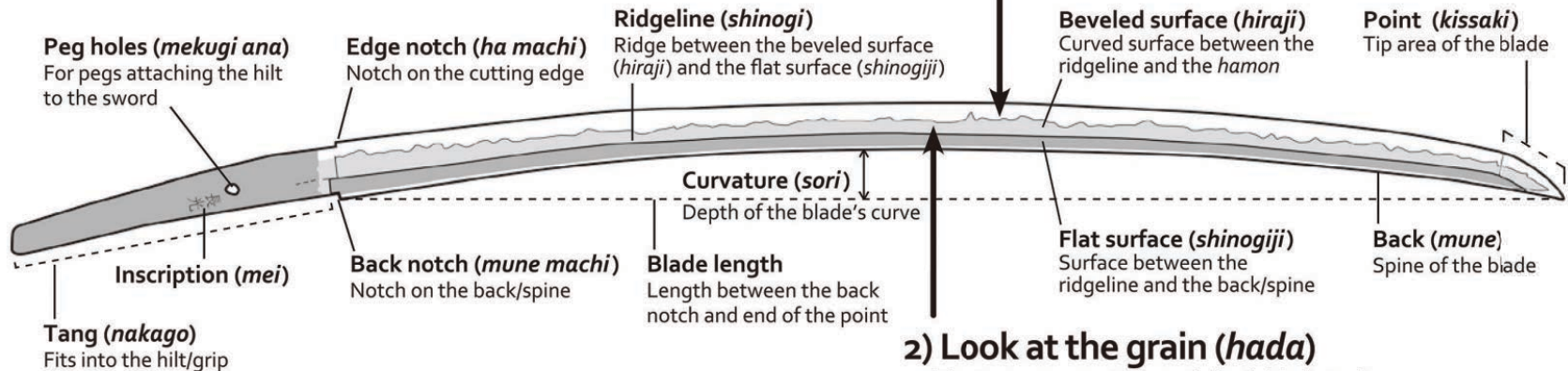


Key Points for Viewing Japanese Swords

1) Look at the *hamon* ("blade pattern")

A crystalline line along the cutting edge



2) Look at the grain (*hada*)

The texture or patterns of the folded steel

1) Types of *Hamon*

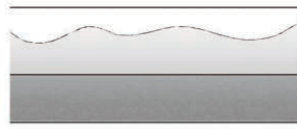
Through the quenching process, a smith can make a variety of different "blade patterns," which become a visual focal point of the sword. The *hamon* can show the smith's skill and might be distinctive to his school.

Straight *Hamon* (*Suguha*)



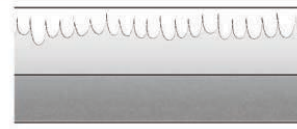
Many straight *hamon* actually have a subtle curve.

Irregular *Hamon* (*Midareba*) Wavy blade patterns



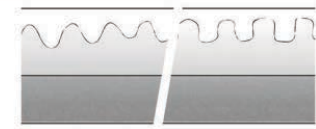
UNDULATIONS (*NOTARE*)

A gently undulating blade pattern. There might be cloves within the undulations.



CLOVES (*CHŌJI*)

A tightly scalloping blade pattern, named after clove buds.



ALTERNATIONS (*GUNOME*)

Literally "alternating eyes." A continuous line of tightly alternating waves or zigzags.

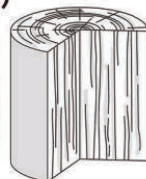
2) Types of Steel Grain (*Hada*)

Hada refers to the surface texture resulting from folding, forging, and quenching the steel. This wood-like grain may help indicate the period or region of manufacture.

Straight Grain (*Masame*)



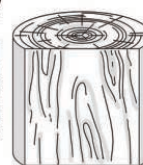
Nearly straight, parallel lines.



Cathedral Grain (*Itame*)



Irregular mountains and waves. The most common type of grain.



Burled Grain (*Mokume*)



Patterns with concentric circles.

