

JAPANESE
SWORD
CATALOGUE 28.5

FIRST RELEASED:
DECEMBER 7/2017

(COVER PHOTO)

ITEM# UJKA278

A SHODAI MASAHIRO KATANA
EARLY EDO PERIOD (1624~1644)
NBTHK TOKUBETSU HOZON

ANTIQUE JAPANESE SWORDS FOR SALE (VOLUME 28.5)

RELEASED: DECEMBER 7TH, 2017 TO VIP CLIENTS ONLY
UPDATED: JANUARY 30TH, 2018

THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN DESCRIPTIONS AND IMAGES
OF GENUINE ANTIQUE JAPANESE SWORDS THAT WERE SOLD IN
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Hello everyone,

Wow, what a year. Our newest addition to the family, Nelson, has turned 15 months. 2017 may have been the *Year of the Rooster*, for us, this has been the *Year of the Nelson*. Yes, we have our very own "Boss Baby" (if you have seen the movie, you understand!)

Both Donna and I can say, without a doubt, that this has been the busiest year of our lives. With three young kids now, we have tackled responsibilities full on together in every shape and form.

Thankfully, Nelson is sleeping better, able to communicate more effectively and our two eldest, Hannah and Lennon, are able to help out too. Our new family dynamic is taking shape.

I set out a goal to produce Catalogue 28 before year end and I am delighted to be present these wonderful swords to you. Thank you for downloading the catalogue.

Eight swords have been compiled for this catalogue. Actually, nine in total given that one of the lot is a spectacular genuine Edo period *daisho*. Half of the lots are from the *koto period* (pre-1600), most of which are from the *Kamakura period*, which is very exciting.

In this catalogue, I have spent extra time focusing on the *nakago* description of each sword. I receive many good questions about the modifications that can occur, especially on older swords. For example, the first sword in the catalogue, a *former tachi by Unji of the Ukai school*, features a relatively rare *gaku-mei nakago* where the original signature was inlaid on the newly formed nakago.

Other koto period collectibles include a lovely *torii-zori katana by Rai Kunizane* with *Tanobe sensei sayagaki*, a charismatic *Katayama Ichimonji school wakizashi* with an impressive *kirikomi* battle scar, and a brilliant *koshi-zori katana signed by Sukemitsu* that just oozes a warrior presence.

Our Edo period swords include a masterpiece by *shodai (first generation) Hizen Masahiro*. Everything about this long, muscular katana says *samurai*. And wait until you see the matching set of swords by *Hizen Tadahiro*. This is a party daisho unlike any other where everyone is invited. ;)

Another unique Shinto period piece is a sharp, iris-shaped wakizashi attributed to *shodai Kanewaka* that has a thoughtful *koshirae* telling the tale of a monkey reaching for the moon's reflection.

Finally, I have an excellent katana here in the UK by *third generation Echizen Yasutsugu* signed with *aoi-mon* (hollyhock family crest) that I created a 15-minute video introducing.

Thank you to all those who claimed swords at our studio in Tokyo this past year. Dozens of swords were acquired this way by happy clients from around the world including Costa Rica of all places. Congratulations Richard!

It's always such a great pleasure to serve you. Your support and incredible enthusiasm means everything to me. Happy holidays!

Warm regards,



Pablo Kuntz
December 2017

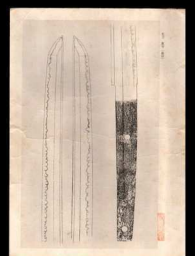


Happy 15 months Nelson!



Recently sold at our studio in Tokyo...

A Hatakedo Sanemori Tachi
Signed, *suriage nakago*
Kamakura period
14th NBTHK Juyo Token



INDEX OF AVAILABLE JAPANESE SWORDS

ITEM#	WORDSMITH & TYPE	CM	CERTIFICATE	ERA / PERIOD	PRICE
ujka190	AN UNJI KATANA	65.4	NTHK Yushuto	Kamakura (1306~1323)	SOLD
ujka272	A RAI KUNIZANE KATANA	67.3	Tokubetsu Hozon	Kamakura (1280~1318)	SOLD
ujwa214	A KANEWAKA WAKIZASHI	34.2	NTHK Kanteisho	Genna (1615~1624)	SOLD
ujdi006	A TADAHIRO DAISHO	72/53	Tokubetsu Hozon	Early Edo (1641~1673)	SOLD
ujka276	A YASUTSUGU III KATANA	69.6	Tokubetsu Hozon	Kanbun (1661~1673)	SOLD
ujka278	A MASAHIRO KATANA	76.0	Tokubetsu Hozon	Kan'ei (1624~1644)	SOLD
ujwa227	A KATAYAMA WAKIZASHI	46.0	Tokubetsu Hozon	Kamakura (1306~1323)	SOLD
ujka280	A SUKEMITSU KATANA	73.3	NBTHK Hozon	Oei era (1394~1428)	SOLD

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.

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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 EBISU.

DOMO ARIGATO,
PABLO



ITEM# UJKA190

AN UNJI KATANA

SIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (TOKUJI~GENKO ERA: 1306-1323)

Swordsmith: *Ukan Ju Unji* (signed with *gakumei* framed inlay on tachi side)
Measurements: **Length:** 65.4cm (*suriage*) **Curvature:** 1.8cm **Moto-haba:** 2.9cm
Jihada: *Ko-itame nagareru*
Hamon: *Suguha with wavy ko-notare*
Certificate #1: NTHK-NPO **Yushuto** (a sword designated as Highly Excellent by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)
Certificate #2-4: NTHK-NPO **Kanteisho** (a sword, tsuba and koshirae designated as Authentic by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)
Fujishiro: **Jo-saku** (ranked as a superior swordsmith)
Included: Shirasaya, koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description

SOLD

The majority of *tachi* that exist from the golden Kamakura period (1185-1333) have been altered to present-day katana and wakizashi. In the shortening process, the original *mei* (signature) is often lost. With this unique sword, the *mei* was respectfully preserved and inlaid on the new *nakago* - a procedure known as *gakumei* (framed signature). Superior swordsmith **Unji** is of the famed **Ukai school**, pupil of **Unsho**. Based in Ukai village in Bizen, their roots are from the Yamashiro tradition and thus the blade exhibits such rich qualities. This is a beautifully polished sword with a handsome set of koshirae fittings that compliments this rare and interesting piece.

Saki-kasane: 4.4mm



Saki-haba: 2.0cm

Nagasa: 65.4cm

Moto-kasane: 6.1mm

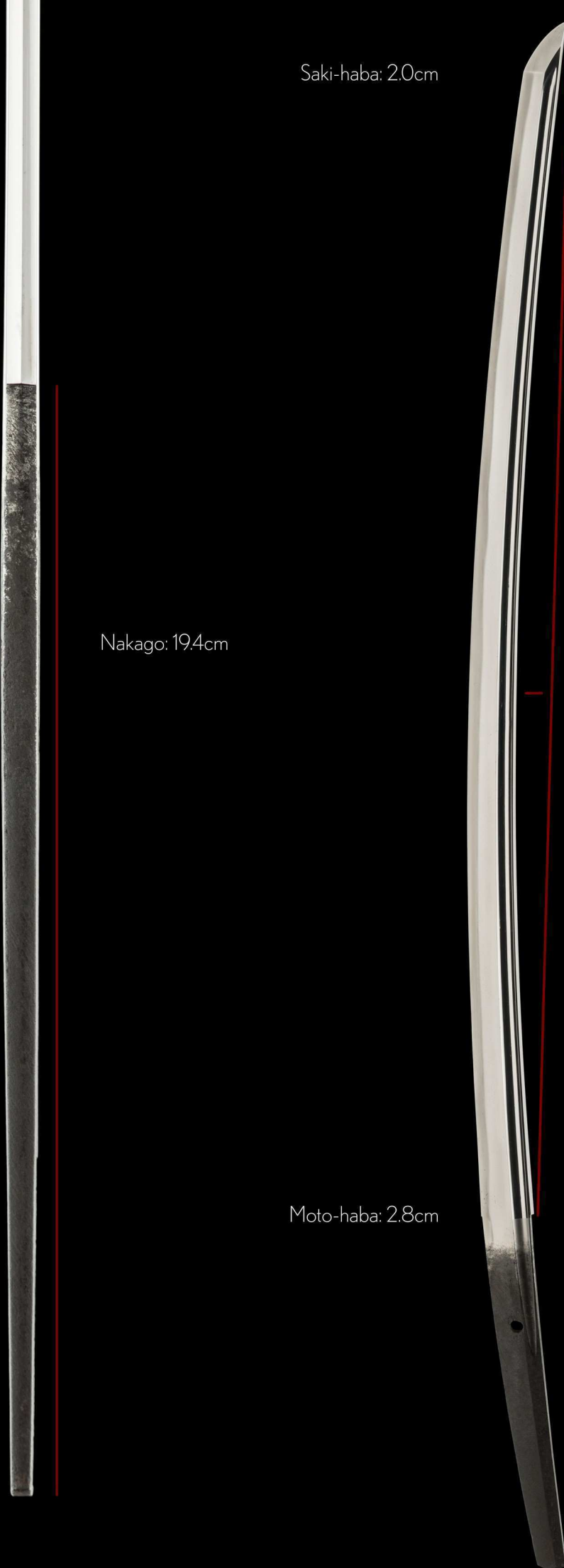
Nakago: 19.4cm

Sori: 1.8cm

Omosa: 540g

Moto-haba: 2.8cm

Mekugi-ana: 1





The graceful curvature of the Kamakura period

Location: *Ukan Ju* (living in Ukai, Bizen province)
Swordsmith: *Unji*



Minamoto Yoshitsune

This sword was once a long tachi that a samurai carried on horseback. It was shortened to a more practical katana length (from a standing position) during the late Muromachi to early Edo period.

The original *mei* (signature) is normally lost during the shortening process becoming an *o-suriage nakago*.


In this unique situation, out of respect for the sword and smith, the mei was preserved and inlaid as *gaku-mei* meaning 'framed signature' after the new nakago was formed.

Ukan or Ukai was a village in Bizen province where swordsmith Unji lived and worked.

U
kan
Ju
Un
ji

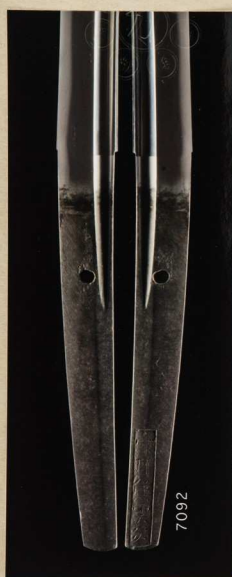
Gaku-mei
(framed signature)



A close-up, diagonal view of the nakago (tang) of a Japanese sword. The metal has a textured, slightly mottled appearance. A rectangular area on the left side of the tang is engraved with a signature in kuzushiji script. The signature is a 'gaku-me' (smith's mark), which includes the character 'un' (云) at the bottom, indicating it belongs to the Un family (Ukai School).

Note that the *gaku-me* signature was inlaid on the *tachi* side of the nakago as this sword was once a tachi, carried on horseback by samurai 700-plus years ago during the Kamakura period.

Interestingly, all smiths from the Ukai School carried the prefix of *Un*, meaning "cloud". The leading smiths are *Unjo*, *Unji* and *Unju*, collectively known as *Unrui* (Un family).



NTHK-NPO Yushusaku Certificate of Designation

Issued in the 27th year of Heisei (2015), December 13th

Mei (signature)
(Gaku-mei) Ukan ju Unji

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 1-sun 5-bu (65.4cm)

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)

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

This katana will likely be published in a future book showcasing a collection of Yushuto awarded swords released by the organization.



kaki-nagashi

A *hi* (pronounced "hee") is a groove engraved on the *shinogi-ji*, the surface between the *mune* (spine) and the *shinogi* (ridge line) or the *hira-ji* (area between the *hamon* and *shinogi*).

A groove helps to make a sword lighter and aids in the cutting performance by taking on i-beam construction properties of absorbing energy.

On this sword, there is a *bo-hi* on the *omote* (front) and *ura* (back) of the blade.

The groove then becomes pointed and tapers about halfway down the *nakago* (tang). This is known as *kaki-nagashi*.



The *boshi* (hamon in the tip of the sword) has a brushed appearance thus referred to as *hakikake* meaning 'sweeping'.



The blade is polished beautifully.

Notice how the *hada* (steel skin) is crisp above and below the hamon.



mokume-hada, close up.



Light *utsuri*, whitish reflective areas
in the *jihada* near the *shinogi*.

ko-ashi
(legs, Yamashiro tradition-like)



A close-up photograph of a Japanese sword blade, focusing on the hamon (temper line). The blade is dark and polished, with a bright, curved hamon visible. Two red rectangular boxes highlight specific areas: one at the top left and another further down on the right. Red lines connect these boxes to their respective text labels. The background is black.

kuichigaiba, where the hamon is intentionally nibbled away.

nijuba, where a second line runs parallel to the main hamon

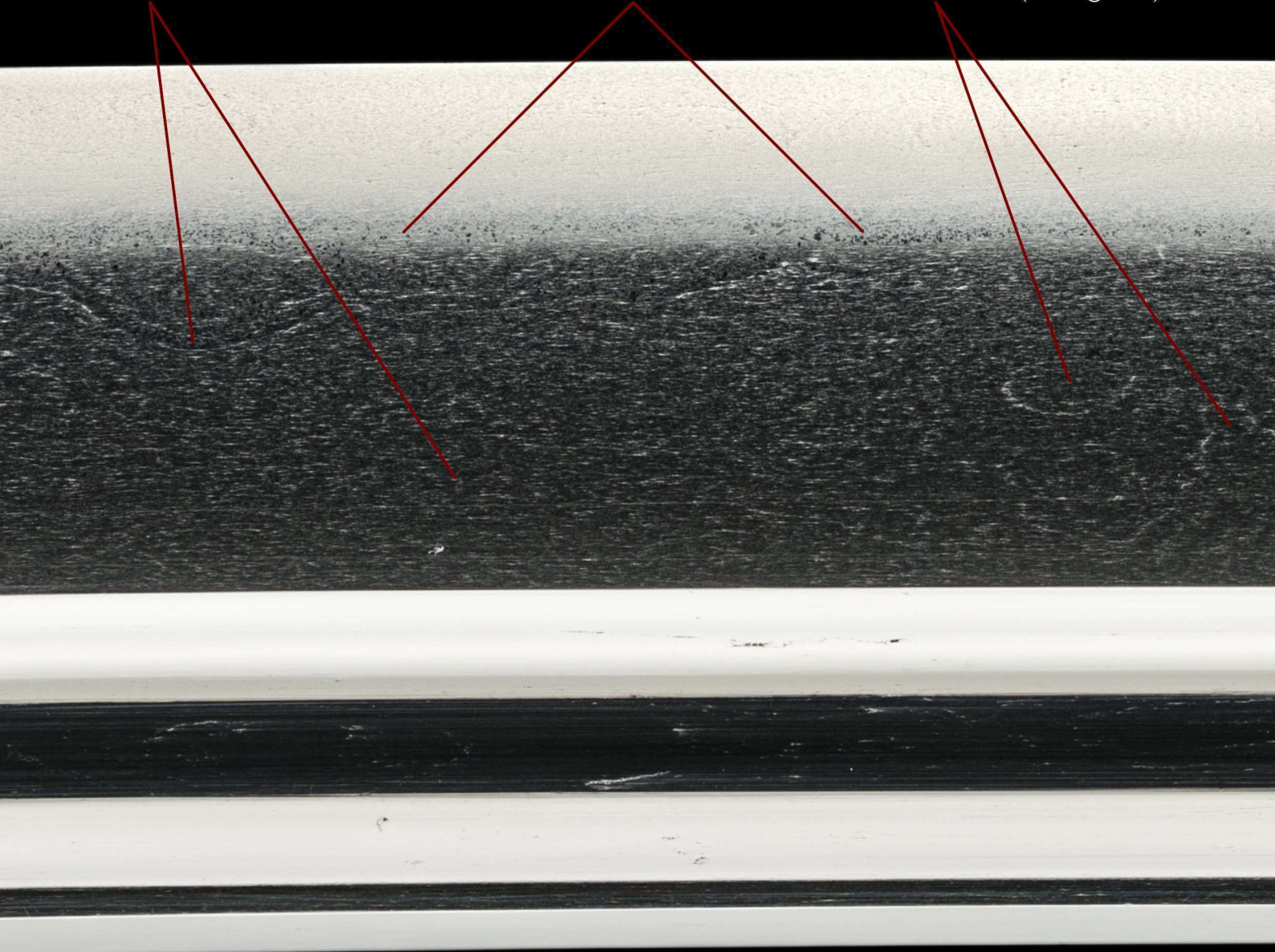
The founder of the *Ukai School* travelled to Bizen province from *Yamashiro* (Kyoto) thus the workmanship displays Yamashiro characteristics rather than those of the Bizen tradition.

The traits include *mokume-hada* (circular burl grain) mixed with *chikei* (dark swirls of nie crystals) with a hamon that is *chu-suguha* with *ko-gunome* or *ko-choji*. *Nijuba* (double hamon) also appears.

chikei

beautiful stream of *nie*

mokume-hada (burl grain)





Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



Niju-habaki
(brass)



The *saya* (scabbard) is lacquered with a rich chocolate-brown colour. The *sageo* (cord) is made out of suede.





This is a splendid example of a *Ko-katchushi School* tsuba. It is hammered, polished iron with a raised rim.

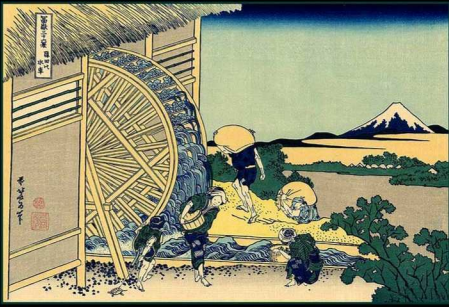
Katchushi tsubas were made by armour makers and are highly collectible.

On the top there is a comma-shaped heraldic design along with three silhouettes of water mills or wheels.

This wonderful piece was crafted during *middle Muromachi period, 1400's*.



This tsuba is certified with NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certification



*Hokusai - Haiku and Happiness
(note the water mill/wheel)*





Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) carry a *hyotan* (gourd) theme under a tightly wrapped smoked leather *tsuka* (hilt). The *samekawa* (ray skin) is lacquered black.

The gourd symbolizes happiness and success. *Hideyoshi Toyotomi* (1537-1598), former general and daimyo used a gourd motif as his battle marker. He would add further gourd motifs after each winning confrontation.



The *kashira* (pommel), carved and polished from horn, is wrapped elegantly.





Ukan
Unji



ITEM# UJKA272

A RAI KUNIZANE KATANA

UNSIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA PERIOD (CIRCA 1280~1318)

Swordsmith: *Rai Kunizane (attribution)*
Measurements: **Length:** 67.3cm (o-suriage) **Curvature:** 2.6cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0cm
Jihada: *Ko-mokume with ji-nie, chikei and yubashiri, classic Rai-hada*
Hamon: *Ko-gunome with kinsuji, ko-ashi, and yo*
Certificate: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japan Art Sword)
Fujishiro: **Jo-saku** (ranked as a superior swordsmith)
Authenticity: **Sayagaki by Tanobe-sensei** (former director of the NBTHK)
Included: Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description

SOLD

This gem of a katana has been attributed to *Rai Kunizane*, a Juyo-level smith from the respected Rai School. The Rai School was established in Yamashiro province, modern day Kyoto. The character Rai 来 means "to come", as the founder is said to have travelled to Japan from overseas.

There are almost certainly two generations of Rai Kunizane (sometimes written *Kunisane*). The first generation born 1268 worked until early 1300s' late Kamakura period (died in 1318) was the son (and apprentice) of master *Rai Kunitoshi*. A second-generation Rai Kunizane lived from about 1350. Given the grandiose *torii-zori* curvature of the sword, its shape speaks of the Kamakura period, thus the first generation's work.

This healthy katana carries all the hallmarks of the Rai School. Swirling *chikei* within a *ko-mokume hada* and a touch of *utsuri*. A bright *ko-gunome hamon* with *kinsuji*, *ko-ashi* and spots of *yo* (leaves) offers plenty of eye candy to nibble on. The shirasaya exhibits *sayagaki* by *Tanobe-sensei* who has written fine praise for the sword. A custom koshirae project would be an adventure to consider.

Saki-kasane: 4.1mm[^]

Moto-kasane: 5.6mm

Omosa: 610g

Saki-haba: 2.1cm

Nakago: 18.0cm

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Nagasa: 67.3cm

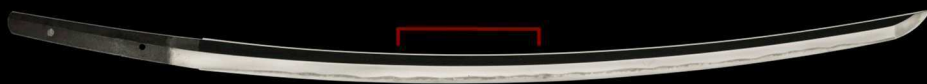
Sori: 2.6cm

Mekugi-ana: 2




Elegant *torii-zori* shape, where the evenly distributed *sori* (curvature) resembles a *torii* (archway to a Shinto shrine). The deepest point resting near the middle of the blade.

The type of curvature is also referred to as *Kyo-zori* as most of the koto period schools based in *Yamashiro* (Kyoto) - such as this Rai Kunizane katana - applied this type of sori.



Itsukushima-jinja (source: pixabay)



The image shows two katana blades side-by-side against a black background. Both blades have a dark, polished upper section (tsuba area) and a lighter, textured lower section (nakago area). Each blade has a circular hole near the base of the nakago. The blade on the right has a small, rectangular mark near the base of the nakago, which is pointed to by a red line from the text.

This katana carries an *o-suriage nakago*, where the *nakago* (tang) is greatly shortened. The new nakago is formed from what was originally part of the blade.

Note that one of the older holes has been filled in suggesting that this former tachi was shortened more than once over its lifetime.

In o-suriage blades the original *mei* (signature) is lost, although sometimes preserved as an *orikaeshi* (folded-over signature) or *gakumei* (framed signature).

特 保
17200511



№ 150739

鑑定書

長 二尺二寸三分

一 刀 無銘(来国真)

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成十八年一月十九日

財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



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

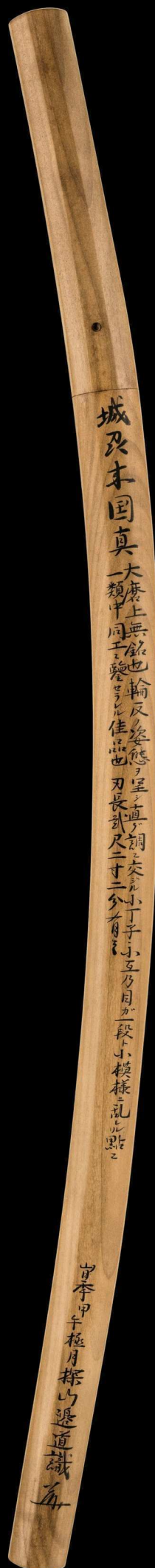
Issued in the 18th year of Heisei (2006), January 19th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Mumei (Rai Kunizane)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 2-sun 2-bu (67.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



Joshu

Rai

Kunizane

*Osuriage Mumei Nari Wazori no Shitai wo Teishi
Suguchō ni Majiru Kochoji Kogunome ga Ichidan to
Kokibo ni Midareru Ten ni Ichirui Chu Doukou ni
Kanserareru Kahin Nari*

O-suriage, unsigned, circular curvature, straight temper line, small clove shape temper line, small irregularly undulating temper line, lots of small movement, displaying classic Rai school features, good work.

Nagasa 2-shaku 2-sun 2-bu ari kore (67.3cm)

Jizai Kougo Gokugetsu (April 2014)

Tanzan Hendoushiki (Kaou)

signed by Tanobe sensei with his personal seal

The *boshi* (hamon in the tip) is called *yakitsume* (without turn-back) where the hamon continues directly to the *mune* (back of the blade). In this case in a *midare* (irregular wave) fashion.

Note the clusters of nie crystals called *nie-kuzure*, a boshi feature to swords of the Rai School.

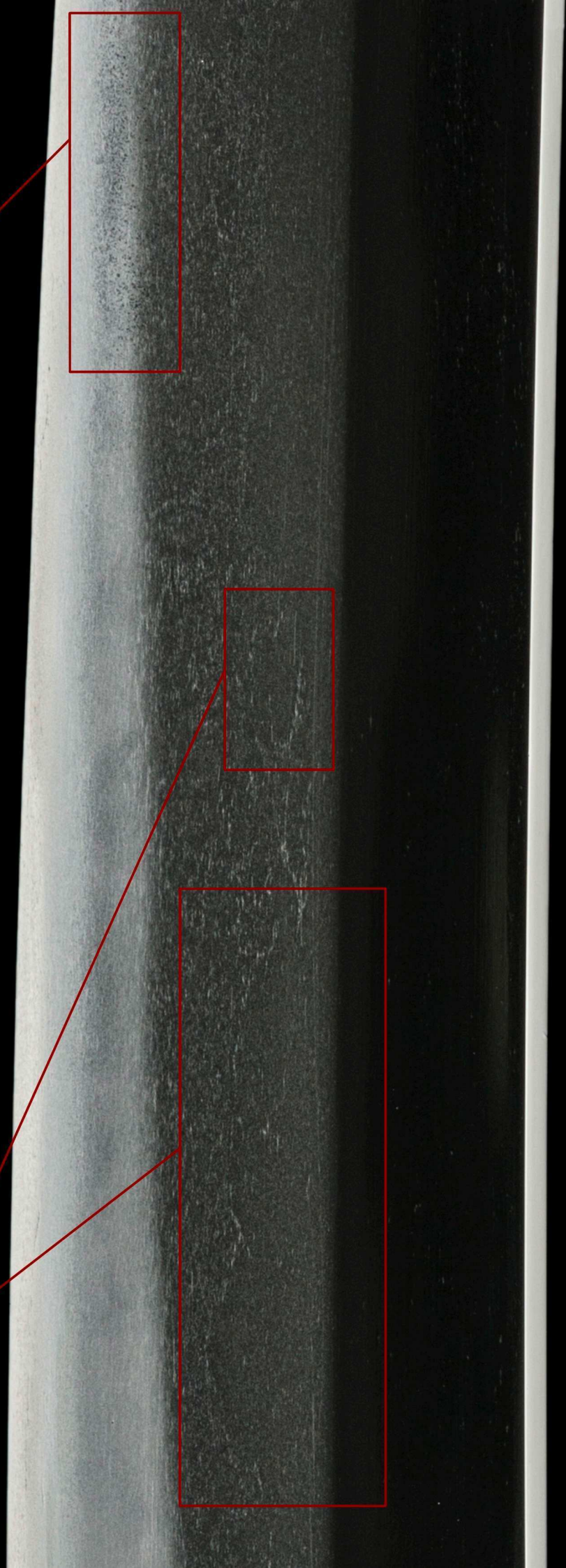



nie crystals

Swords of the Rai School are crafted with the majority of the blade made of *shingane* or core steel.

When polished the core can be revealed in tiny islands that carry a slightly different hue.

This unique trait has come to be known as *Rai-hada* (steel skin or gain of the Rai School).




A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a Japanese katana, showing the intricate patterns of the steel. The blade is dark and polished, with a bright highlight along its edge. A red rectangular box highlights a specific area of the blade's surface, which is then pointed to by a red line from the text below. The background is black.

Tight *ko-mokume hada* (circular burl grain) with dark lines of *chikei* burrowing through the steel.

When the light reflects off of the *jigane* (surface steel), it shines like a diamond.

This effect is called *ji-nie*, a sign of a top quality sword.





ko-ashi

A gorgeous *ko-gunome hamon* temper line that pulses in a narrow manner. Note the small *ashi* (legs) that gravitate to the cutting edge.

kinsuji

A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the yubashiri (concentrated spots of nie crystals) and yo (leaves) patterns. The blade is dark and metallic, with a bright, glowing area in the center. A red line points from the text 'yubashiri' to a specific area on the blade. Another red line points from the text 'yo (leaves)' to a specific area on the blade. A red square highlights a section of the blade.

yubashiri (concentrated spots of nie crystals) that look like running water.

yo (leaves)

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# UJWA214

A SHODAI KANEWAKA WAKIZASHI

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD, (GENNA ERA: 1615-1624)

Swordsmith:	<i>Kashu Ju Kanewaka (first generation)</i>		
Measurements:	Length: 34.2cm	Curvature: 1.1cm	Moto-haba: 3.0cm
Jihada:	<i>Wavy itame with masame</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Deep suguha (straight) with notare, thick sunagashi, kinsuji, yo and ko-ashi (legs)</i>		
Certificate 1 & 2:	NTHK-NPO Kanteisho (a sword and koshirae designated as Authentic by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)		
Fujishiro:	Jojo-saku (ranked as a highly superior swordsmith)		
Cutting ability:	Ryo-Wazamono (maker of good sharp swords)		
Included:	Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description		

SOLD

This sharp wakizashi has been certified to first generation *Shodai Kanewaka*, one of the most influential smiths from Kaga province during the Shinto period. His talents so grand, he received the nickname *Kaga-Masamune* after the grandmaster of the Kamakura period. As his fame resulted in quite expensive blades, there was the saying: "Bushii [samurai] that want to own a sword by Kanewaka will have to spend so much money that they'll even have to sell their daughters!"

The unique shape of the sword is that of an iris leaf, called *shobu-zukuri*. The *hamon* is a bright line of deep *suguha* with wavy *notare* and chalk full of *hataraki* (activity) that includes thick *sunagashi*. The sword is secured in a handsome and thoughtful set of Edo period koshirae that tells the inspiring folkloric tale of the monkey reaching for the reflection of the moon.

Saki-kasane: 5.9mm



Moto-kasane: 6.5mm

Omosa: 420g

Saki-haba: 3.5cm

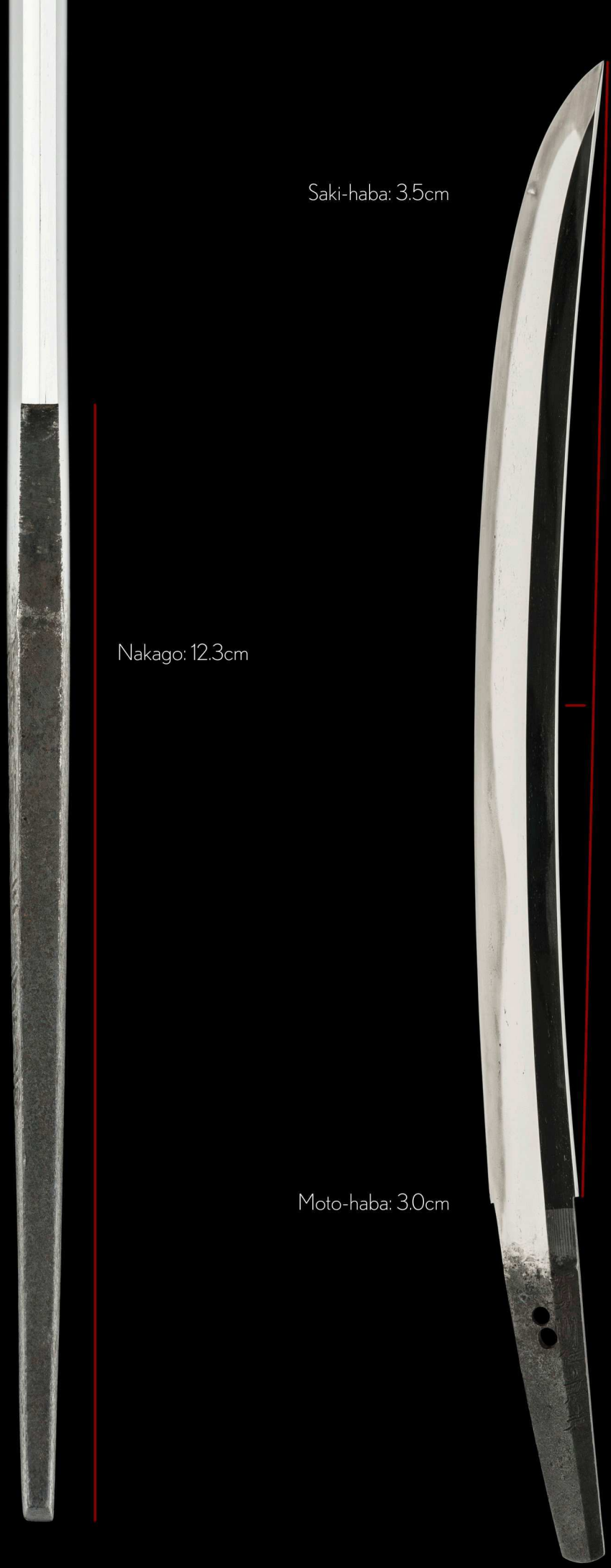
Nagasa: 34.2cm

Nakago: 12.3cm

Sori: 11cm

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Mekugi-ana: 2

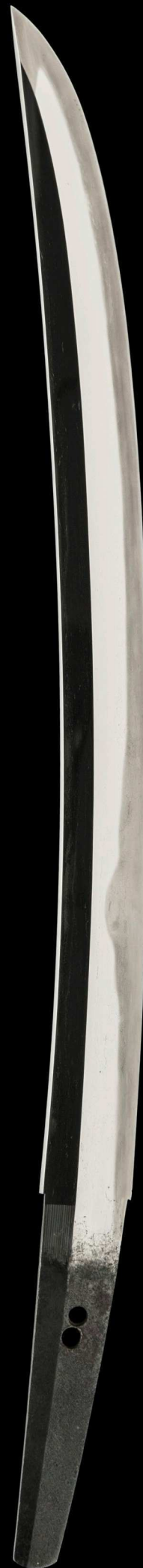


The structure of this sharp sword is called *shobu-zukuri*. Shobu means "iris", as the shape looks like an iris leaf.

The samurai revered the iris as the word *shobu* has the same sound as 'martial' or 'samurai spirit'.



Horikiri no hana-shobu by Hiroshige (1857)





Location: *Kashu Ju* (living in Kashu province)

Swordsmith: *Kanewaka*

Ka

shu

Ju

Kane

waka

Note there are two *mekugi-ana* holes in the *nakago*. This is *not* a case of *suriage* (shortening the sword). This sword is *ubu-nakago*, original length.

What happened is that a previous owner created an extra hole in the nakago to fit a new *tsuka* (hilt).



捺 査 印 員	備 考	中 心	彫 刻	鍔 子	刃 紋	銀	造 り 込 み	銘 文	第 七 九 六 三 号
五 五 五 五 五	元 和 頃	目 釘 穴 二 個 縫 目 違 ハ		直 ぐ 不 入	右 り の 中 直 ぐ 刃 調 灣 れ 心 世 帯 び る	板 目 込 肌 立 ッ	莒 蒲 造 り 庵 棟	賀 洲 経 業 若	

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, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)

Kashu Ju Kanewaka (shodai, first generation)

Nagasa (length)

1-shaku 2-sun 9-bu (34.2cm)

Issued in 28th year of Heisei (2016), December 18th

Nihon Token Hozon Kai
(NTHK-NPO)

The *boshi* curls back right into the *mune* (spine) forming *mune-yaki*, tempering of the spine.



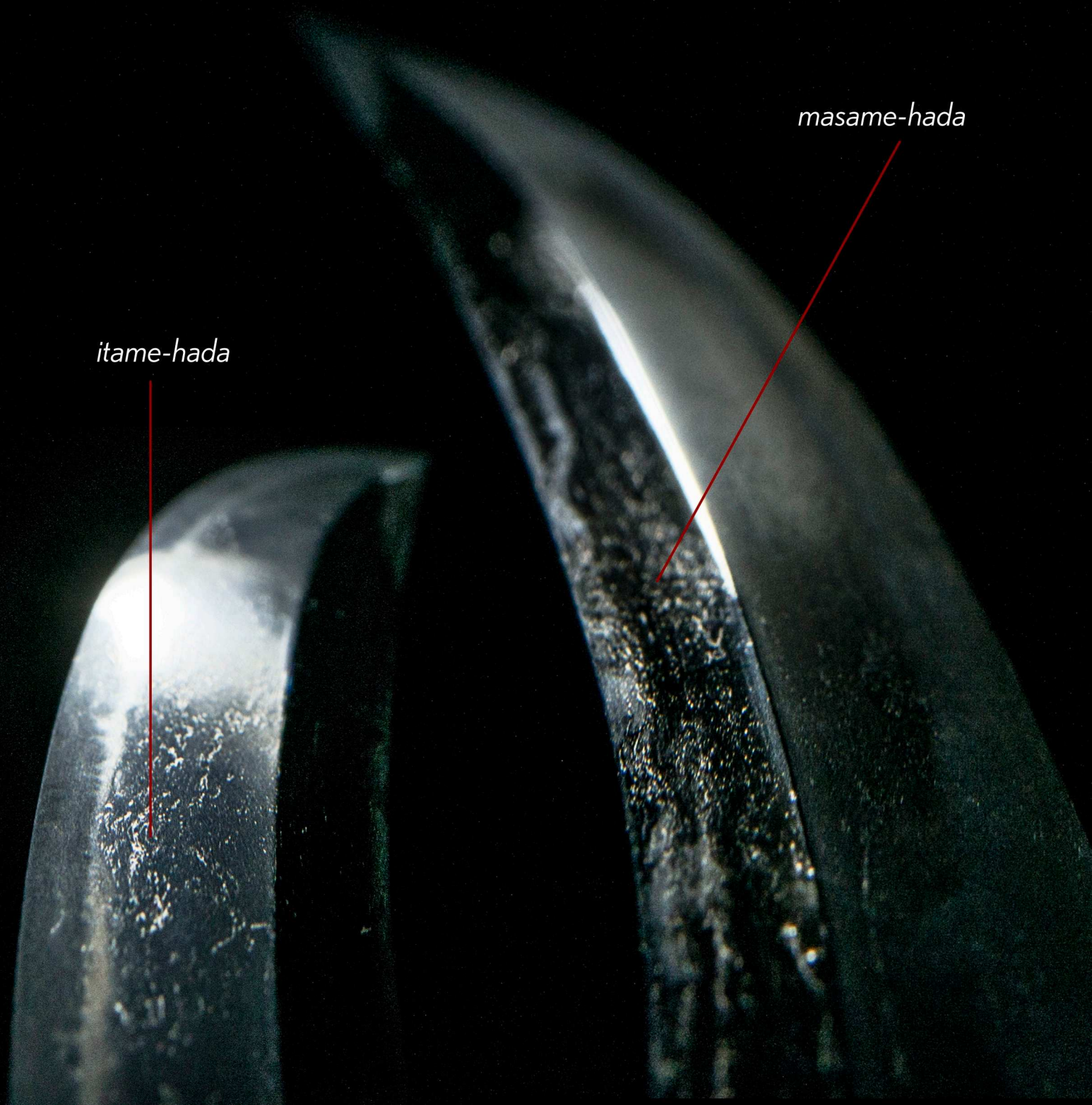


powerful *mune-yaki* can be
seen the length of the blade

A mixture of wavy straight grain *masame-hada* and wood grain *itame-hada* can be seen on the surface of the steel.

itame-hada

masame-hada



An eclectic hamon that blends a deep straight *suguha hamon* with *ko-notare* (small wave). *Yo*, *kinsuji*, *sunagashi* and even a light *utsuri* can also be admired.

A close-up, diagonal view of a sword's blade, focusing on the hamon (temper line). The blade is dark, with a bright, curved band of light reflecting off the hamon. Three red lines point from text labels to specific features on the hamon: 'utsuri (reflection)' points to the bright band, 'kinsuji (line in hamon)' points to a fine line within the band, and 'yo (leaves)' points to a small, light-colored mark on the blade's surface.

utsuri (reflection)

kinsuji (line in hamon)

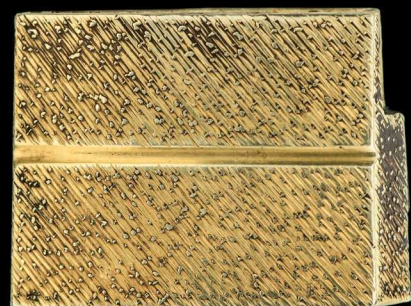
yo (leaves)

Thick *sunagashi* brushes the hamon.






Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



So Yujo yasuri-habaki
(brass with rain pattern)



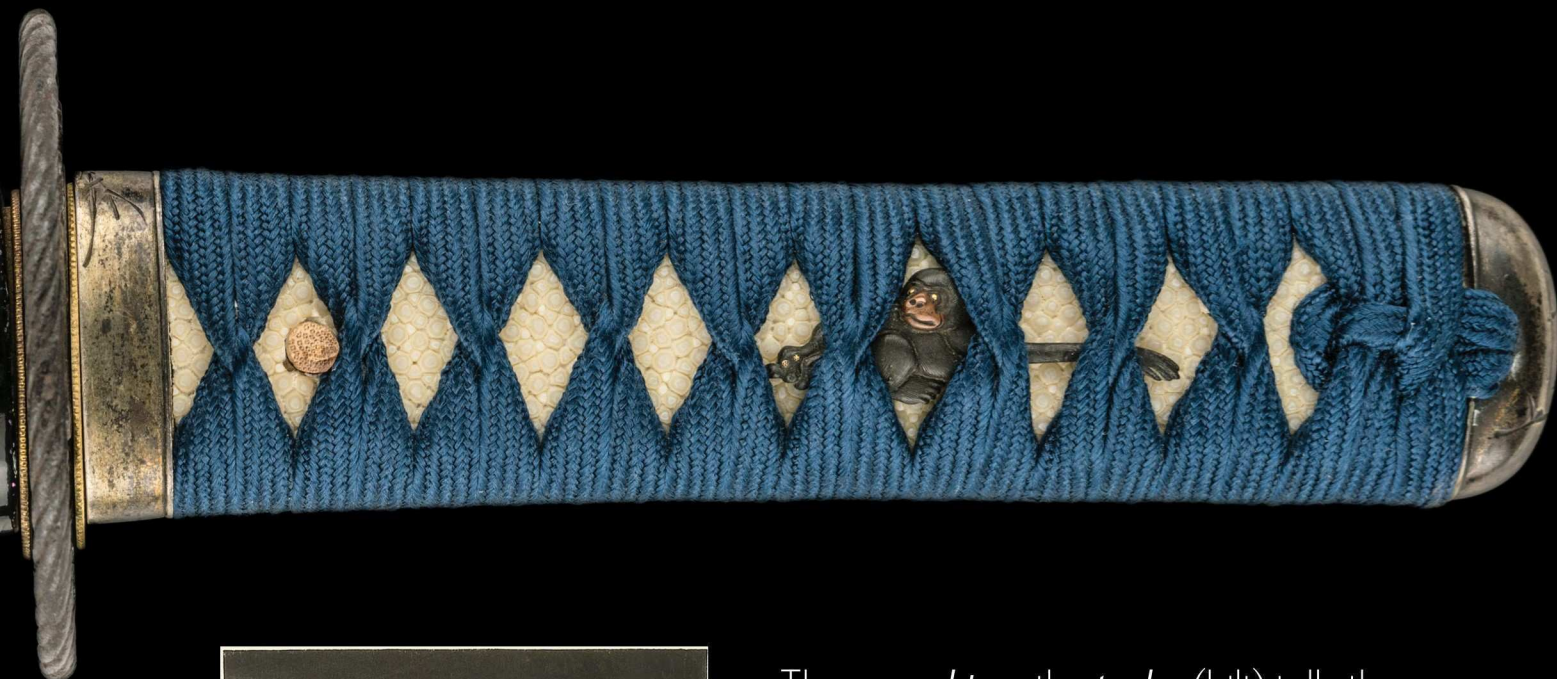
This handsome wakizashi koshirae has been dated and certified to the late Edo period (early 1800s).

Handachi fixtures wrap and protect the scabbard while providing an element of force.



A polished iron tsuba with a seafaring rope design contouring the rim. The silhouette of an anchor amid rolling waves completes the nautical scene.





Ohara Koson - Monkey and Moon

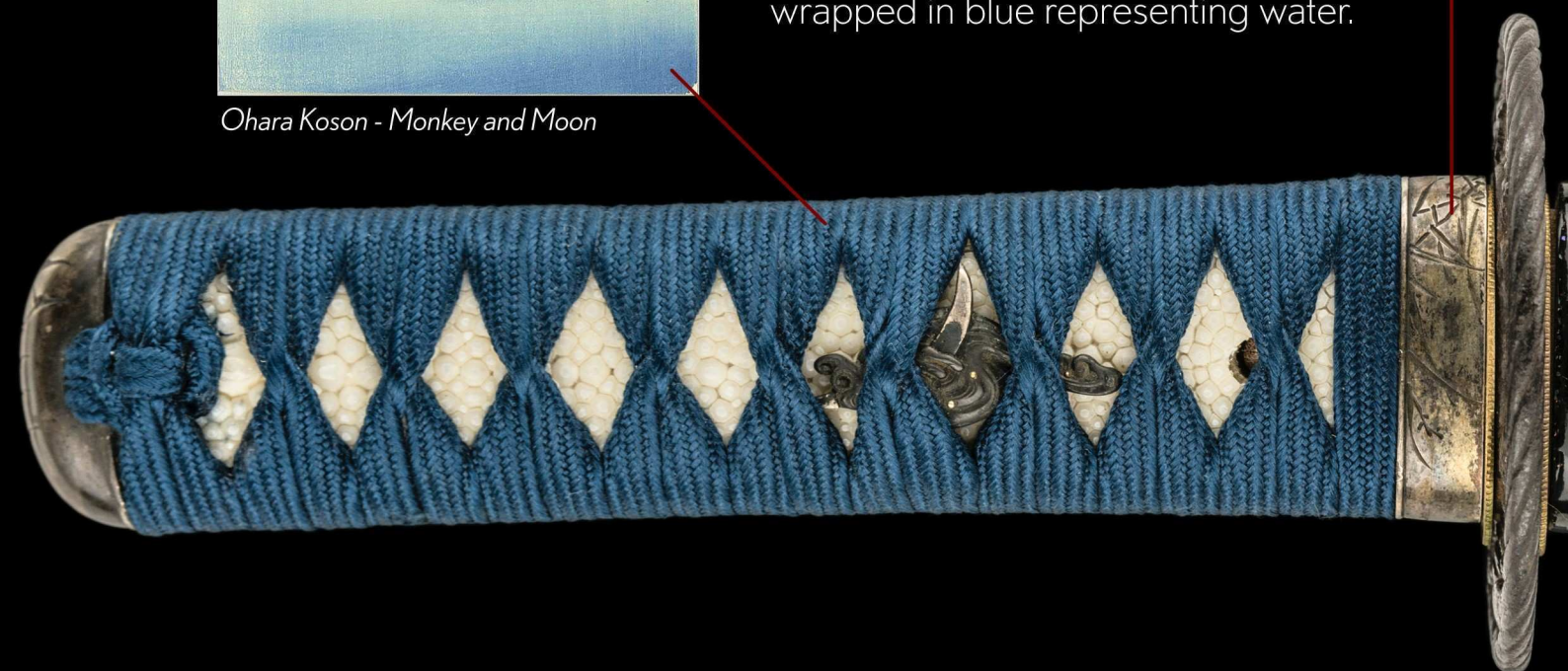
The *menuki* on the *tsuka* (hilt) tells the inspiring story of the monkey and moon.

As poet *Hakuin Ekaku* writes:

The monkey is reaching for the moon in the water. Until death overtakes him, he'll never give up.

If he'd let go of the branch and disappear in the deep pool, the whole world would shine with dazzling pureness.

Complementing the scene, the *fuchi* is in the design of tree branches and the hilt is wrapped in blue representing water.



Twinkling speckles of lacquered crushed mother-of-pearl, known as *aoi-gai*, gives the appearance of the night sky for the moon to shine within.

Painted blossoms on the *kurikata* suggests the monkey is hanging from a plum tree.





|

lkin

(Kaou)

Fuchi (collar) is signed by metalsmith *lkin* with his *kaou* (personal seal).



Kashira (pommel)
Geese flying in tandem

The material made to create the *fuchi-kashira* is *shibuichi* - an alloy made up of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ copper and $\frac{1}{4}$ silver.

It takes great skill to work with shibuichi as the material is harder and more brittle than shakudo.

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

Care and Protection

The maintenance kit also includes a large cloth to comfortably and safely rest the sword when viewing (for hours on end!).

And when the sword is not in hand, watch the **Art of the Japanese Sword DVD** or read the insightful sword picture book from the **All Japan Swordsmith Association** (also included free for clients).



40cm x 40cm cloth
(in blue and white)



ITEM# UJDI006

A HIZEN TADAHIRO DAISHO

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANEI TO KANBUN ERA: 1641~1673)

KATANA (DAI)

Swordsmith: *Hizen no Kuni Ju Omi Daijo Fujiwara Tadahiro (second generation)*

Measurements: **Length:** 72.3cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 1.3cm

WAKIZASHI (SHO)

Swordsmith: *Omi Daijo Fujiwara Tadahiro (second generation)*

Measurements: **Length:** 53.8cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 1.3cm

Certificates (4x): NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (*both swords awarded*)

NTHK-NPO Kanteisho (*daisho koshirae and daisho tsuba*)

Authenticity: Both shirasaya have sayagaki by Dr. Sato Kanzan (from 1968 and 1976)

Fujishiro: Jojo-saku (*ranked as a highly superior swordsmith*)

Cutting ability: O'wazamono (*maker of great sharp swords*)

Included: Two shirasayas, daisho koshirae, fabric bags, stands, kit, etc.

SOLD

Born Hashimoto Heishiro in Saga, Hizen province in 1614, renowned swordsmith second generation (*nidai*) **Tadahiro** began working with his father, maestro *shodai* (first generation) *Tadayoshi* at the tender age of ten. Guided by his father and other great smiths such as *shodai* *Masahiro* and *Yoshinobu*, *Tadahiro* took over leadership of the school at the age of nineteen when his father died in 1632.

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

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

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

We are delighted to offer a genuine *samurai daisho* from the heart of the Edo period with the two swords having been crafted by this leading swordsmith. The word *daisho* is combination of *dai* meaning 'long/large' (the katana) and *sho* 'short/small' (the wakizashi). The daisho was the official dress code for the samurai.

Both swords feature Tadahiro's masterful and iconic *suguha hamon* that beams like a laser over a *jigane* packed so tightly resulting in the much-desired *konuka hada* that resembles rice bran.

The matching daisho koshirae can be best described as a *party piece*. Upper echelon samurai had daisho for different occasions; while on duty, traditional black scabbards for formal affairs and even eclectic daisho on nights on the town with their favourite geisha...this is one such piece.

Lacquered in black with red polka dots and bright blue *tsukas* (hilts) with the *Ikeda damiyo kamon* (family crest) on the two *fuchi*, there is a serious and playful spirit to this matching set of swords. It's fun and very samurai.

Needless to say, this is a rare find. Nearly all daisho to date have been either separated long ago or exist in poor condition. Both swords have NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certification with certificates of authenticity for the koshirae and namban tsuba. All told, this is a highly collectible Edo-period daisho koshirae that will forever light up any home or office. Enjoy.



Saki-kasane: 5.3mm[^]

Moto-kasane: 6.5mm

Saki-haba: 2.0cm

Nagasa: 72.3cm

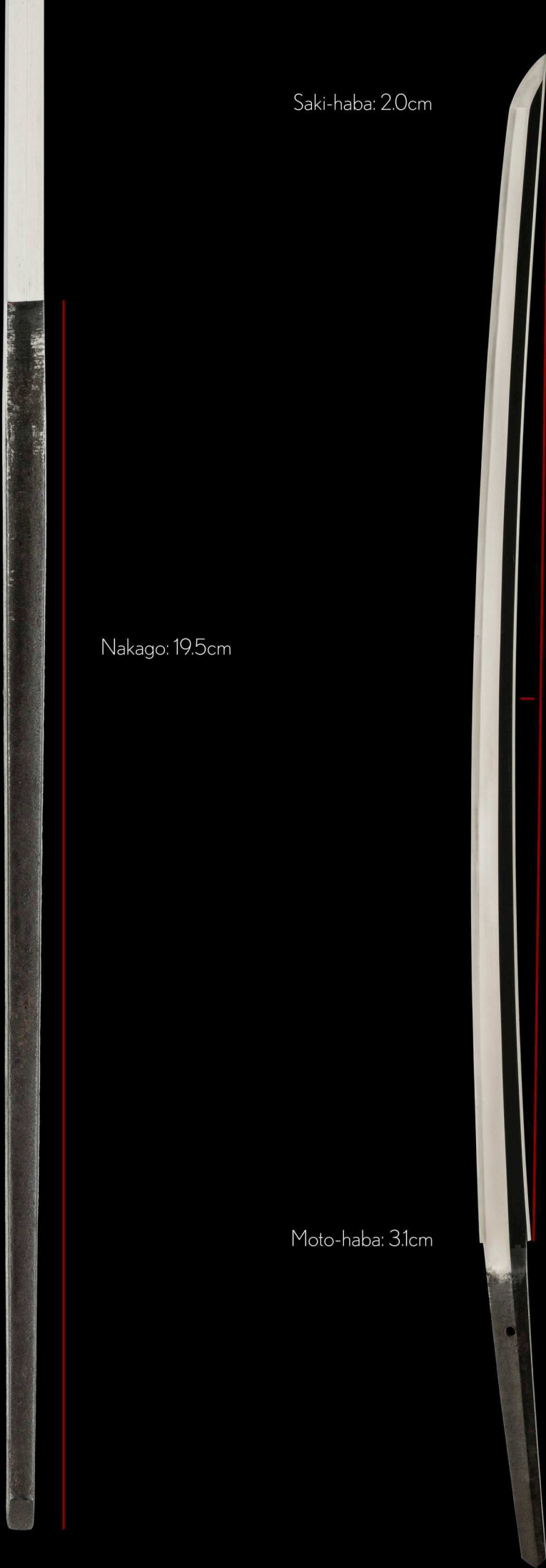
Nakago: 19.5cm

Sori: 1.3cm

Omosa: 675g

Moto-haba: 3.1cm

Mekugi-ana: 1





Location: *Hizen no Kuni* (Hizen province)

Title: *Omi Daijo* (assistant lord of Omi province)

Clan: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Tadahiro* [second generation]

Hi
zen
(no) kuni
ju
O
mi
Dai
jo
Fuji
wara
Tada
hiro

**note that this katana is signed *tachi-me* whereby the signature is chiselled on the side of the *nakago* that is facing *away* from the samurai when the blade is worn cutting-edge down.

Signing tachi-me is a characteristic of the majority of katana (not wakizashi) that were crafted in Hizen province.



特保
28201601

No 1005050

鑑定書

一 刀 銘 肥前国住近江大掾藤原忠広

長二尺三寸九分

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

平成二十八年三月二十三日

公益財団法人日本美術刀劍保存協會



北海道 教育委員会
第 186 号
昭和46年 5月24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 28th year of Heisei (2016), March 23rd

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Hizen no Kuni Ju Oumi Daijo Fujiwara Tadahiro

Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 3-sun 9-bu (72.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



Hizen

(no)Kuni ju

Omi Daijo

Fujiwara

Tadahiro

Dousaku chu Kasaku Nari Suguha Hataraki Houfu

Good quality work by Tadahiro. *Suguha* (straight) temper line, with plentiful *hataraki* (activity)

Nagasa 2-shaku 3-sun 8-bu ari kore (72.3cm)

Showa 51-nen Satsuki Kichijitsu
(a good day in May 1976)

Kanzan (kaou)

signed by Dr. Kanzan Sato sensei with his personal seal



Tight *mokume-hada* with *chikei*
(dark swirls of nie crystals).

This type of refined steel grain is
known as *konuka-hada* (rice bran),
typically seen on Hizen blades.

chikei



(katana)

A smooth and consistent *suguha*
(straight) hamon.

This is classic work by *Jojo-saku*
(highly superior swordsmith)
second generation *Hizen Tadahiro*.





tiny *ashi* (legs) flirt with
the edge of the blade.

Saki-kasane: 4.8mm



Moto-kasane: 6.9mm

Saki-haba: 2.1cm

Nagasa: 53.8cm

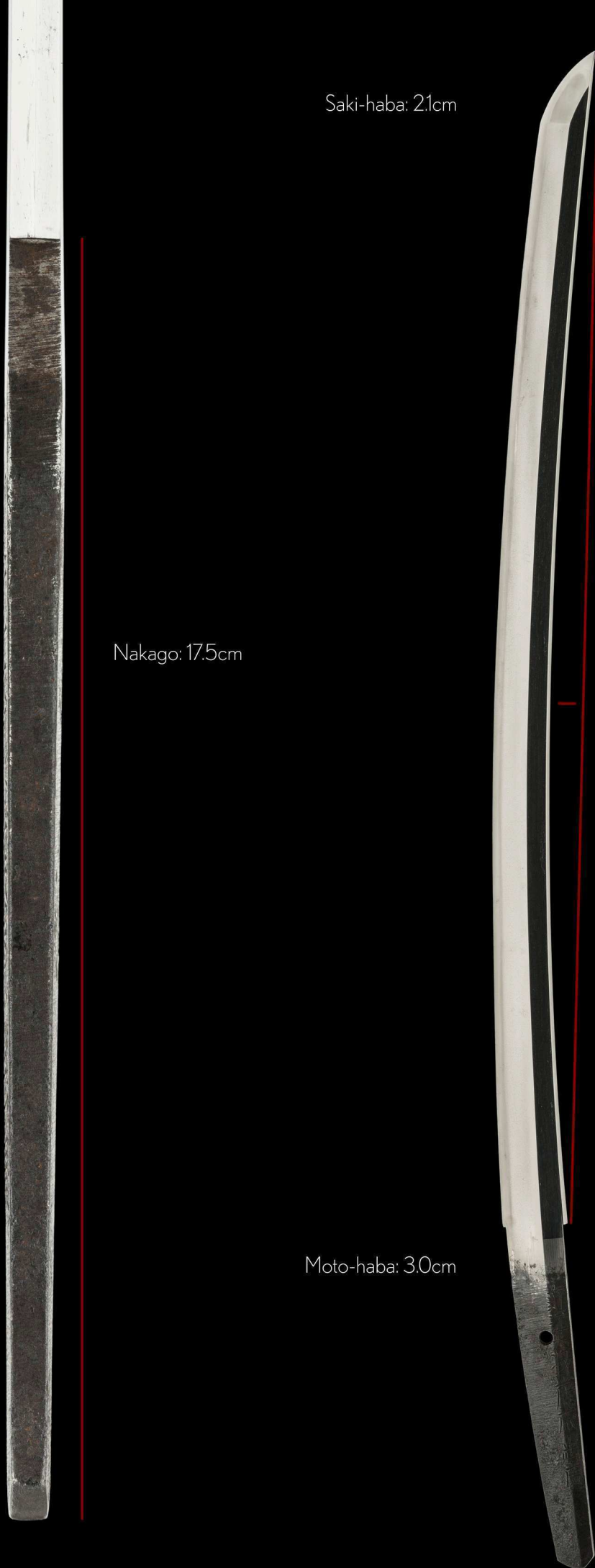
Nakago: 17.5cm

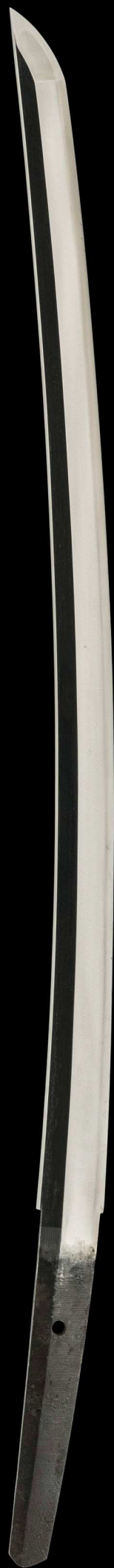
Sori: 1.3cm

Omosa: 570g

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Mekugi-ana: 1





Title: *Omi Daijo* (assistant lord of Omi province)

Clan: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Tadahiro* [second generation]



Ou

mi

Dai

jo

Fuji

wara

Tada

hiro

特 保
26201605

No 1005834



鑑定書

一、脇指 銘 近江大掾藤原忠広

長一尺七寸七分半

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十八年七月二十一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



三重 教育委員会
第 16111 号
昭和38年 9月 25日

平成25年 2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 28th year of Heisei (2016), July 21st

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)

Oumi Daijo Fujiwara Tadahiro

Nagasa (length)

1-shaku 7-sun 7-bu han (53.8cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



Hizen

(no) kuni

Omi

Daijo

Fujiwara

Tadahiro

Suguha deki (straight temper line)

Nagasa 1-shaku 7-sun 9-bu (53.8cm)

Showa Kenen Chushun

(spring 1968)

Kanzan (kaou)

signed by Dr. Kanzan Sato sensei with his personal seal

The hamon in the tip of the sword is called the *boshi*. The boshi on both the katana and wakizashi is *ko-maru*, which translates to 'small curl-back'.

This type of boshi is common on *Hizen-to* (swords of Hizen province).



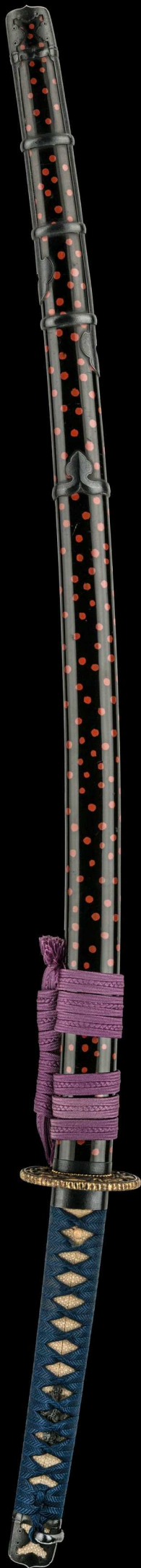
(wakizashi)

Whether the *hamon* (temper line) is *midare* (wavy) or *suguha* (straight), a good quality sword will always display a clean consistency in the *nioguchi* (the band of crystals that make up the hamon).



bright nioguchi

katana (dai)
koshirae



wakizashi (sho)
koshirae





polka dots amongst *handachi* fittings
securing the *saya* (scabbard).



Mizuno Toshikata (Samurai and Geisha, circa 1910)

Wealthy samurai would have daisho koshirae to meet specific occasions. On formal events such as a wedding, classic black-lacquered daisho koshirae with matching Goto family fittings was traditional wear.

When it came to a night on the town, more playful daisho koshirae was often entertained by the samurai. This black and red polka dot Tadahiro daisho koshirae is a wonderful example of such festive fun. Note the similarity of the black and red striped koshirae in the above ukiyo-e print of a samurai and a music-playing *geisha*.





This striking set of *daisho tsuba* are in the shape of *kiku* (chrysanthemums) with a design of fire and twin dragons. They are crafted of polished iron with gold inlay.

Referred collectively as *namban tsuba* meaning "southern barbarian sword-guards", these tsuba show an imported artistic influence. They were in high-fashion during the middle Edo period. This set has NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certification.

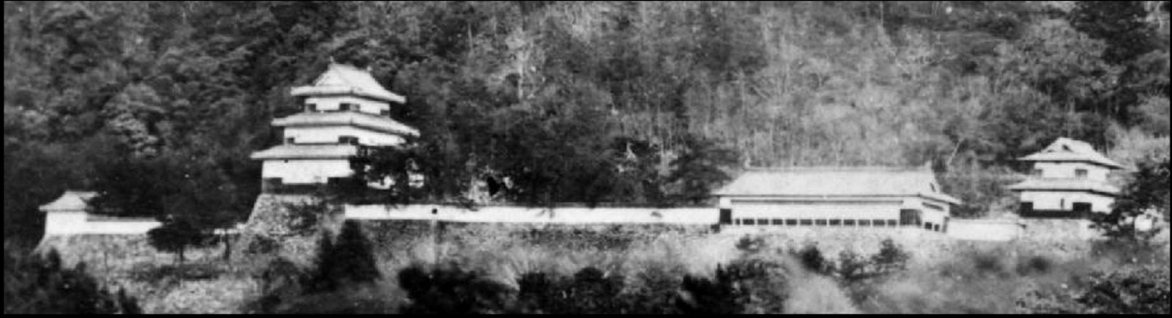




On the matching fuchi of this daisho koshirae is the famous *cho-kamon* (butterfly crest) of the notable *Ikeda daimyo family*. As this daisho has been dated to the mid-Edo period (1700s) during the heart of the Edo period, we can confidently state that this daisho was carried by a ranking member of this powerful samurai clan.

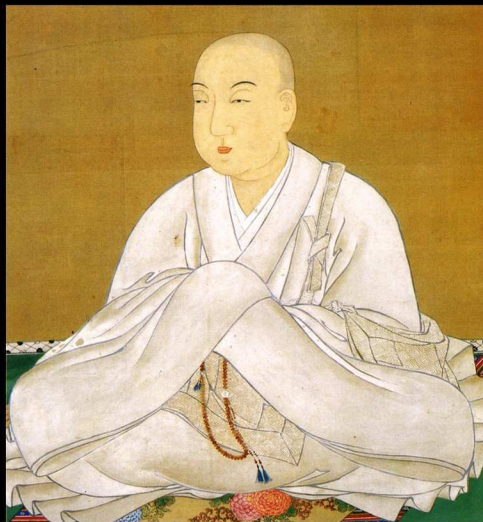


Ikeda Tokumasa - former Lord of the Ikeda clan (1638-1714)



Tottori castle was the central castle of the *Ikeda* clan in feudal Japan. Being a *yamashiro*, or "mountain-castle", it was built into the mountain itself, using natural obstacles and defences to a greater extent than man-made walls.

The Ikeda family are said to be descendants of the *Seiwa Genji* - a line of the *Minamoto clan* that is descended from *Emperor Seiwa* who was the 56th emperor of Japan from 858 to 876.



Emperor Seiwa

Many of the most famous Minamoto warriors, including *Minamoto no Yoshiie*, *Minamoto no Yoritomo*, the founder of the Kamakura shogunate and *Ashikaga Takauji*, the founder of the Ashikaga shogunate, belonged to this line.

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, also claimed descent from this lineage.



Menuki (decorative grips on the hilt) display crawling dragons. Dragons are also seen on the *tsubas* and fixed on the katana *saya* (scabbard) itself.



In good hands

The unique clasps on the kashira are matching carved depictions of the gentle holding of hands.

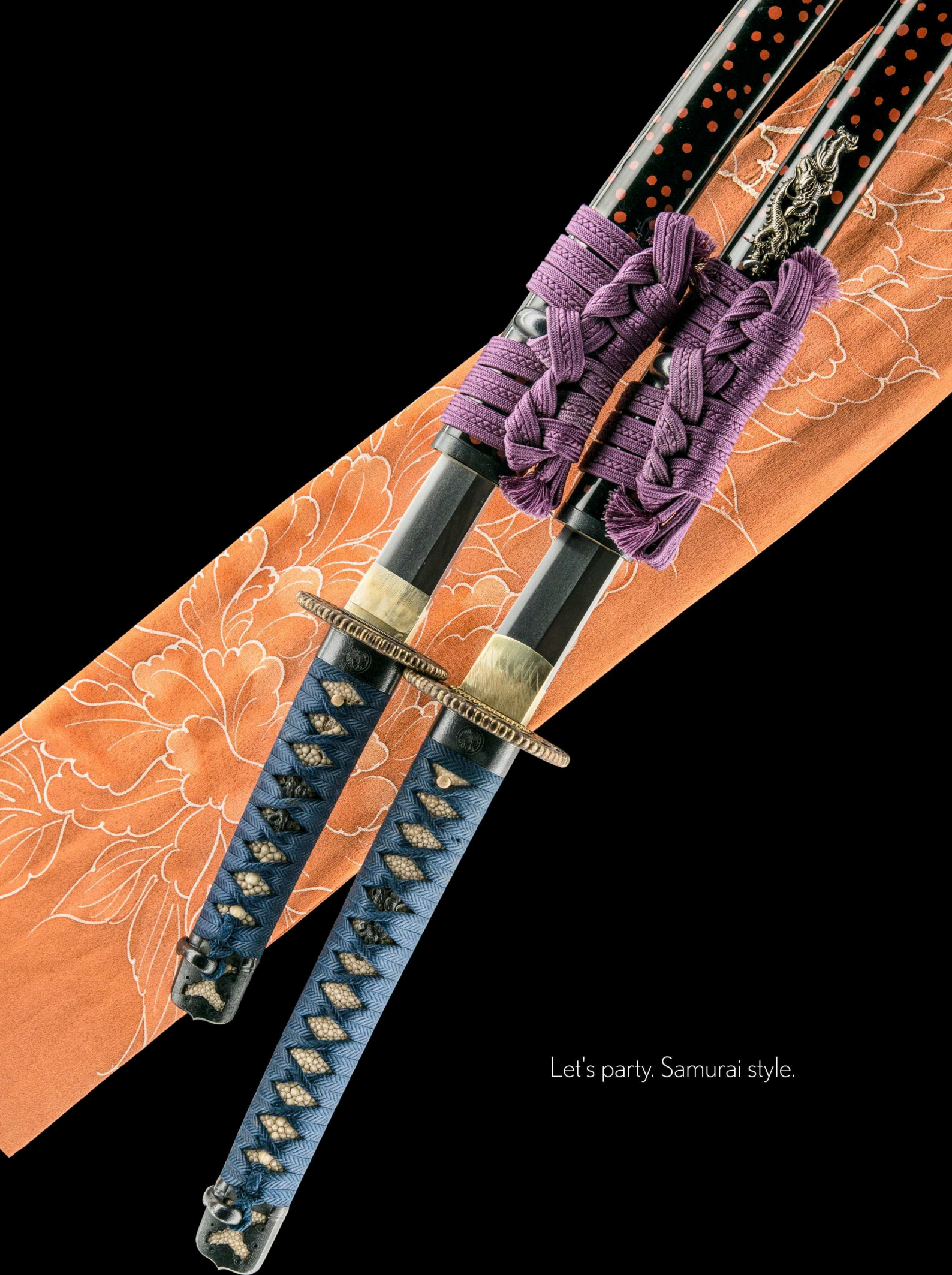




Nestled neatly in the wakizashi *saya* (scabbard) is a *kozuka* - a small utility knife.

A *kozuka* was used by the samurai to open letters, cut fruit, fix shoes, etc. It was not a weapon per se.

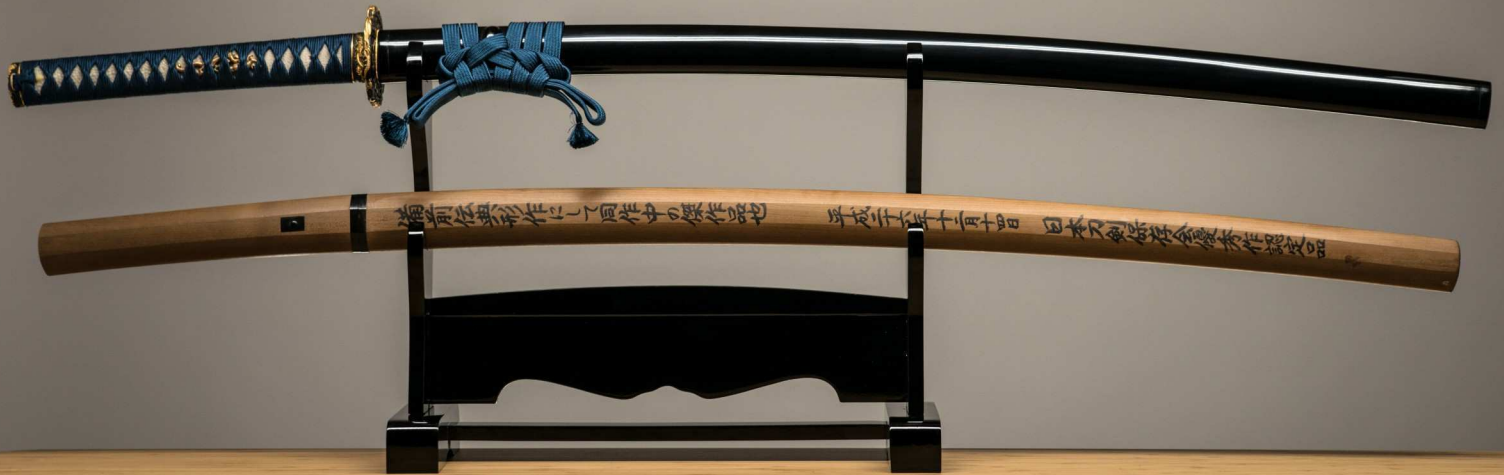
The design is of the emergence of spring depicting *ume* (plum) blossoms.



Let's party. Samurai style.

Thinking about how to best display?

Clients can select from one of three types of complimentary sword stands to proudly showcase their work of art.



traditional double-hook black wood sword stand



acrylic 'floating' type



small stand for tanto



ITEM# UJKA276

AN ECHIZEN YASUTSUGU III KATANA

SIGNED WITH AOI-MON, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN ERA: 1661~1673)

Swordsmith: (Aoi-mon) Yasutsugu Oite Echizen Saku Kore (3rd generation from Echizen)
Measurements: **Length:** 69.6cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 0.9cm **Moto-haba:** 3.0cm
Jihada: Itame, ji-nie and chikei
Hamon: Naka-suguha with ko-notare, nijuba, ko-ashi, nie-deki
Certificate: NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword)
Fujishiro: Chu-Josaku (ranked as an above average swordsmith)
Included: Koshirae, carry bag, sword stand, kit, DVD, sword booklet, maintenance kit

SOLD

This is a charismatic katana by 3rd generation Yasutsugu from Echizen province. A notable sword-making family that were given permission to place the *aoi-mon* (hollyhock) on the *nakago* (tang) of their swords by the ruling *Tokugawa shogunate*.

First generation Yasutsugu's father, *Hironaga*, was reputed to be the last descendant of *Yamato Senjuin School*, by way of Nara. As this sword displays all the qualities of the Yamato tradition, it pays deserving respect to the family's heritage. The *jihada* is a very well forged *itame* with swirls of *chikei* and sparkling *ji-nie*. The *hamon* is based on *suguha* with some movement to the temper line that is pleasing to the eye. There is a section of *ni-juba*, or double hamon that is relatively rare to find on Japanese swords. It's classic Yamato-den work.

The sword's beautifully aged *koshirae* features a *namban* tsuba and a set of *fuchi-kashira* that features the *kamakiri*, or 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. The *kamakiri* thus symbolizes the samurai's moral duty to protect Japanese society during the Edo Period.

This sword is with me in the UK on consignment. Please watch a 15-minute video that I have prepared at the following YouTube link:
<https://youtu.be/2ZzQVRc9Qas>

Below is further information and history of the Yasutsugu family.
Pablo

The much-acclaimed Yasutsugu lineage starts with the birth of the first generation, *Ichizaemon*, in *Shimosaka Shiga-gun* in *Omi province* during the middle of the 16th century. Throughout the history of Japan, a great number of swordsmiths flourished when they came under the patronage and protection of the local feudal lords. Yasutsugu (first generation) was one such swordsmith.

Whether by chance or intent, he became noticed and supported by *Matsudaira Hideyasu*, who was the third son of *Tokugawa Ieyasu* (the first shogun of the Edo period, pictured on right). Hideyasu was the *daimyo* (great family) of Echizen province. His power and influence bolstered the fame of Yasutsugu considerably.



By the fifth year of Keicho (1600) Yasutsugu was well established in Echizen. His patronage by Hideyasu secured his livelihood and allowed him the freedom to produce swords in a variety of styles.

Around the 11th or 12th year of this same period of Keicho (1606-1607), Yasutsugu's fame reached a level that he was called to *Edo* (Tokyo) to share his time with Tokugawa Ieyasu.

Not long after Yasutsugu was given the privilege of using the kanji character *Yasu* (康) from Tokugawa Ieyasu's name. Thus he changed his name to Yasutsugu from then on.



An additional privilege followed whereby the carving the *Aoi Mon* (hollyhock crest) on his blades was granted. These privileges were given in perpetuity to Yasutsugu and his descendants. Yasutsugu swordsmiths thus became the *kaji* (official smiths) of the Tokugawa Family.

Nidai (2nd generation) Yasutsugu made swords only until the second year of Shoho (1645) and he died on February 15 of the third year of that same era (1646). His death caused a rift in the family that was solved by creating two *Sandai* (3rd generation) Yasutsugus. Umanosuke would assume his father's mantle and become the third generation Yasutsugu working permanently in Edo, maker of this katana, while Shirouemon would remain in Echizen and become the Echizen third generation.

From this point onward the Yasutsugu lineage of swordsmiths was split into two distinct branches, the *Edo branch* and the *Echizen branch*. The two divisions of the Yasutsugu school continued for several generations. The Edo school was sustained through eleven generations.



ITEM# UJKA278

A SHODAI MASAHIRO KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KAN'EI ERA: 1624-1644)

Swordsmith: *Hizen no Kuni Kawachi Daijo Fujiwara Masahiro (shodai, first generation)*
Measurements: **Length:** 76.0cm (ubu) **Curvature:** 1.5cm **Moto-haba:** 3.3cm
Jihada: *Ko-mokume leading to Hizen konuka-hada, thick nie-deki*
Hamon: *Gorgeous gunome choji-midare with kinsuji and sunagashi*
Certificate: **Guaranteed NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword)
Certificate #2-4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (a tsuba, fuchi-kashira and koshirae designated as Authentic by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Sword)
Fujishiro: **Jo-saku** (ranked as a superior swordsmith)
Cutting ability: **Wazamono** (maker of sharp swords)
Included: Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bag, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description

SOLD

Kawachi Masahiro was born *Sadenjiro* in 1607 and died at only 59 in 1665. He is the son of *Yoshinobu* who was the adopted son of the great first generation *Shodai Tadayoshi*. He began signing as *Masanaga* and even signed for *Shodai Tadayoshi* when he became ill (*dai-me*). Recognizing his clear talent, his employer *Lord Nabeshima Katsushige* suggested he change his name to *Masahiro*, thus becoming *Shodai Masahiro*. This long and splendid katana housed within a striking Edo period koshirae is a tour de force by this powerhouse of a swordsmith. A magnificent *gunome-choji-midare hamon* over a tightly forged *konuka-hada* captures the heart and imagination. This is a top-class samurai sword in every sense of the word.

Saki-kasane: 4.9mm[^]

Moto-kasane: 7.4mm

Omosa: 875g

Saki-haba: 2.1cm

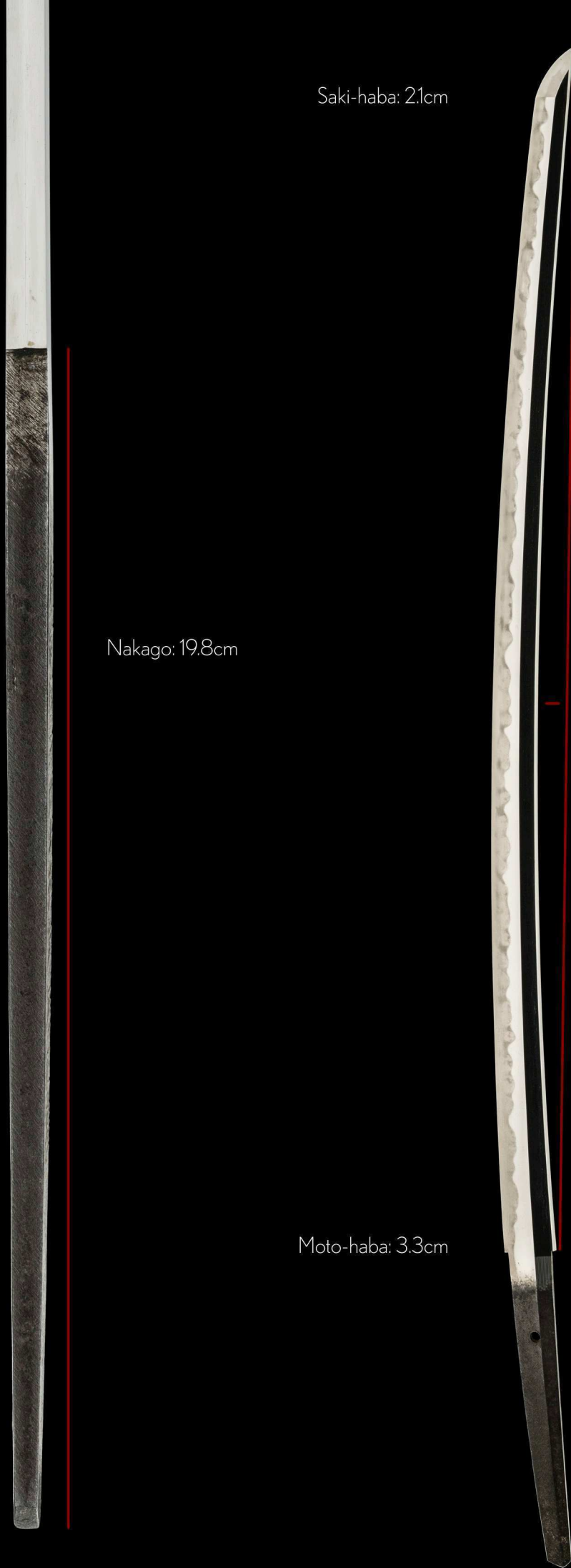
Nakago: 19.8cm

Moto-haba: 3.3cm

Nagasa: 76.0cm

Sori: 1.5cm

Mekugi-ana: 1





Location: *Hizen no Kuni* (Hizen province)

Title: *Kawachi Daijo* (assistant lord of Kawachi province)

Clan: *Fujiwara*

Swordsmith: *Masahiro* [first generation]

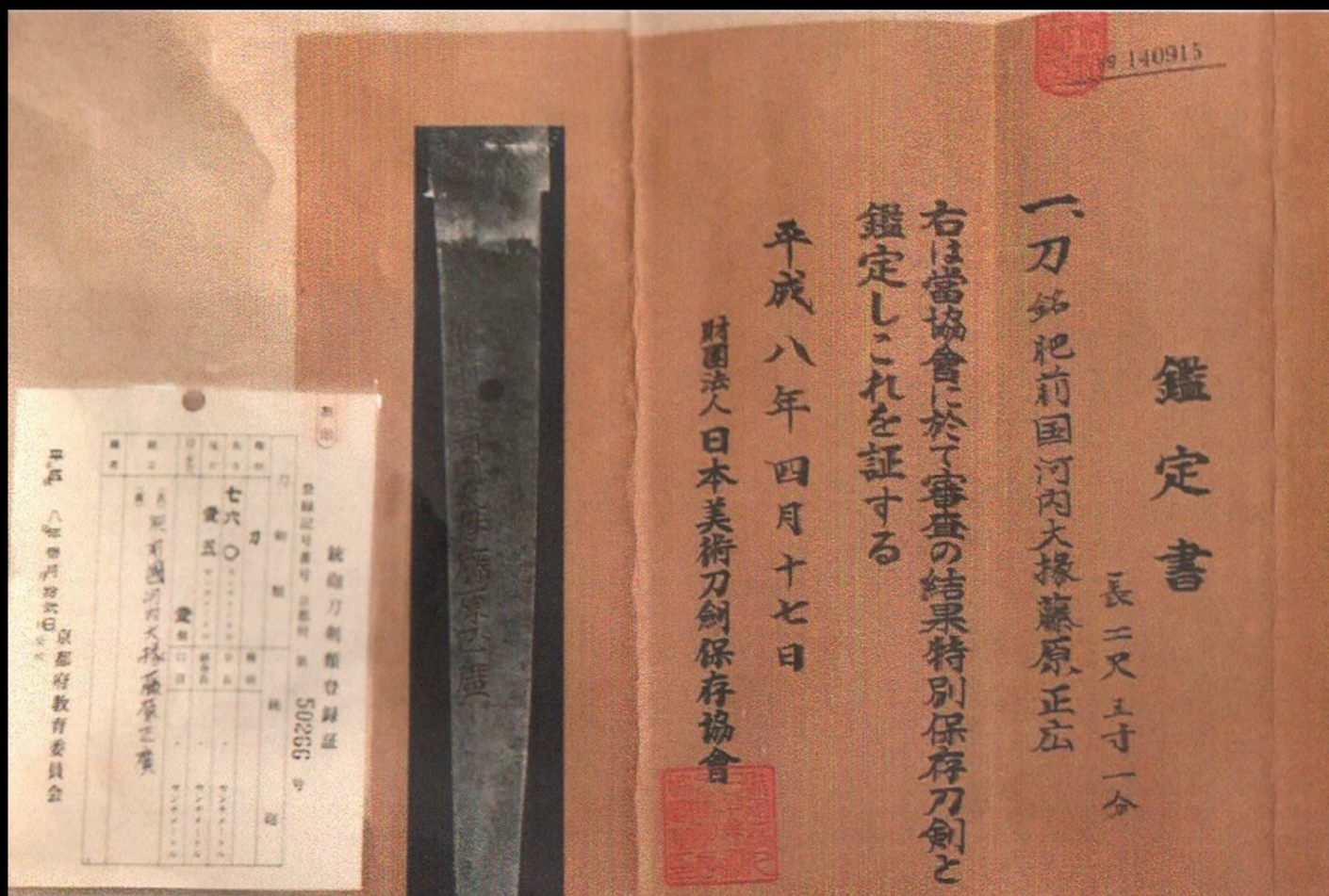
Hi
zen
(no) kuni
Ka
wachi
Dai
jo
Fuji
wara
Masa
hiro

**note that this katana is signed *tachi-me* whereby the signature is chiselled on the side of the *nakago* that is facing *away* from the samurai when the blade is worn cutting-edge down.

Signing tachi-me is a characteristic of the majority of katana (not wakizashi) that were crafted in Hizen province.







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 8th year of Heisei (1996), April 17th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)

Hizen no Kuni Kawachi Daijo Fujiwara Masahiro

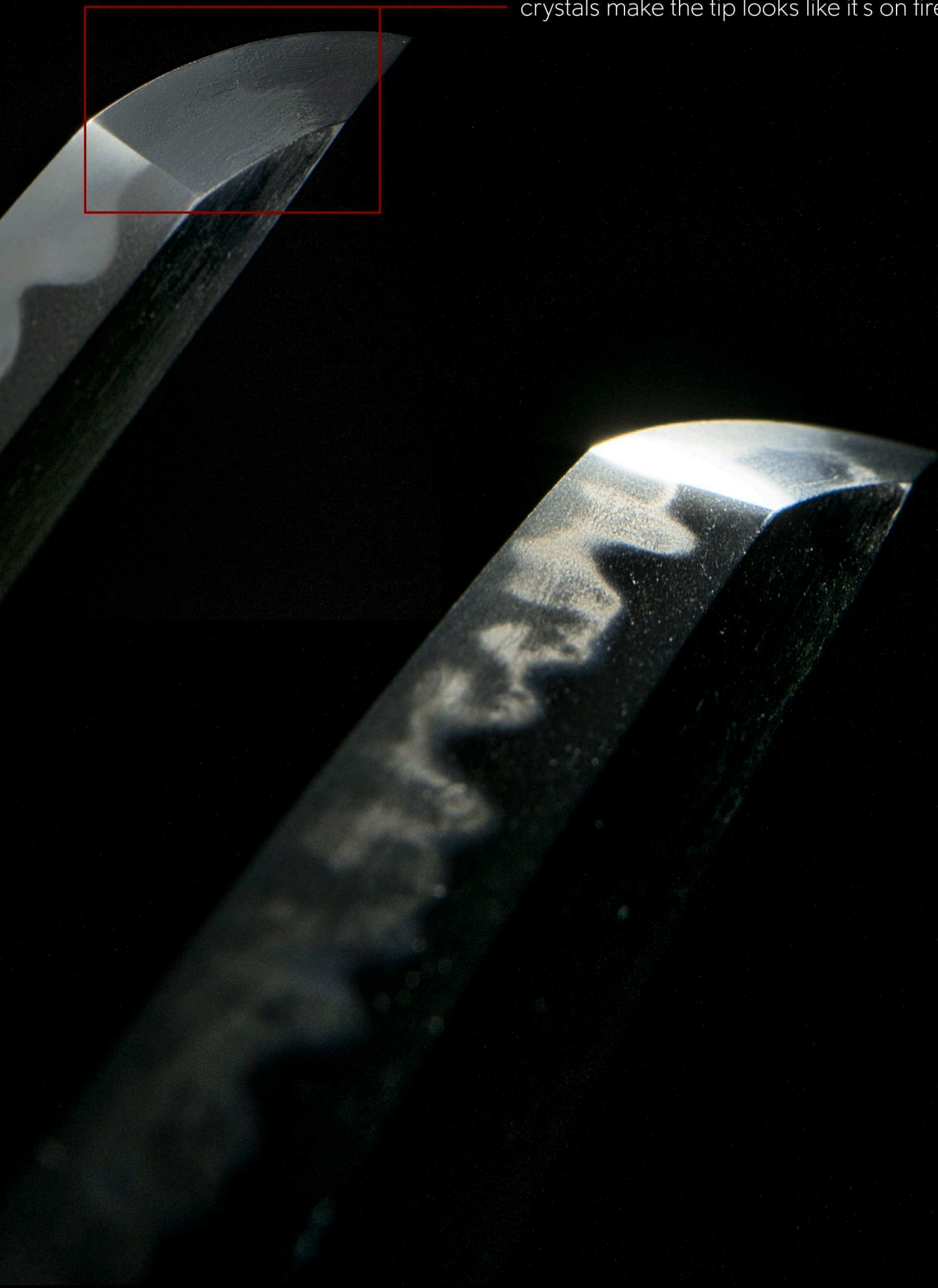
Nagasa (length)

2-shaku 5-sun 1-bu (76.0cm)

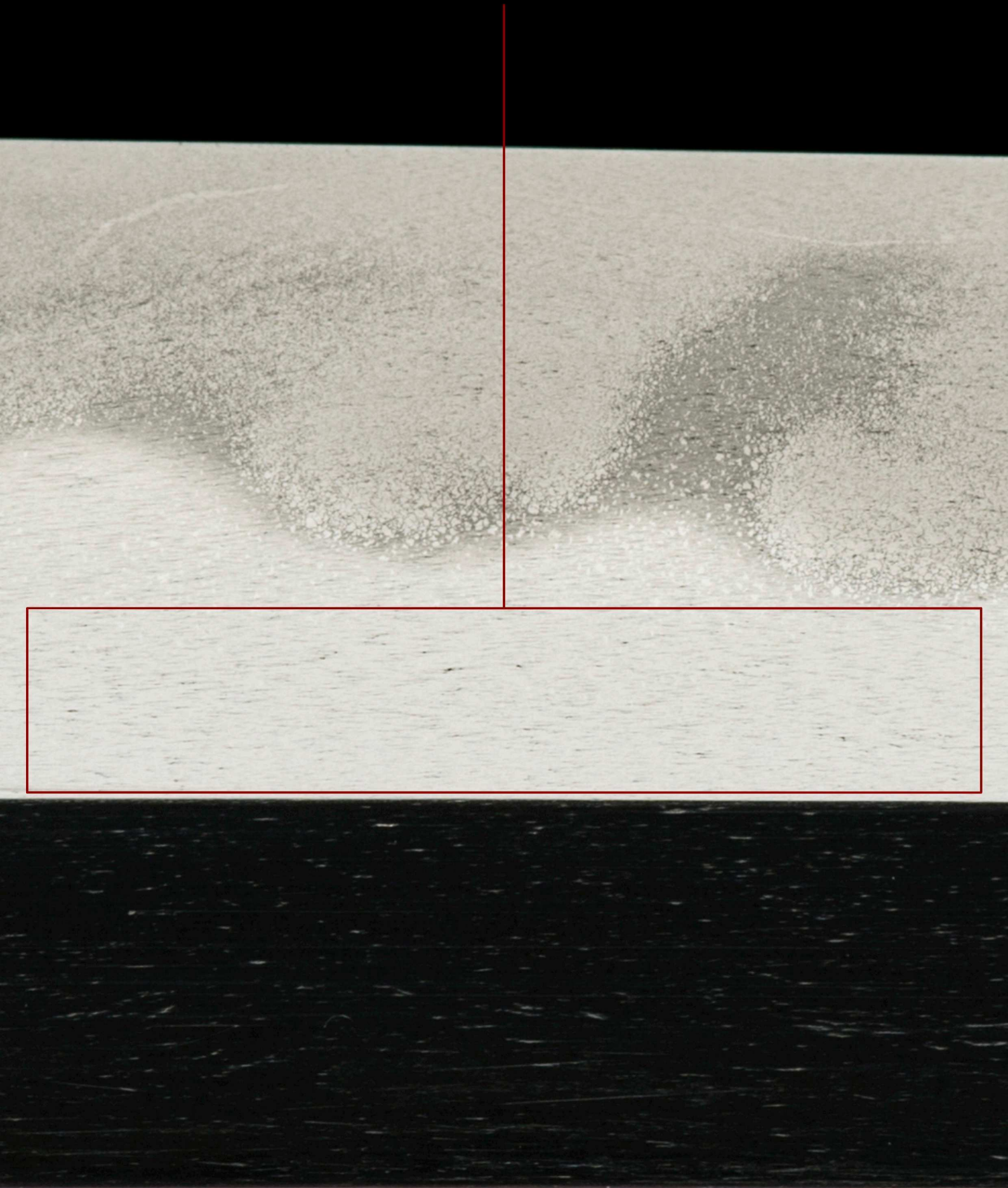
Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

****This is a copy of the original NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon certificate that was unfortunately lost by a past owner. By policy the NBTHK does not re-issue certificates that are lost or stolen. Therefore a new shinsa application will be required. We guarantee that this sword will pass NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon and shall cover all associated certification costs.**

The *boshi* is *kaen*, meaning flame or blaze, whereby the thick clusters of nie crystals make the tip looks like it's on fire.

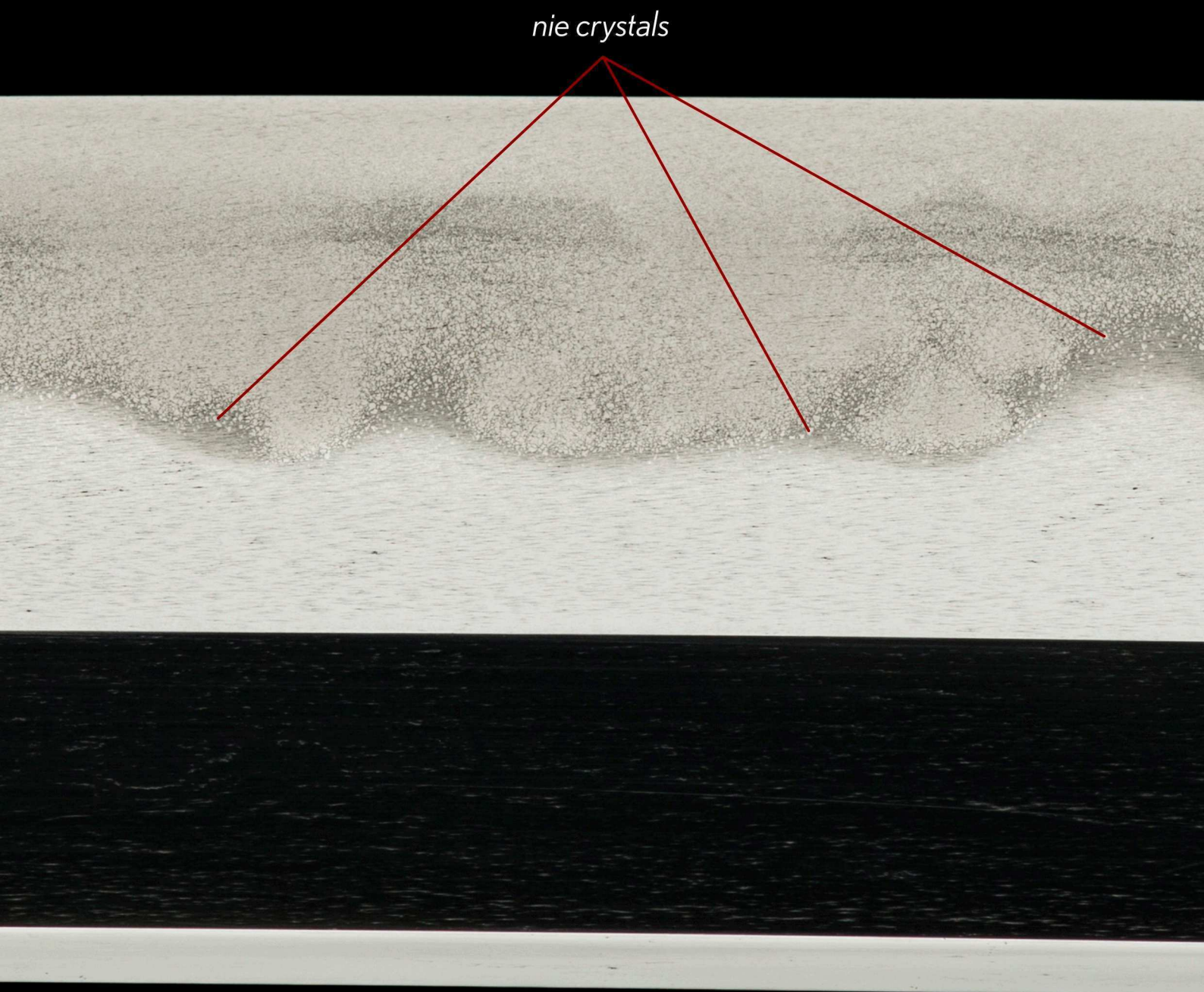


Classic Hizen tradition *mokume-hada* that is so tightly forged it is known as *konuka-hada* (resembling rice bran).

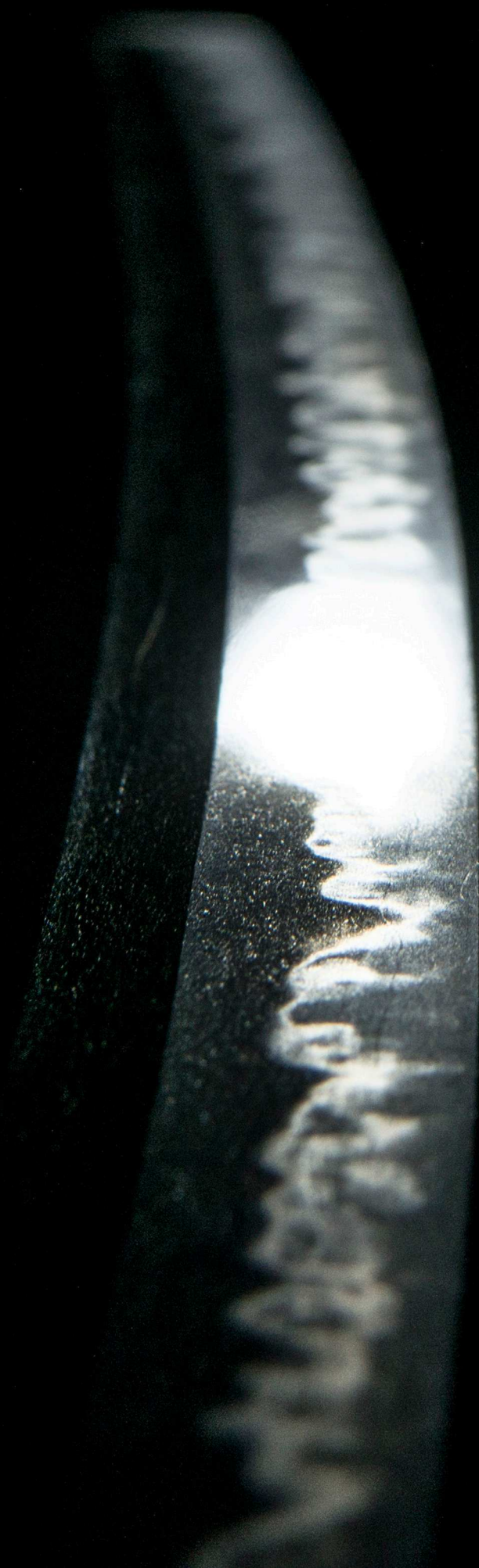


Shodai Masahiro was known for forging swords in thick *nie-deki*, where generous splashes of visible nie crystals cover the blade like twinkling stars.

Tip! Using a strong magnifying glass when examining a sword such as this piece in hand opens up a whole new world of visual appreciation.



A marvellous *gunome choji*
midare hamon, a wild temper
line of clove blossom buds,
illuminates the blade.



Plenty of *sunagashi*, where the hamon appears brushed.





kinsen / kinsuji
(short black brilliant line of nie
that appears inside the hamon)

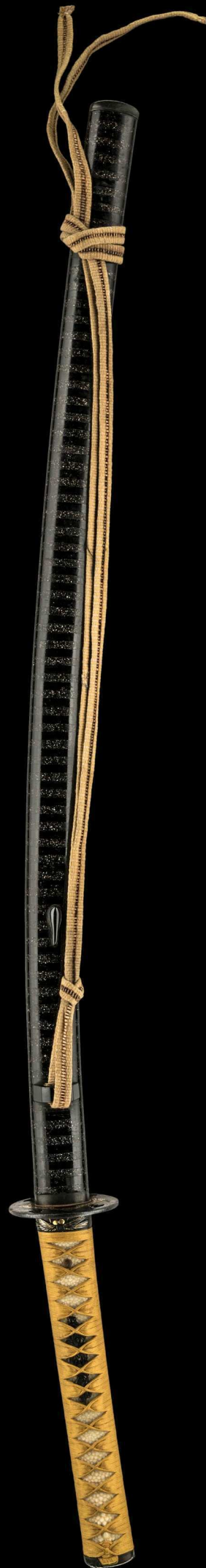
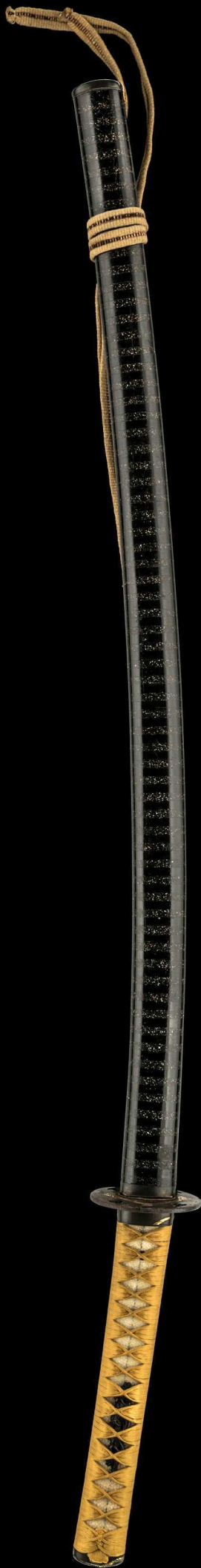


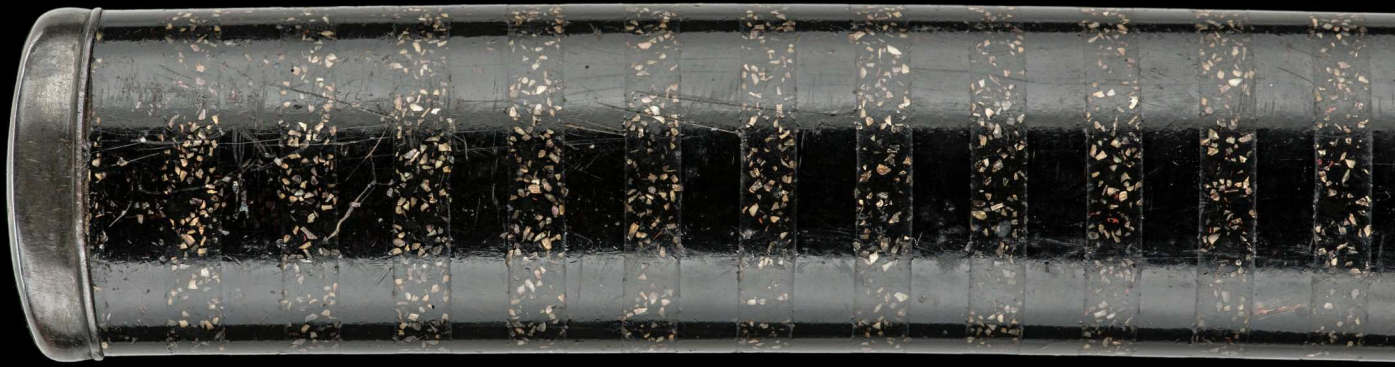
Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



Ibushigin Flower Niju-habaki
(oxidized silver)

a classic samurai
uchigatana koshirae





This *saya* (scabbard) has been dated and certified to the middle Edo period (circa 1688 to 1780). The *urushi* (lacquer) technique is called *raden fuemaki*, where symmetrical flute-like stripes of mother-of-pearl decorate the piece.

This skilful, understated design is very samurai. Note the thin scratches of time near the tip of the saya that denotes decades and decades of history.



This hook made of horn on the saya is called *kaerizuno*. It secures the sword in the belt and stops it from slipping out or being pulled out by an opponent.



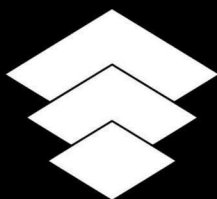
A fine polished iron tsuba with gold cloth inlay attributed to the famous *Umetada school* dated to the mid-Edo period, circa 1700s.

The four triple-diamond shapes in the corners of the tsuba are called *sangaibishi*.

This is the official *kamon* (family crest) of the *Ogasawara daimyo* that ruled the *Karatsu domain* in Hizen province from 1817 to 1871.



This tsuba is certified with NTHK-NPO Kanteisho certification



(reversed)

The *sangaibishi* (triple diamond) *kamon* of the *Ogasawara* clan that ruled the Karatsu domain in Hizen province (modern-day Saga prefecture) from 1817-1971.



Karatsu castle





The samurai revered the dragonfly.
For when they flew, they flew forward, and never retreated.

Dragonflies are a symbol of determination and bravery, reflecting
the very essence of the samurai themselves.





kashira (pommel) of a dragonfly.

This *fuchi-kashira* has been certified by the NTHK-NPO to the *Iga school* from the late Edo period, early 1800s.



Large and powerful *shakudo menuki* in the form of crawling dragons give grip to the samurai while providing spiritual protection to the sword.

They are secured by a beautiful two-strand *tsukamaki* weave called *tsunegumi-kumiagemaki*.





Hizen
Masahiro



Flying into Japan?

If you are travelling to Tokyo and would like to acquire an authentic Japanese sword, be sure to book a **private meeting** with us in advance.

Many swords every year are sold this way to happy clients around the world. Contact service@uniquejapan.com where we'll discuss the type of sword, age and other special qualities you are seeking along with budget parameters. Meetings are held at our studio near JR Ebisu station.



ITEM# UJWA227

A KATAYAMA ICHIMONJI WAKIZASHI

UNSIGNED, LATE KAMAKURA TO NAMBOKUCHO PERIOD (1260~1390)

Swordsmith: *Katayama Ichimonji* (attribution)
Measurements: **Length:** 46.0cm (o-suriage) **Curvature:** 0.9cm **Moto-haba:** 2.6cm
Jihada: *Fine mokume-hada with chikei and beautiful midare-utsuri*
Hamon: *Spectacular saka-choji with long ashi and yo*
Certificate: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (a sword designated as Especially Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword)
Authenticity: **Sayagaki by Honami Soukei** (13th generation of the Honami Koumi family)
Included: Shirasaya, fabric bags, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description

SOLD

The Ichimonji School's name derives from the early *Fukuoka Ichimonji* smiths that signed their blades with the single kanji character *ichi* (one) meaning *muteki* or 'no enemy'. Sword appraiser and scholar *Fujishiro Yoshio* wrote that *muteki* meant that no blade and no warrior could ever hope to stand against one who wielded an Ichimonji sword.

This rare treat of a wakizashi has been attributed in *sayagaki* to **Katayama Ichimonji School** by *Honami Soukei* of the Honami family and later the NBTHK as *Tokubetsu Hozon*. Katayama is an area of Bitchu province and one of several branches of the Ichimonji school that prospered in the late Kamakura to end of the Nanbokuchō period. The spectacular *saka-choji hamon* (slanted clove blossom) of this blade is their recognized trademark with vibrant *midare-utsuri*. A large *kirikomi* (battle scar) on the spine shows that this glorious blade forever means business.

Saki-kasane: 4.5mm



Moto-kasane: 5.0mm

Nakago: 14.5cm

Omosa: 350g

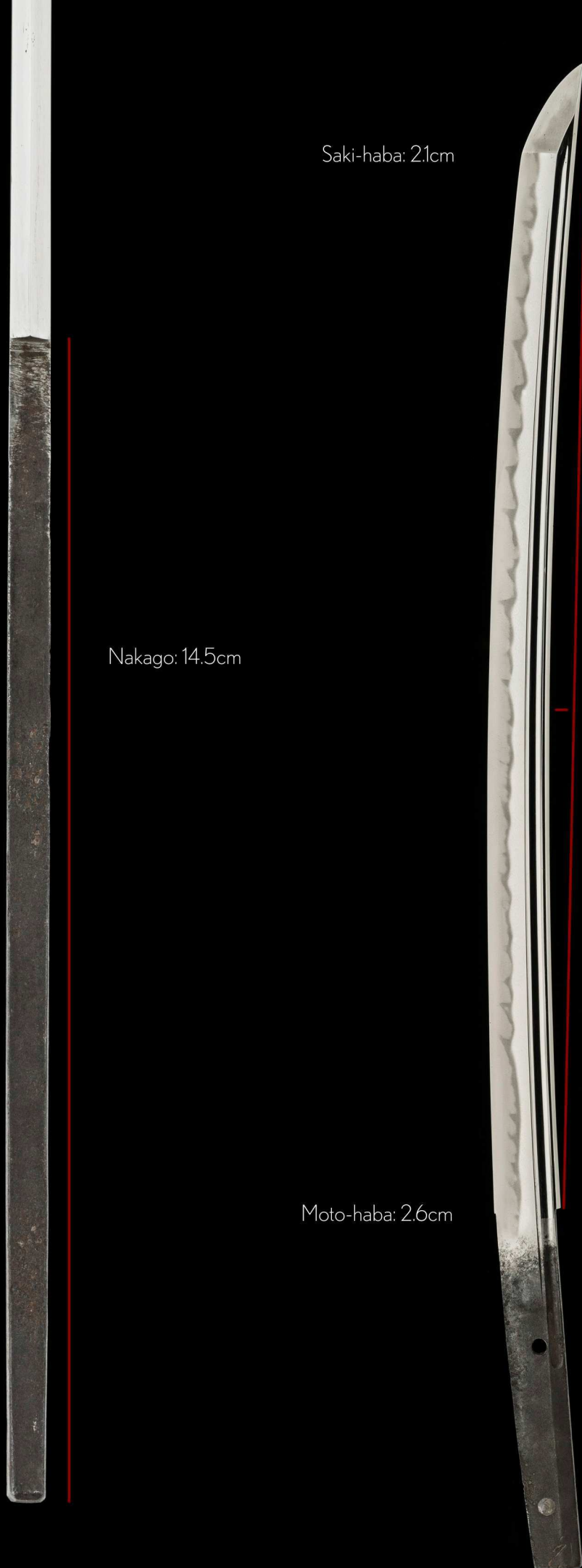
Saki-haba: 2.1cm

Nagasa: 46.0cm

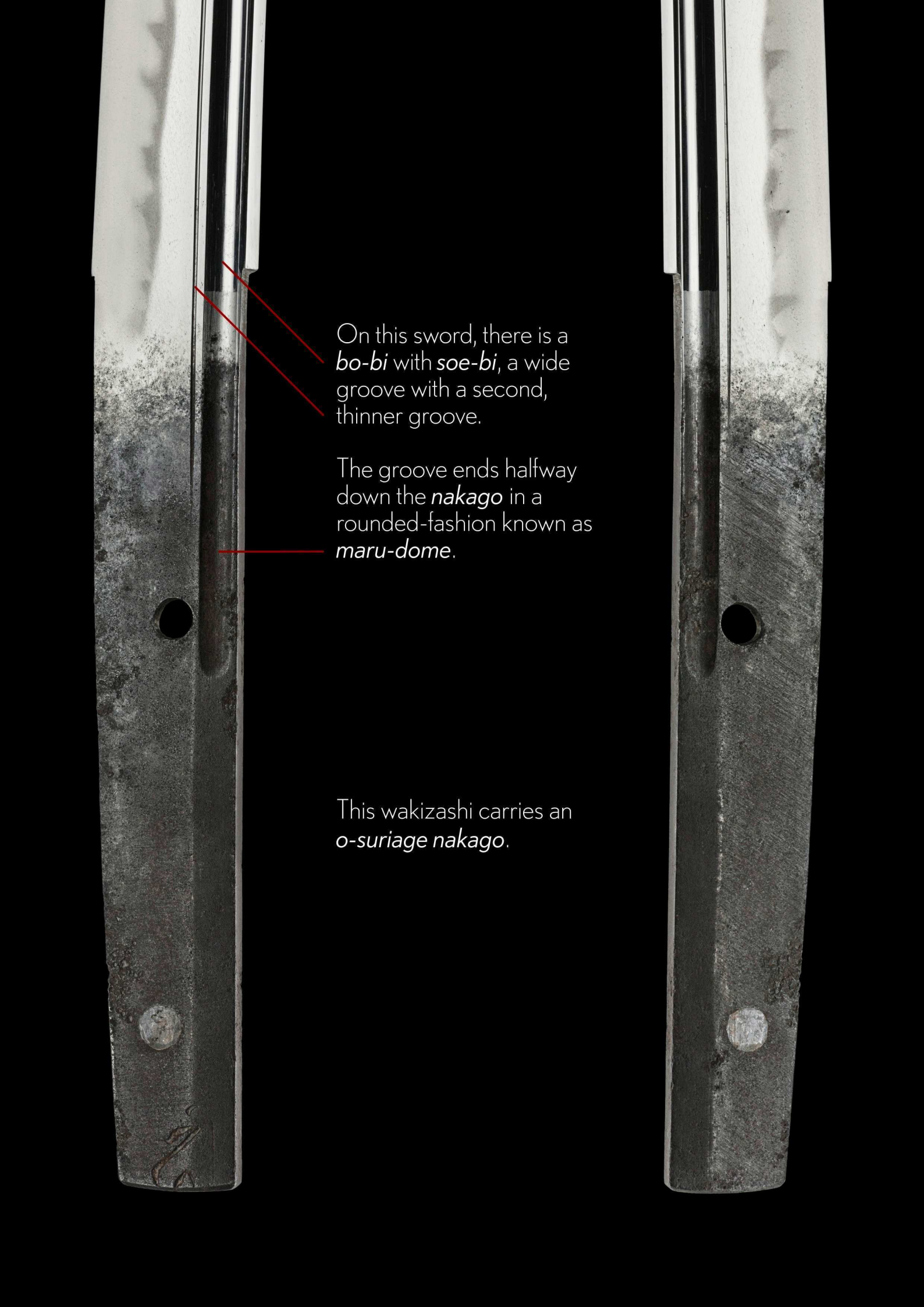
Sori: 0.9cm

Moto-haba: 2.6cm

Mekugi-ana: 2







On this sword, there is a *bo-bi* with *soe-bi*, a wide groove with a second, thinner groove.

The groove ends halfway down the *nakago* in a rounded-fashion known as *maru-dome*.

This wakizashi carries an *o-suriage nakago*.



Many, many moons ago this sword was almost certainly a tachi. Looking closely at the *nakago*, the remains of a *bonji* character was saved in the shortening process.

Feel the history...

保 存
29201703



No 1007315

鑑定書

一脇指 無銘（片山一文字）

長一尺五寸二分

右は當協會に於て審査の結果特別保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十九年五月三十日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



神奈川県 教育委員会
第 15146 号
昭和 28 年 8 月 24 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 29th year of Heisei (2017), May 30th

One, Wakizashi

Mei (signature)

Mumei (Katayama Ichimonji)

Nagasa (length)

1-shaku 5-sun 2-bu (46.0cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)



Bichu

(no) Kuni

Katayama

Ichimonji

Nagasa 1-shaku 5-sun 2-bu ari kore
(46.0cm)

Omote ura hi ari ni
double-groove on both sides

Suriage mumei nari
shortened and unsigned



Sou Yujo Yasuri-habaki
(silver)

Showa 29-nen 5-gatsu sue In Shirusu Kore

Written at the end of May 1954

Honami Soukei (Kaou)

Signed by Honami Soukei sensei
with his personal seal

[Honami Soukei is the 13th generation of Honami Koumi family]



Kirokomi - this a large battle scar from another sword when defending in combat.

These prized marks of courage are intentionally left by polishers over the centuries.



Bravery.



The stunning *saka-choji hamon* (slanted clove blossoms) continues to flow into the *kissaki* (tip) forming the *boshi*.

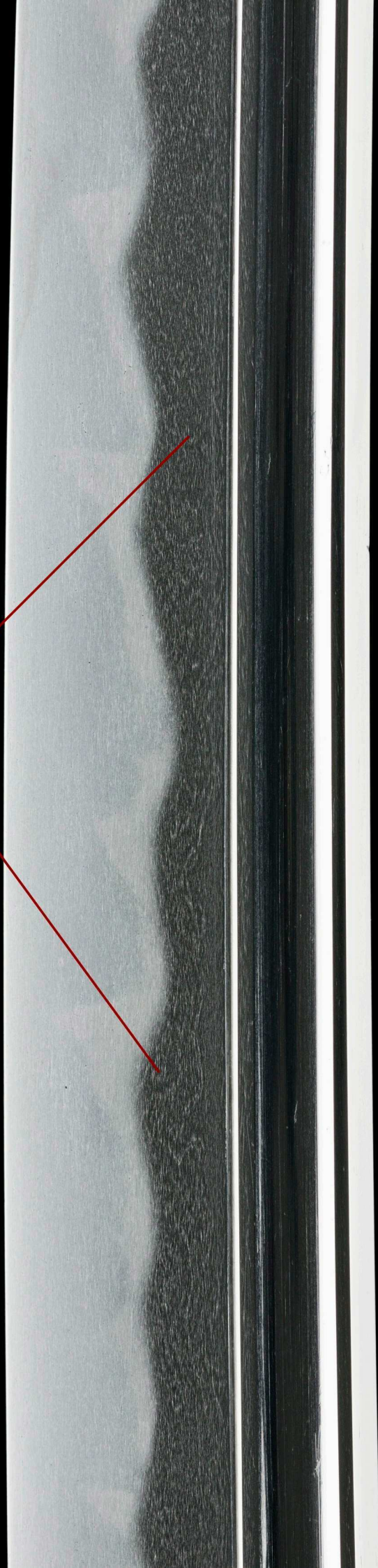




The *saka-choji hamon* dances like waves in the ocean.



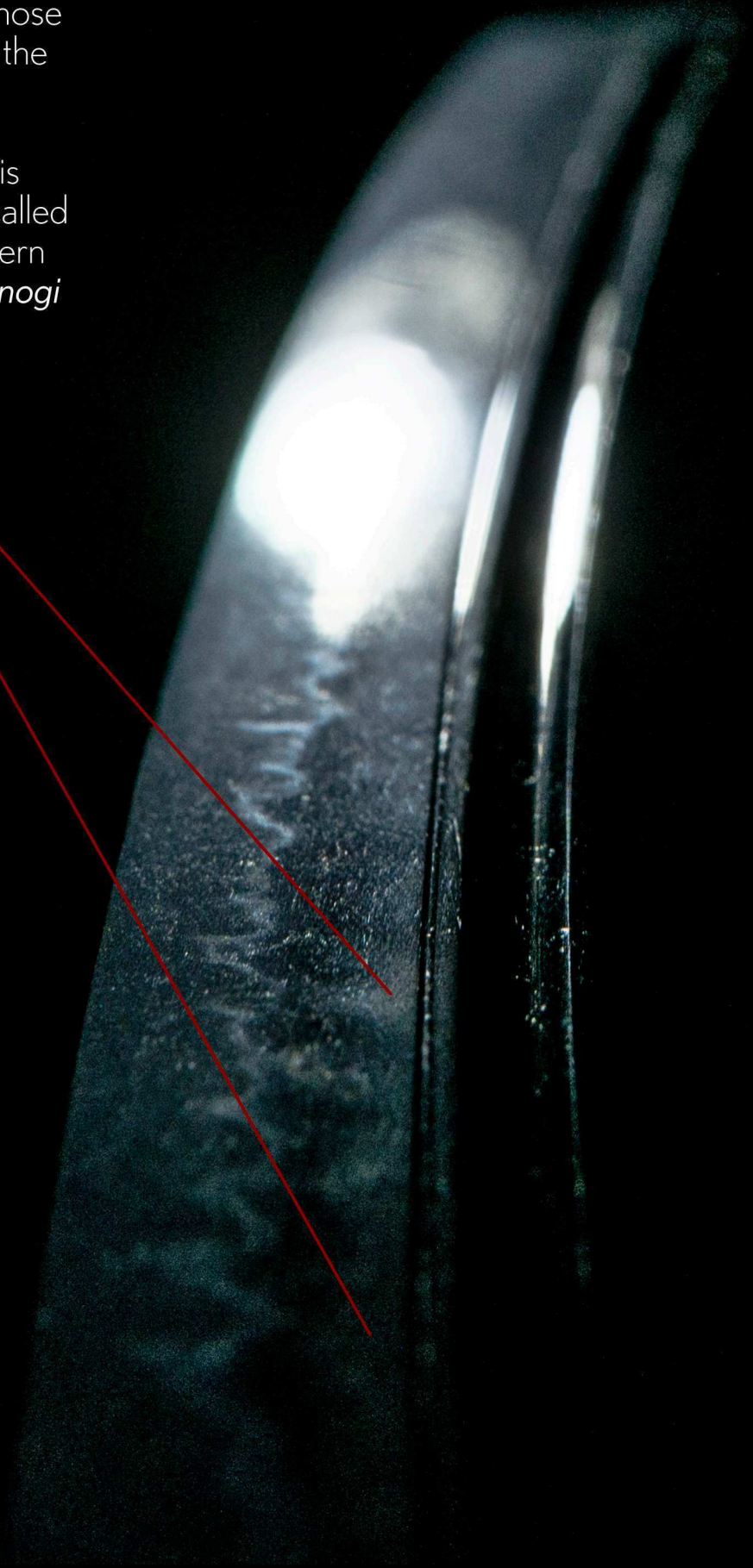
A refined *mokume-hada*, note
the circular burl grain pattern.



Literally meaning "reflection", *utsuri* is a beautiful, rather magical, misty reflection appearing in the *ji* (body of sword) above the *hamon*.

It is much loved and appreciated feature of swords, particular those made in the Bizen tradition in the Koto period (pre 1600).

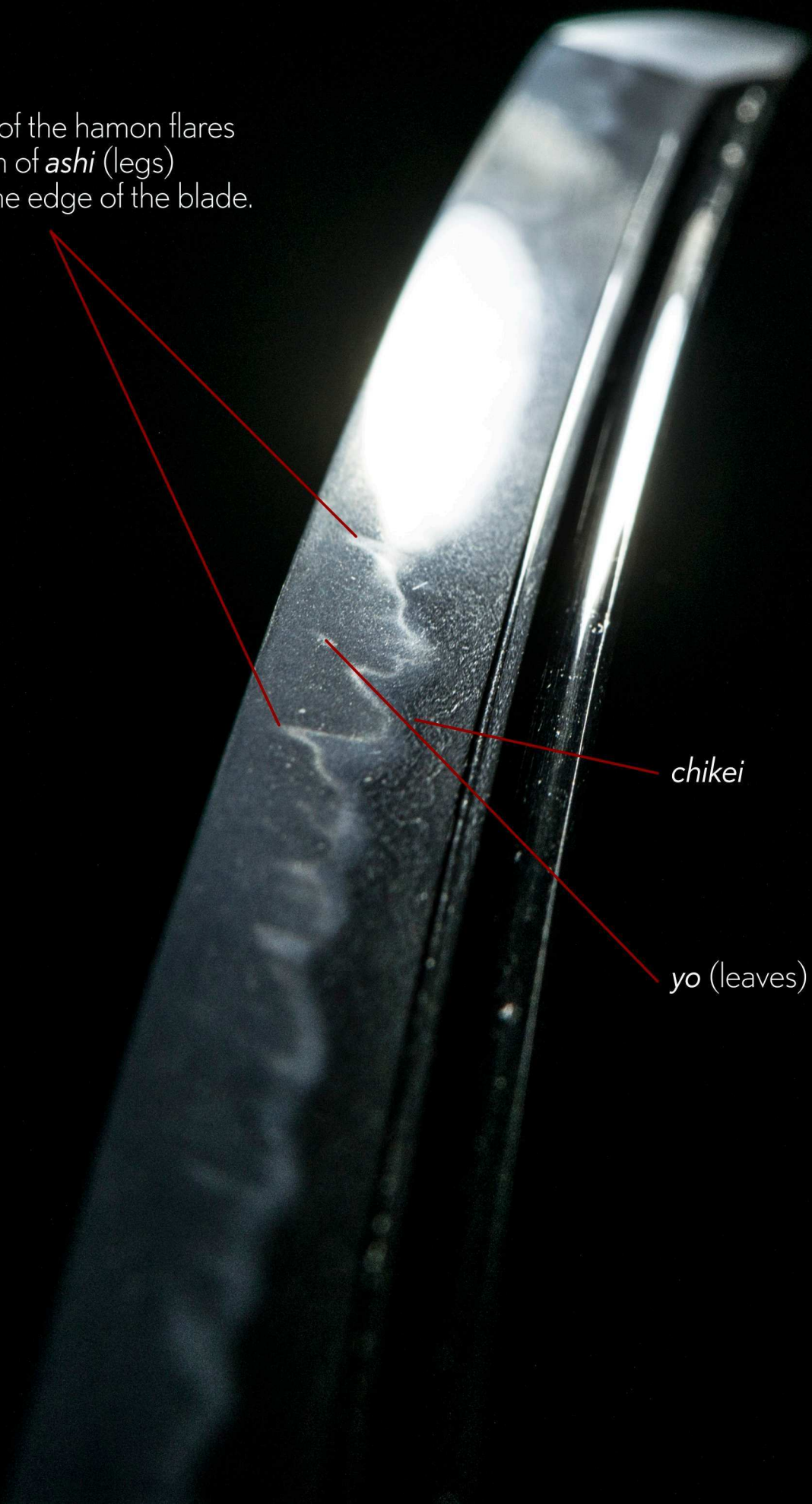
The type of *utsuri* found on this Katayama Ichimonji blade is called *midare-utsuri* - a smokey pattern that billows towards to the *shinogi* (ridge line).



The apex of the hamon flares
in the form of *ashi* (legs)
towards the edge of the blade.

chikei

yo (leaves)





Pure Bizen.



ITEM# UJKA280

A SUKEMITSU KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY MUROMACHI PERIOD (OEI ERA: 1394~1428)

Swordsmith:	<i>Sukemitsu</i> (two-character signature)		
Location:	Bizen province		
Measurements:	Length: 73.3cm (<i>machi-okuri</i>)	Curvature: 2.7cm	Moto-haba: 3.0cm
Jihada:	<i>Ko-mokume</i> with <i>chikei</i> , <i>ashi</i> and light <i>midare utsuri</i>		
Hamon:	<i>Bright gunome choji-midare</i>		
Boshi:	<i>Hakikake</i> and <i>midare-komi</i>		
Certificate:	NBTHK Hozon (a sword designated as Worthy of Preservation by the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword)		
Included:	Shirasaya, fabric bag, stand, kit, DVD, booklet, description		

SOLD

The magnificent shape of this *koshi-zori* (curvature at the waist) katana by swordsmith Bizen *Sukemitsu* speaks to the horseback-ridden *tachi* of the Kamakura period. There is a *Sukemitsu* from the famed *Yoshioka Ichimonji School* that worked from 1295-1326 who signed *katana-mei* with deep *koshi-zori* who may very well have been the craftsman.

The NBTHK, however, has dated the sword to the Muromachi period (1392~1573). In W.M. Hawley's book of Japanese swordsmiths, there is a *Sukemitsu* listing who worked at about 1394, which we conservatively attribute this blade to.

This is a katana with bundles of character. It has clearly been involved in countless battles and numerous polishes over the centuries. As such the steel has some *hada-ware* (openings in the body). These scars of time are easily forgivable given it's a signed piece with a graceful shape and a lively *gunome choji-midare hamon* with light *utsuri*. It's now looking for a caring home to lay it's beautiful *boshi* (hat).

Saki-kasane: 5.5mm [^]

Moto-kasane: 7.4mm

Omosa: 820g

Saki-haba: 2.0cm

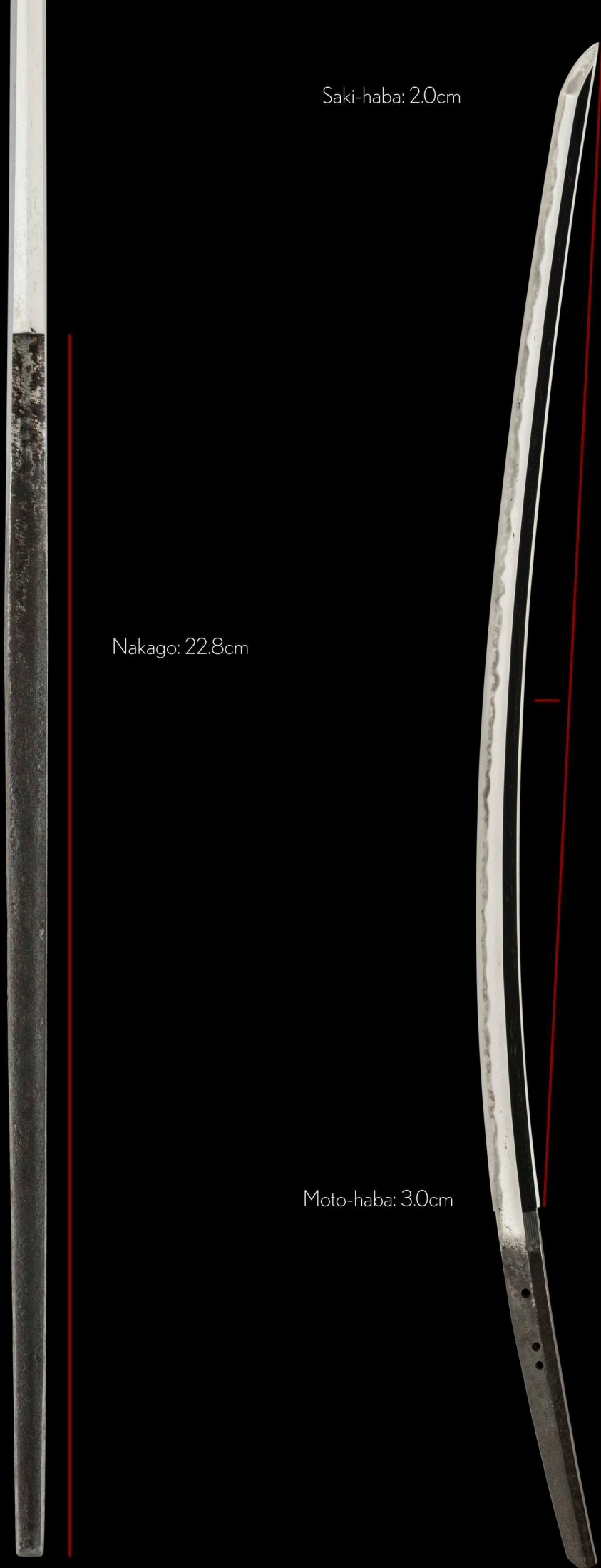
Nakago: 22.8cm

Moto-haba: 3.0cm

Nagasa: 73.3cm

Sori: 2.7cm

Mekugi-ana: 3



Koshizori

(curvature at the waist)

This term is used to describe swords with its deepest point towards the base of the blade.

Swords of the *Heian* and *Kamakura* periods generally carry *koshizori sugata* (overall shape) as these swords were carried on horseback as *tachi* 'wrapping' around the waist of the samurai.

As the NBTHK has dated this blade to the Muromachi period (1392~1573), it would have been crafted very early on during this time frame as demand for such a shape was greater.



Location: Bizen province

Swordsmith: *Sukemitsu*

A classic two-character signature
of the Koto period (pre-1600).



Suke

mitsu

Machi-okuri nakago

This sword was originally carried on horseback as a tachi, therefore it needed to be long and curvy.

As warfare changed over the centuries, swords needed to be drawn from a standing position. Therefore the *nagasa* (length) had to be physically viable given the height of the warrior. In most cases, a longer blade needed to be shortened, often times by several centimetres.

One way to shorten a sword is through a process called *suriage* where the sword is cut from the nakago and a new nakago is formed from where the cutting edge used to be.

In other cases, such as on this katana, the shorter nagasa is achieved by simply moving the *machi* (notches) upwards.

This process is called *machi-okuri*.

The overall length of the sword is unchanged, only the cutting edge is shorter, typically by about 1-sun or 3cm. A new hole (*mekugi-ana*) is created for the new hilt that is required. It should also be noted that with machi-okuri the *mei* (signature) is left intact.

new machi

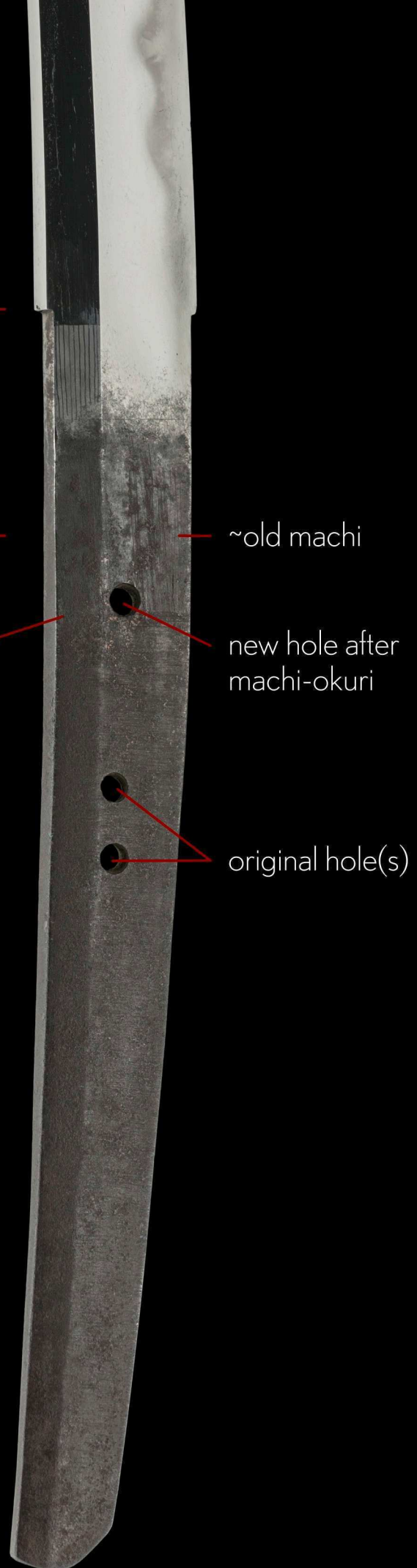
~ amount
shortened

original file
marks end

~old machi

new hole after
machi-okuri

original hole(s)





the kanji character 光 (mitsu) means 'bright'.

保 研
28201505



No 3012664

鑑定書

一刀 銘 助光(時代室町)

長二尺四寸二分弱

右は當協會に於て審査の結果保存刀剣と
鑑定しこれを証する

平成二十八年 七月二十一日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



秋 田 教育委員会
第 839 号
昭和26年 4月25日

NBTHK Hozon Certificate of Designation

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

Issued in the 28th year of Heisei (2016), July 21st

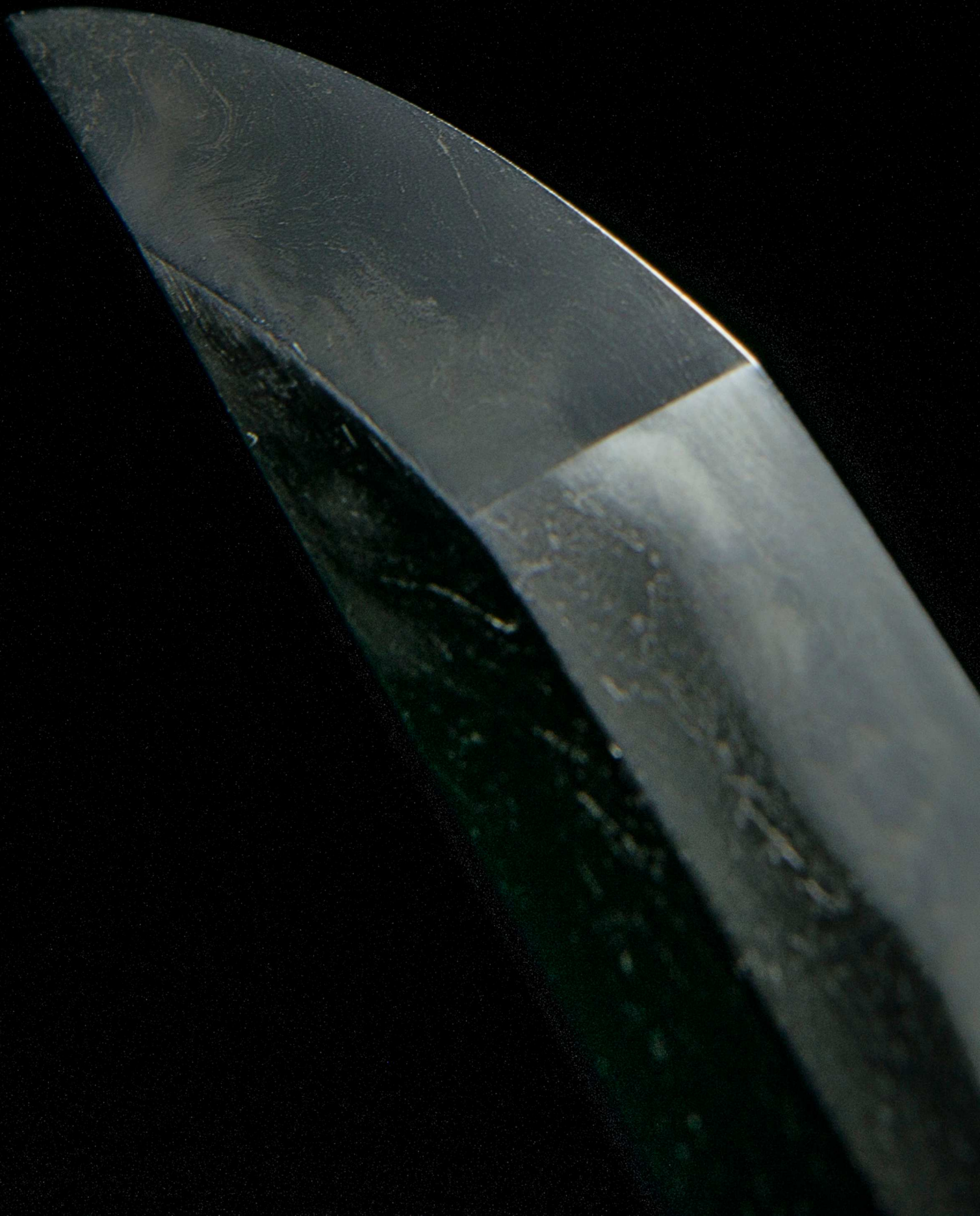
One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Sukemitsu (*Muromachi* period)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 4-sun 2-bu jaku (73.3cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

Boshi is a lovely mix of *hakikake*
(swept) with *midare-komi* (wavy).





Tried and tested

This sword has stories to tell. This is a katana that has been in several battles and thus polished many times over the centuries.

As such, the *ji* (steel body) has opened at the folds in several places along the blade. This flaw is called *hada-ware*.

While artistically hada-ware is not desirable, it is not a serious or fatal flaw, and certainly much more acceptable on older swords.

And this is why the sword was awarded NBTHK Hozon certification. It *is* a sword worthy of preservation and it's now looking for an owner who will care for this retired warrior in a respectful manner.

mokume-hada
(circular burl grain)



A dazzling *gunome choji-midare hamon*.



A close-up photograph of a sword blade, likely a katana, showing the hamon (edge pattern). The blade is dark and polished, with a bright reflection of light on the upper edge. The background is black. Three red lines point from text labels to specific patterns on the blade: 'light midare utsuri (reflection)' points to a wavy line, 'choji (clove blossoms)' points to a series of small, rounded shapes, and 'ashi (legs)' points to a series of small, pointed shapes.

light *midare utsuri*
(reflection)

choji
(clove blossoms)

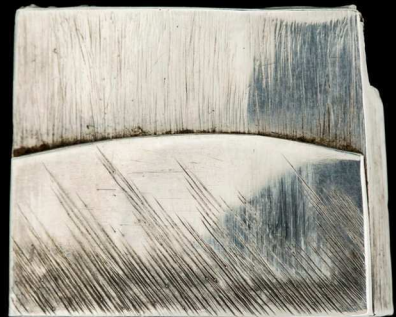
ashi (legs)

The *jigane* radiates a lovely blue tinge, a characteristic of high quality koto-period swords.

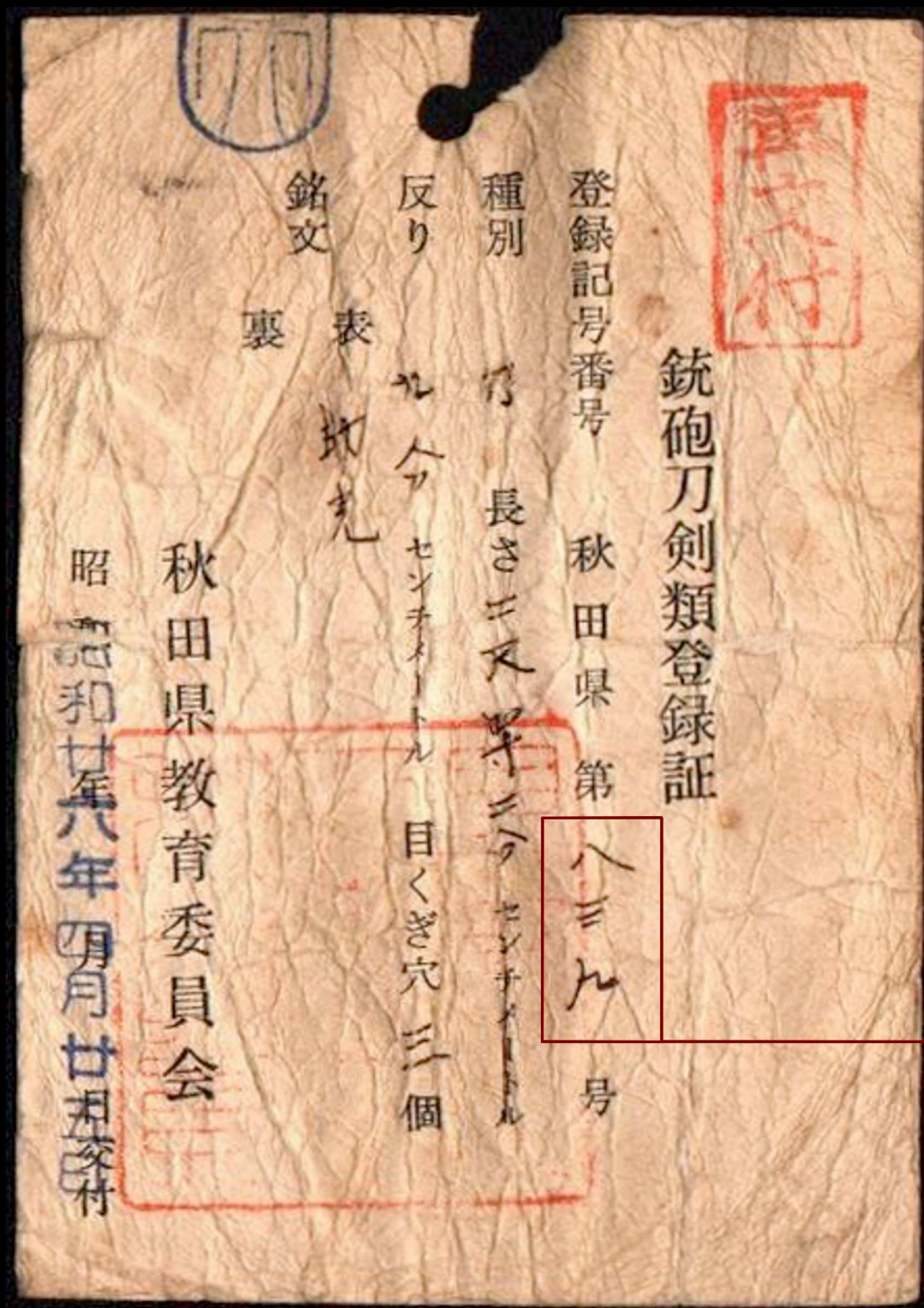




Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



Silver Niju-habaki
(copper base with rain pattern)



This is the *torokusho* (registration card) for the Sukemitsu katana. The card was registered in the 26th year of Showa (April 1951) in Akita.

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

The serial number is just 839, one of the very first swords registered in Japan.



Sukemitsu
Yoshioka

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*A recently completed Kanewaka katana custom koshirae project from father to son.
Congratulations John.*

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