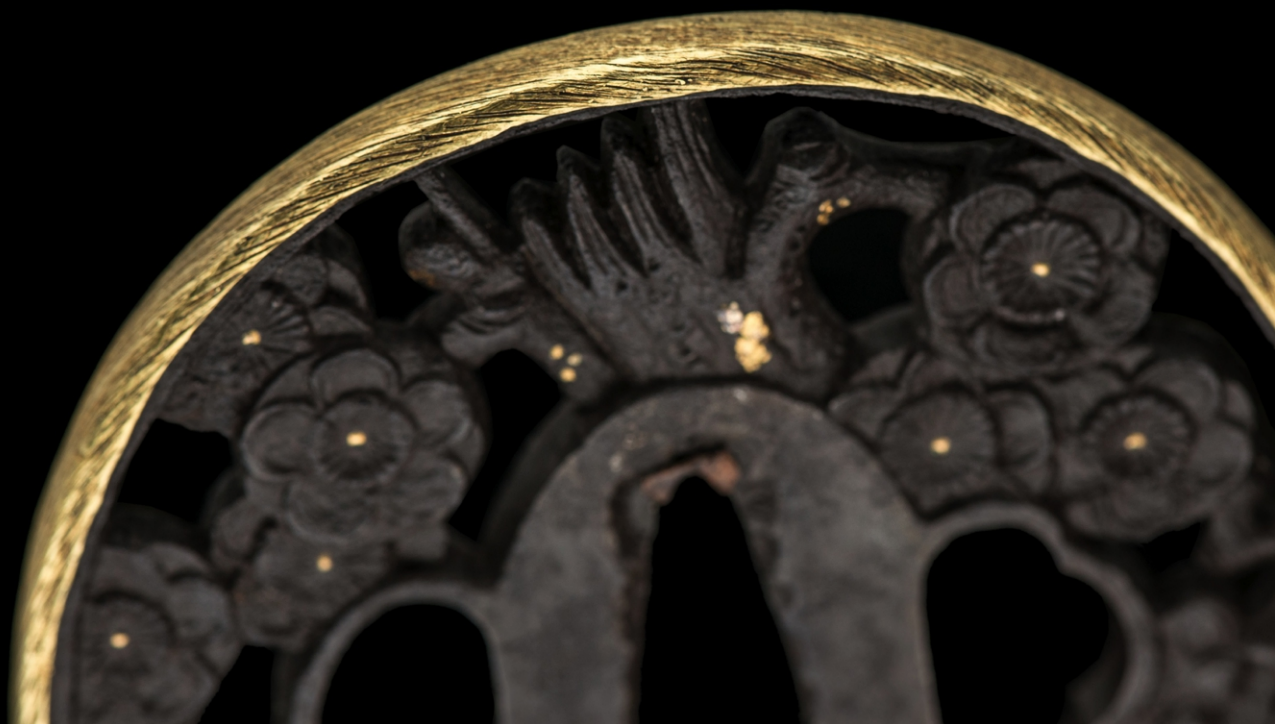
Soft protective leather cover for the *saya* (scabbard)

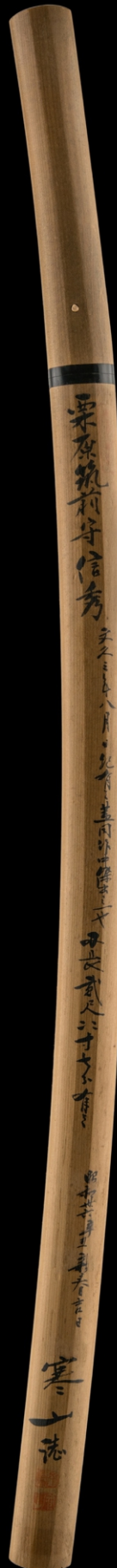






*A Hikone Bori Soten School Tsuba*  
circa Mid-Edo Period (1700s)  
NTHK-NPO Kanteisho Certification





## Sayagaki

The Taira Nobuhide Katana features an ink-written authentication by Dr. Kanzan Sato on its shirasaya - a process known as sayagaki.

The characters chiseled on the nakago (smith and date), length of the sword in traditional measurement, date of inscription and Kanzan sensei's signature are hand-written on the shirasaya.

Dr. Kanzan was a former director of the NBTHK (The Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword). A highly respected scholar, he has written numerous books and articles on the Japanese sword.



## The Praying Mantis

The *kashira* (pommel) depicts a *kamakiri* (praying mantis).

The brave mantis within the insect world is a predator and at the top of the food chain.

The role of the mantis is to protect crops from harmful insects, such as the cricket.

In this fabulously artistic *kashira* carving by *Mitsushige* of Mino province in the late Edo period, the *kamakiri* is nestled authoritatively amongst flowers and other insects.

The *kamakiri* thus symbolises the Samurai's moral duty to protect Japanese society during the Edo Period.





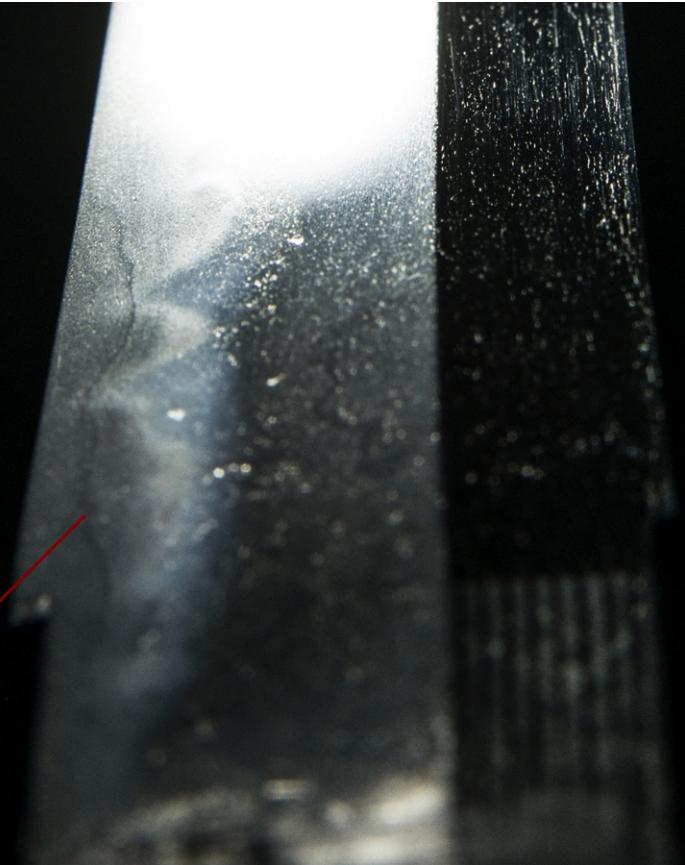
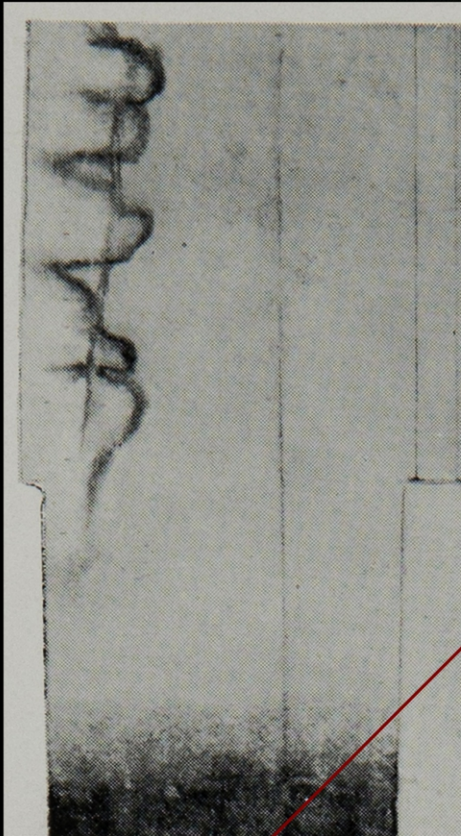


*Mitsushige*  
(artist)

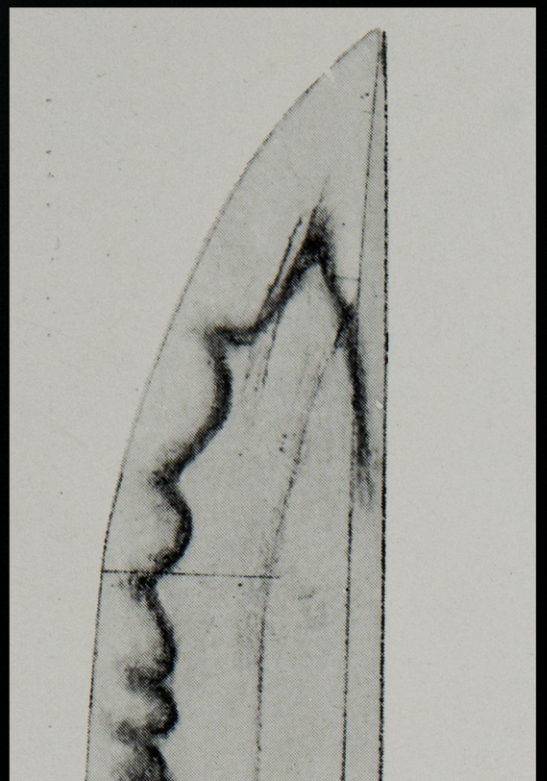
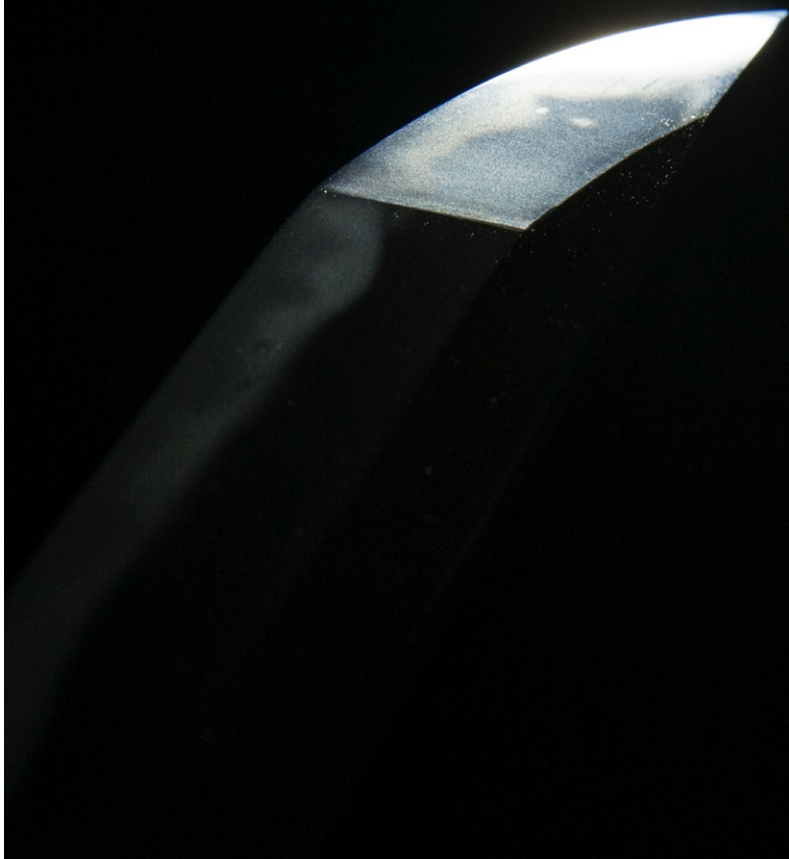
*Mino ju*  
(living in Mino)

The *kamakiri* theme is portrayed throughout the entire *fuchi-kashira*. The *fuchi-kashira* comes with NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certification thus authenticating the work and signature as genuine by Mitsushige.





Note the *kinsuji* (black line) channelling its way through the *gunome hamon*.  
The *boshi* (hamon in the tip) is pointed and curled back like a burning candle.

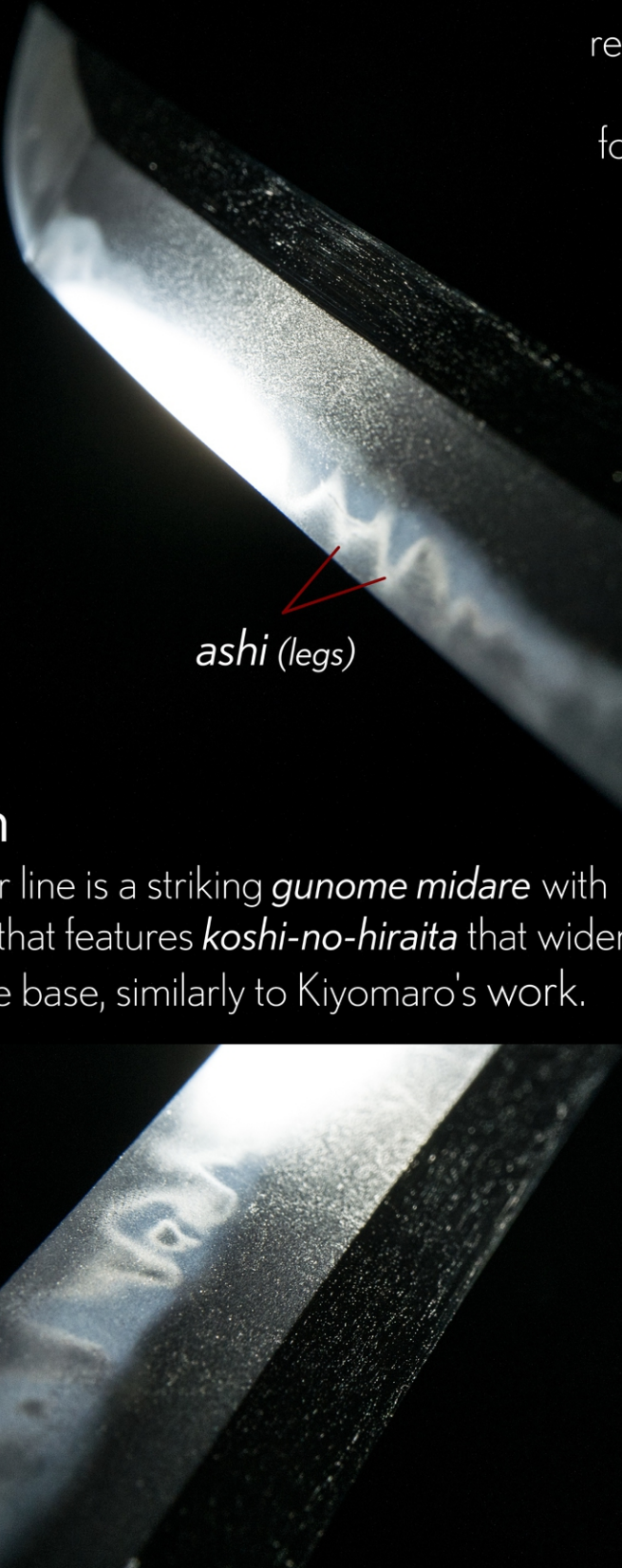




## Jihada

Kurihara Nobuhide forged an extremely dense and beautiful *ko-itame hada*.

The *jigane* (steel) is relatively soft yet strong and powerful. He learned forging techniques from his grandmaster sensei, *Kiyomaro*, becoming his most prolific student.

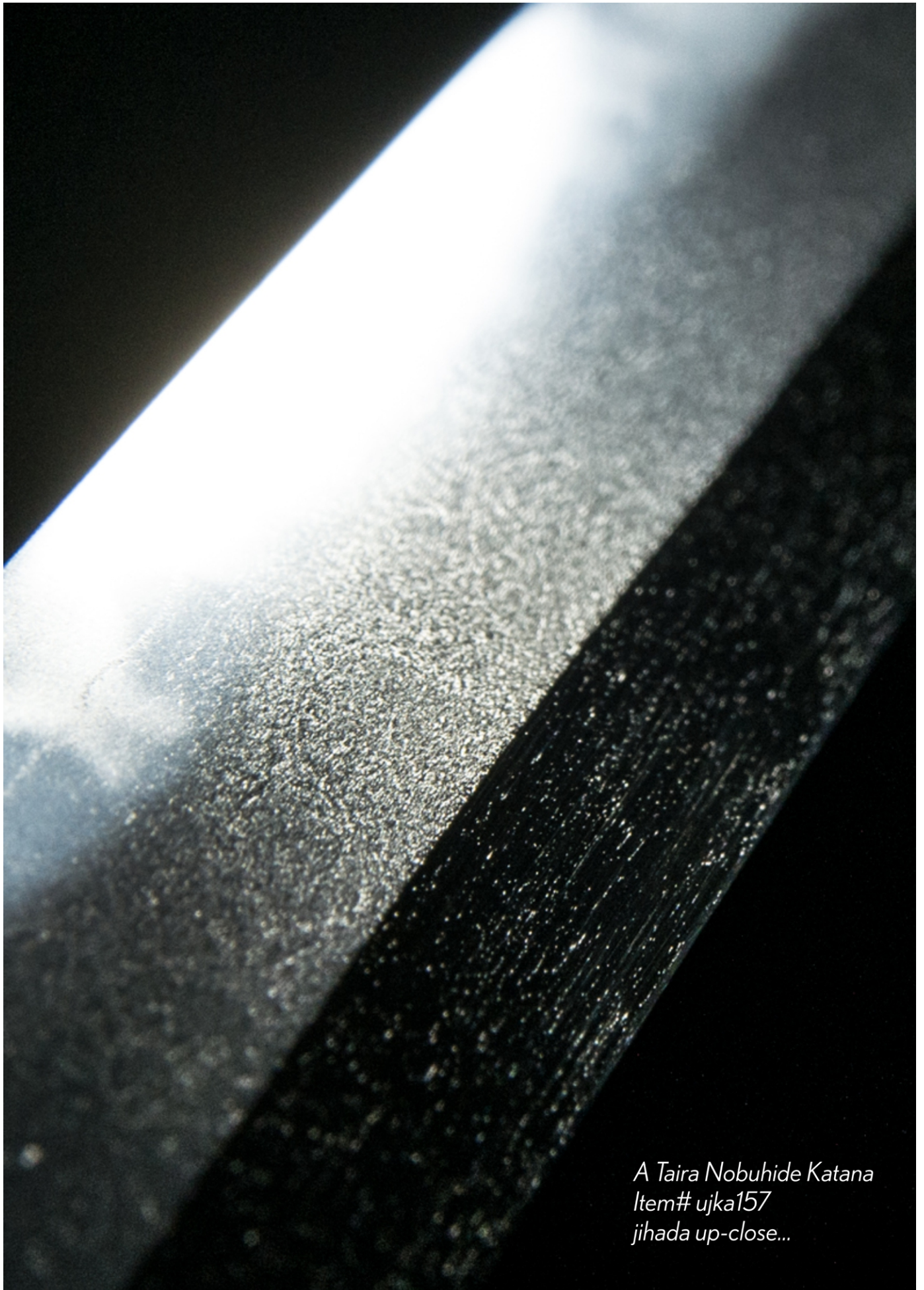


*ashi* (legs)

## Hamon

The temper line is a striking *gunome midare* with *ashi* (legs) that features *koshi-no-hiraita* that widens towards the base, similarly to Kiyomaro's work.





*A Taira Nobuhide Katana  
Item# ujka157  
jihada up-close...*





## 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 60th year of Showa (1985), May 29th

One, Katana

*Mei* (signature)

*Taira Nobuhide* (omote, front)

*Bunkyu 3-nen 8-gatsu* (ura, back)

*Nagasa* (length)

2-shaku 4-sun 6-bu (74.9cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)



ITEM# UJKA154

## A SHIMIZU HISAYOSHI KATANA

SIGNED, SHINSHINTO PERIOD (3RD YEAR OF BUNKYU, AUGUST 1863)

**Swordsmith:** *Sagami Kunihiro Minamoto HISAYOSHI*  
**Location:** Musashi province (modern-day Tokyo)  
**Measurements:** **Length:** 72.9cm (ubu)    **Curvature:** 1.6cm    **Moto-haba:** 3.2cm  
**Saki-haba:** 2.3cm    **Moto-kasane:** 8.2mm    **Saki-kasane:** 6.1mm  
**Weight of blade:** 995 grams

**Hamon:** *Ko-gunome, ko-choji, with beautiful sunagashi and chikei*  
**Jihada:** *Pure masame hada (straight grain)*  
**Certificate #1:** **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)  
**Certificate #2:** **NTHK-NPO Yushusaku** (a sword designated as Highly Excellent by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)  
**Fujishiro:** *Chujo-saku* (ranked as an above average swordsmith)  
**Included:** Shirasaya, sword fabric bag, sword stand, maintenance kit, DVD, etc.  
**Koshirae:** Potential custom koshirae project

**SOLD** (a custom koshirae is being built for this sword)



## Shimizu Hisayoshi

To fully appreciate swordsmith Hisayoshi is to first travel back to his roots of noted sensei, **Hosokawa Masayoshi**. First generation (Shodai) Masayoshi was, in fact, an accomplished armourer from the lineage of the Saotome School.

It comes to no surprise that Masayoshi studied under the grandmaster **Suishinshi Masahide**. Next to **Taikei Naotane**, Masayoshi is Masahide's best student and also trained a large number of students. Hisayoshi was one of his very finest students.

Hisayoshi's civilian name was *Shimizu Sogoro*. He originally travelled from Odawara of Sagami province. He worked mostly in the Soshu tradition and often exhibited an *o-midare* (large wavy temper line) to the swords he crafted.

Many of his blades also display *horimono*. They are always robust with a thick *kasane* and full *hira-niku* (the meat of the surface of the cutting edge). This foundation was created to penetrate harder targets such as armor – a clear influence of sensei Masayoshi.

Two of Hisayoshi's greatest personal accomplishments came as a master himself having trained both the great **Sa Yukihide** and **Kawai Hisayuki**. He died on September 15th, 1868.

## The sword

Although Hisayoshi is officially ranked a respectful *Chu-josaku* (above average) smith, one look at this katana will blow away any preconceived notions of his forging ability.

Never judge a book by its cover or a smith by his Fujishiro rank. This katana is an awesome reminder that genius is embedded in all of us. We just have to dig deep to channel it.

This is our first work by Shimizu Hisayoshi at Unique Japan. On a personal note, when I was introduced to the blade, I confessed on having never heard of the artist. I lifted the katana and was immediately struck on how beefy this blade is. It's actually 1kg in weight with a whopping *moto-kasane* of 8.2mm.

Powerful only begins to describe her. I was then completely overwhelmed by the sublime straight-grain *masame* pattern in the jihada. Wow. It reminded me immediately of our recent Hosho School katana with Juyo certification, yet about a third heavier! Every Japanese sword lover must respect a flawless *masame*. It's the stuff dreams are made of.

It's perplexing that all *hamon* and *jigane* characteristics normally associated with Hisayoshi are completely different in this katana. A tighter temper line, Yamato tradition forging in its *masame-hada* - a glorious accomplishment that rightly deserves to share pages with the grandmasters listed in this special Shinshinto Edition catalogue.

In very deserving fashion, this katana has achieved NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certification and the highest rank at the NTHK-NPO called *Yushusaku*. Yushusaku swords are the NTHK-NPO's equivalent of NBTHK Juyo Token. It's an amazing sword that would look incredible with a thoughtful koshirae built around her.

Or, as stated earlier, enjoyed just as she is.

PVK

Saki-kasane: 6.1mm

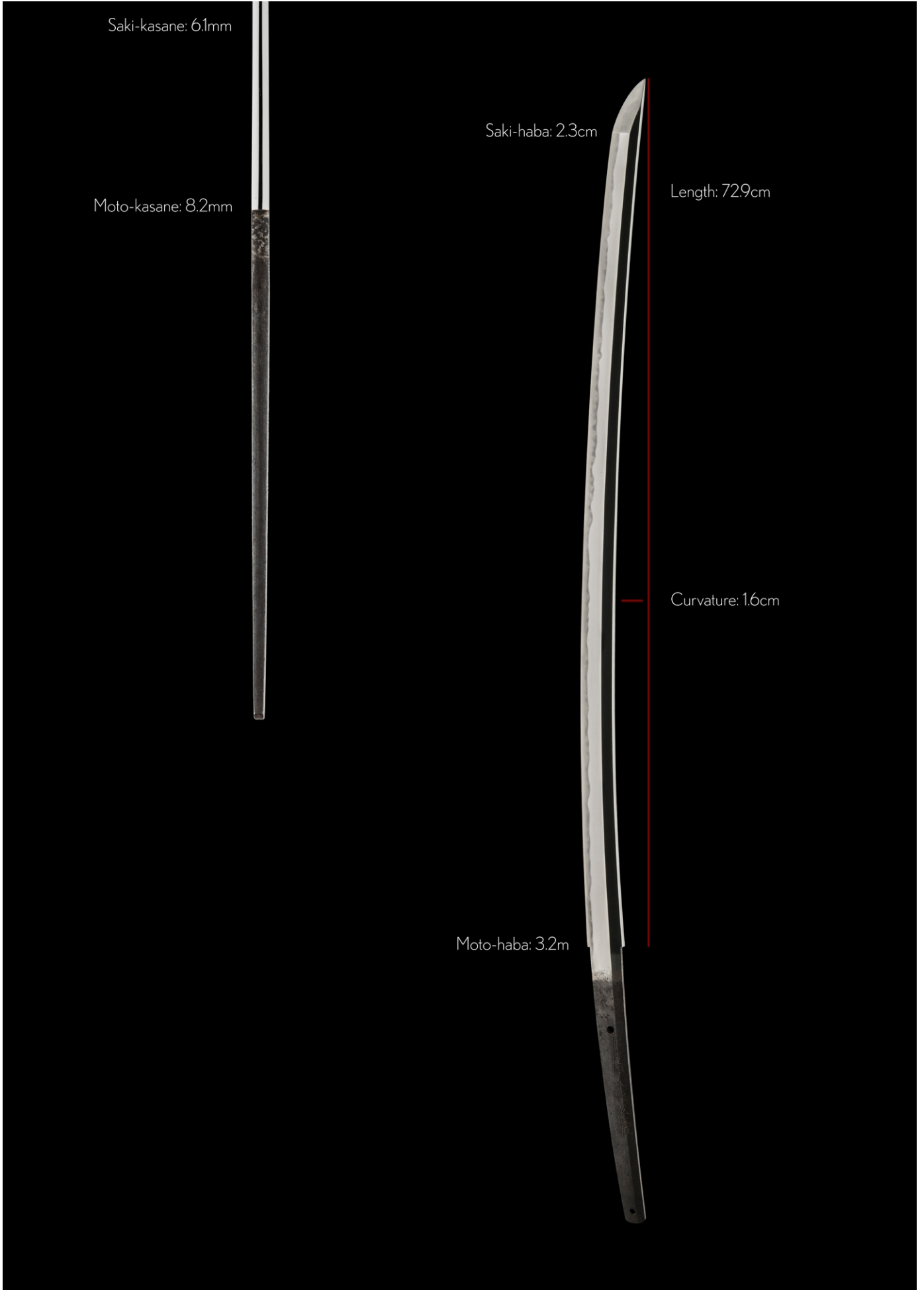
Moto-kasane: 8.2mm

Saki-haba: 2.3cm

Length: 72.9cm

Curvature: 1.6cm

Moto-haba: 3.2m







This katana was crafted and  
signed by swordsmith  
Hisayoshi of the Minamoto  
clan living in Sagami province.

*Saga  
mi  
Kuni  
hito  
Minamoto  
Hisa  
yoshi*

相模國人源久義

## A lucky year

This katana was signed by *Hisayoshi* in the 8th month during the 3rd year of the Bunkyu era.

This translates to August 1863.

This is the exact same month and year as the *Taira Nobuhide* katana featured in this catalogue.

As it happens, this is a very special year...

Note that Hisayoshi added the characters "*Kigai*" on the nakago.

*Kigai* represents the completion of a full 60-year calendar cycle.

Each year is represented with an 12-year animal cycle: Year of the Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Wild Boar.

Each year is also paired up with an element, in which there are 5; *wood, fire, earth, metal, water*

The pattern repeats itself every 60 years. The 3rd year of Bunkyu era was the last year of the "Heavenly Stem" (1804-1863).

The next *sexagenary* (yes, this is a word) *cycle* will commence in 2044. Enjoy ;)

Bun  
kyu  
3  
Ki  
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nen  
8  
gatsu  
hi

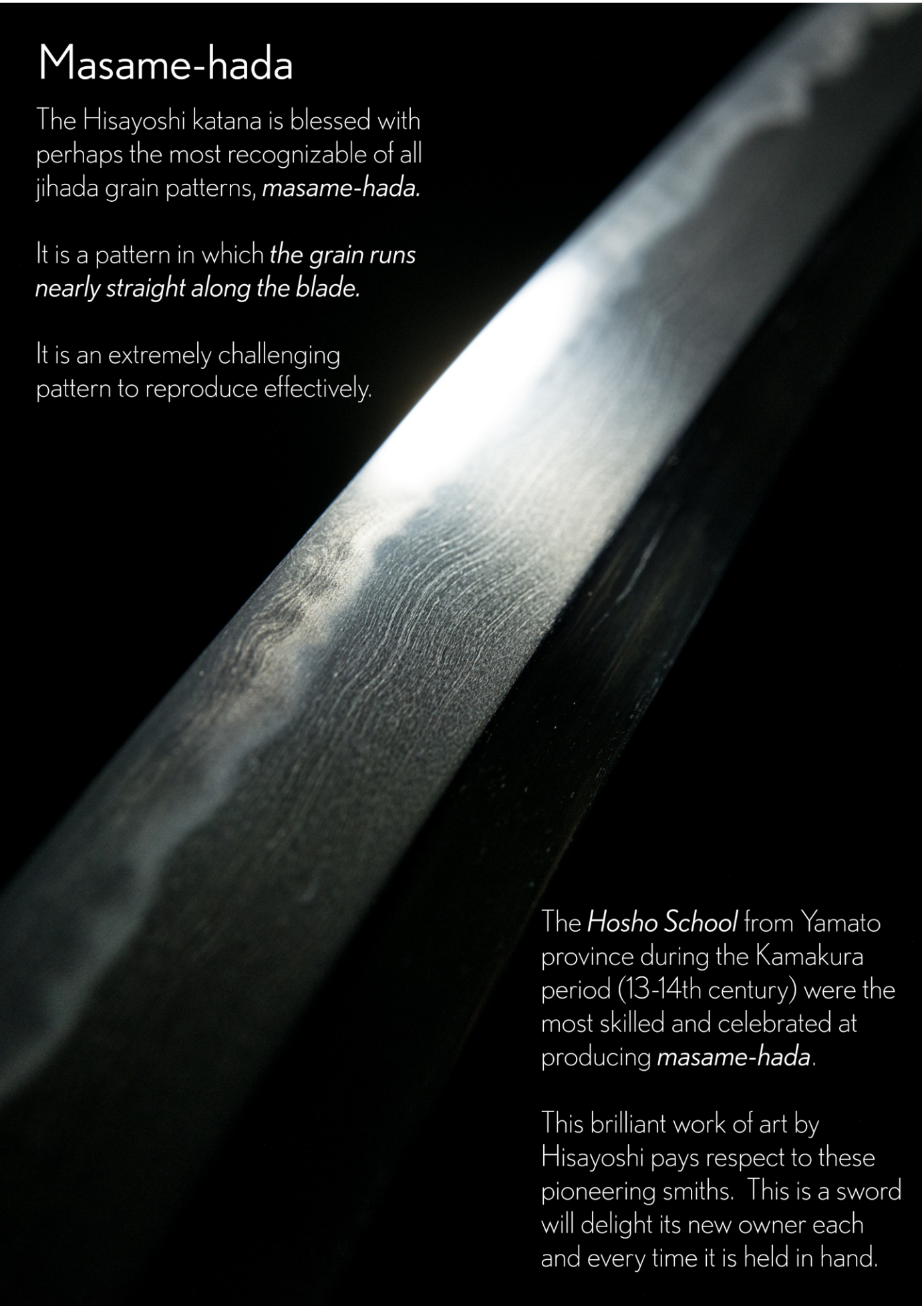


## Masame-hada

The Hisayoshi katana is blessed with perhaps the most recognizable of all jihada grain patterns, *masame-hada*.

It is a pattern in which *the grain runs nearly straight along the blade*.

It is an extremely challenging pattern to reproduce effectively.



The *Hosho School* from Yamato province during the Kamakura period (13-14th century) were the most skilled and celebrated at producing *masame-hada*.

This brilliant work of art by Hisayoshi pays respect to these pioneering smiths. This is a sword will delight its new owner each and every time it is held in hand.



## Hamon


The temper line (*hamon*) on the blade is a vibrant *ko-gunome* (tight undulating wave pattern) with *ko-choji* (small clove blossoms).

Glorious *hataraki* (activity) inside the hamon can be found such as *kinsuji* (black golden lines) and generous amounts of *sunagashi*, brushes of sand.

*kinsuji*

Hataraki such as *sunagashi* follows the parallel grain pattern in the steel.

A Japanese sword is holistic in nature. A good quality *hamon* can only be achieved if the *jigane* is well-forged to exacting standards. It's harmony at play.

A close-up, vertical photograph of a sword's spine. The central focus is a sharp, dark ridge (the mune) that runs down the length of the blade. The blade itself is dark and textured, with some lighter, possibly polished or worn, areas visible. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light gray.

## Mitsu-mune

*Mitsu* (three) *mune* (spine/ridge) has three surfaces and is generally found in the blades of smiths working of the Soshu (Kanagawa prefecture) and related schools as well as in the tanto of the Yamashiro school such as Rai Kunitoshi from the Kamakura period.

Hisayoshi was a smith known to forge in the Soshu tradition. *Mitsu-mune* is relatively rare sight and always a treat.





## 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 9th year of Heisei (1997), June 9th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

*Sagami no Kunibito Minamoto Hisayoshi* (omote, front)

*Bunkyo 3 Kigai nen 8-gatsu bi* (ura, back)






*Nagasa* (length)

2-shaku 4-sun (72.9cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai  
(NBTHK)





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										三 棟		

## NTHK-NPO Yushusaku Certificate of Designation

(a sword designated as *Highly Excellent* by the  
Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)

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

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Sagami no Kunibito Minamoto Hisayoshi (omote, front)

Bunkyu 3 Kigai nen 8-gatsu bi (ura, back)

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 4-sun (72.9cm)

Nihon Token Hozon Kai  
(NTHK-NPO)

\*\*This certificate is the highest level of honour at the NTHK-NPO

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