



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 descendent 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.