



ITEM# UJKA386

SOLD

AN ETCHÛ KIYOMITSU KATANA

SIGNED, EARLY EDO PERIOD (KANBUN TO ENPÔ ERA: 1661~1681)

- Swordsmith:** *Etchû Kiyomitsu* (清光)
Measurements: **Length:** 70.5cm (*ubu*) **Curvature:** 1.3cm **Moto-haba:** 2.98cm
Jihada: *Well-forged mokume hada with pronounced chikei within a darkish jigane*
Hamon: *Bright and consistent chû-suguha with kuichigaiba and ko-ashi*
Certificate #1: **NBTHK Tokubetsu Hozon** (Especially Worthy of Preservation)
Certificate #2-4: **NTHK-NPO Kanteisho** (*tsuba, fuchi-kashira & koshirae designated as Authentic*)
Fujishiro rank: **Jô-saku** (ranked as a superior swordsmith)
Cutting ability: **Wazamono** (maker of sharp swords)
Included: Shirasaya, Edo koshirae, fabric bags, stand, kit, booklet, description

SOLD

Superior swordsmith Kiyomitsu was the son of *Koshirô Shigekiyo* and given the name *Gorôzaemon* with some sources listing his first name as *Yaroku*. He lived in Etchû province, modern-day Toyama prefecture - a picturesque coastal city on Japan's main island, Honshu. His swords have a lovely darkish *jigane* (steel hue), often seen of swords crafted on the Sea of Japan.

This katana features a bright and consistent *chû-suguha* (straight hamon) with the unique Yamato-den characteristic of *kuichigaiba* on the upper third of the blade. Its antique koshirae from the late Edo period is most inspirational; through the rebirth tale of the fiery phoenix, the valiant importance of perseverance via the four gentlemen that all leads to the good luck omen of *nasu* (eggplants). This is a shinto period samurai sword with a wise, old soul.



Saki-kasane: 3.8mm

Kissaki: 2.92cm

Saki-haba: 1.89cm

Moto-kasane: 6.4mm

Nagasa: 70.5cm

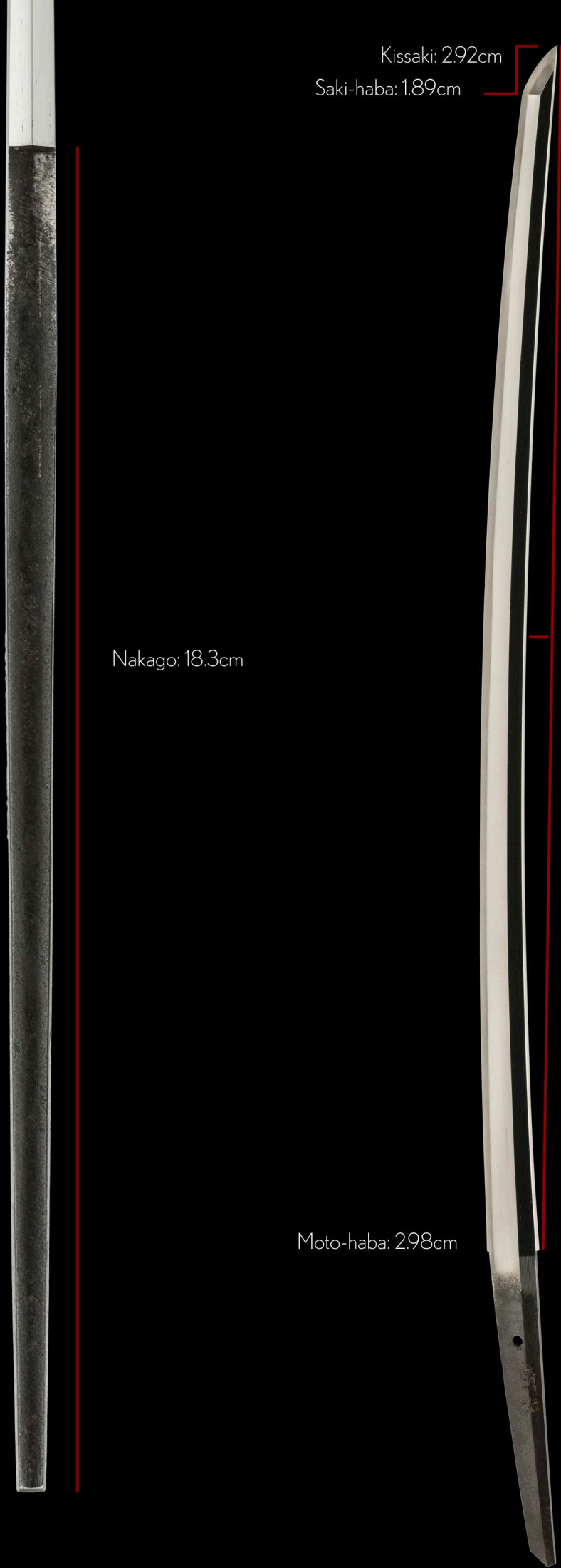
Nakago: 18.3cm

Sori: 1.30cm

Omosa: 655g

Moto-haba: 2.98cm

Mekugi-ana: 1



Swordsmith Kiyomitsu was the son of *Koshirô Shigekiyo* and was given the name *Gorôzaemon* with some sources listing his first name as *Yaroku*.

Kiyomitsu was active from *Kanbun* to *Enpô* eras (1663-1681) and the structure of his swords reflect this time period. He lived in *Etchû province*, modern-day Toyama prefecture - a picturesque coastal city on Japan's main island, Honshu.

His swords have a lovely darkish *jigane* (hue of the steel), which is seen of swords crafted on the Sea of Japan. The wood-grain quality *jihada* (skin) stands out particularly towards the base of the blade.

This katana features a bright and consistent *chû-suguha* (straight hamon) that was forged with skill. The bottom of the nakago is shaped with the unique *Kashû-nakago-jiri*, paying tribute to *Kaga* (Kashû) province that neighbours Etchû. Kiyomitsu must surely have produced many swords for elite samurai from the wealthy Kaga province.

Kiyomitsu is aptly ranked as *jô-saku* (a superior swordsmith) and *wazamono* for his strong reputation for producing extra sharp swords.



Location: *Etchû* (resident of Toyama)
Swordsmith: *Kiyomitsu* (first generation)

ubu-nakago (original, unaltered tang)
kiri-yasurime (horizontal file marks)



清 (Kiyō)

光 (mitsu)



(*ura*, reverse)

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

This short, flat area moving into an acute angle is typically seen on swords from *Kashû* (Kaga) province, thus referred to as *Kashû nakago-jiri*.

02202006

No. 1013802



鑑定書

一刀 銘 清光 (越中・新刀)

長 二又三寸二分半

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

令和二年八月二十八日

公益財団法人日本美術刀剣保存協會



大阪府 教育委員会
第 62267 号
昭和46年2月2日
(再)平成2年3月31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 2nd year of Reiwa (2020), August 28th

One, Katana

Mei (signature)
Kiyomitsu
(*Etchû/Shintô*)

Nagasa (length)
2-shaku 3-sun 2-bu han (70.5cm)

Nihon Bijutsu Token Hozon Kyokai
(NBTHK)

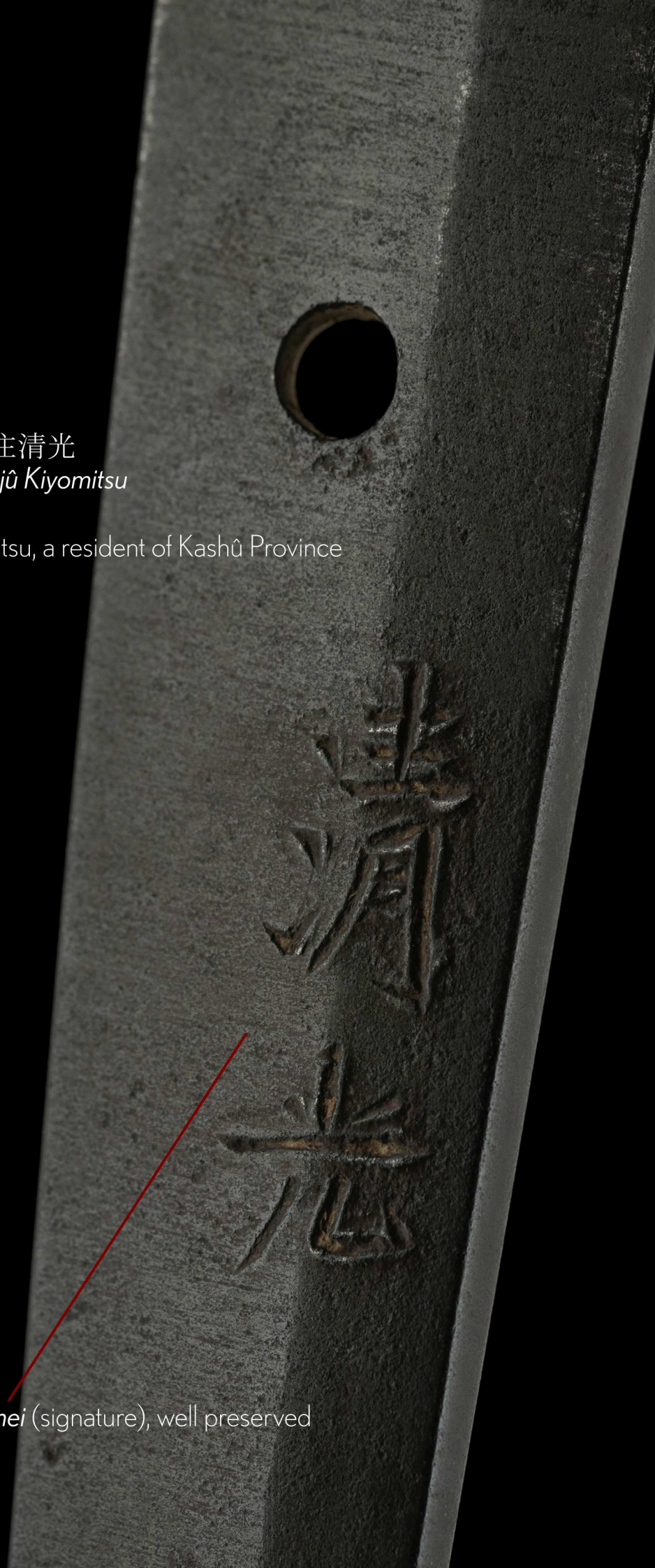


加州住清光
Kashû jû Kiyomitsu

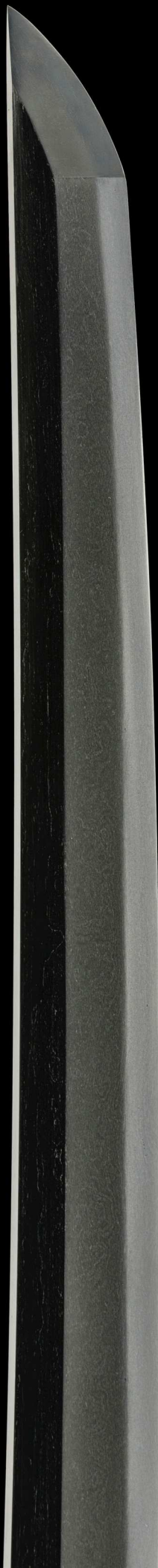
Kiyomitsu, a resident of Kashû Province



crisp *mei* (signature), well preserved







A close-up, diagonal view of a sword blade against a black background. The blade exhibits a complex, layered texture. A prominent feature is a dark, wavy band running across the middle, which is identified as chikei. Above and below this band is a lighter, textured area with a rounded burl grain pattern, identified as mokume-hada. Red lines originate from the text labels and point to these specific features on the blade.

mokume-hada (rounded burl grain pattern)

Dark lines of *chikei* woven beautifully into the expertly forged *mokume-hada* that has a rounded burl grain pattern.



A beautiful and bright *suguha-hamon* (straight temper line) that is consistent throughout, the mark of a well-crafted sword.



kuichigai-ba

kuichigai-ba is the area of the *hamon* where the *nioguchi* overlaps for a noticeable distance.

This unique and sophisticated feature is generally seen on swords with a *suguha hamon* crafted in the Yamato tradition.



Shirasaya
(protective scabbard)



silver *habaki* with
diagonal file marks

*Hôô mon nshiki-zutsumi saya
uchigatana-koshirae*
(鳳凰紋錦包鞘打刀拵え)

*Uchigatana-koshirae wrapped
in brocade with phoenix pattern*

Crafted during the
Late Edo period
(1780~1867)



*NTHK-NPO Kanteisho
Certificate of Authenticity*

peeled areas [think: *rebirth*]



The antique *saya* (scabbard) from the late 1700s, early 1800s has a brocade pattern depicting the phoenix. The mythical phoenix (*hou*) was adopted as a symbol of the Japanese imperial household. The phoenix represents fire, the sun, justice, obedience and fidelity.

A prosperous civilization requires the foundations of tradition to give it a bedrock, a base to build upon and continue through the ages. However, if it's too rigid, too tyrannical, it dries out. A successful culture understands that it needs to burn off the old in order to rejuvenate and become born again, ie new king, new ideas, new technology.

The old phoenix burns to make way for the new phoenix to emerge. This poignant mythological story has been retold throughout the ages in various artistic forms.



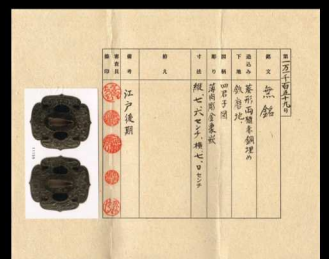
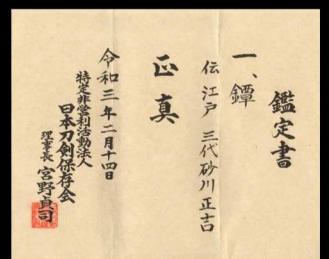
Rather fittingly, there are areas of the brocade phoenix pattern that have peeled (ie burned) away over time exposing the base wood of the scabbard.



This glorious tachi style polished iron tsuba has been attributed to the work of third generation *Sunagawa Masayoshi* from nation's capital *Edo* (Tokyo prefecture).

Looking closely, motifs of *ran* (orchids, spring), *take* (bamboo, summer), *kiku* (chrysanthemums, autumn) and *ume* (plum blossoms, winter) can be admired. Collectively, these plants are known as *shikunshi* ('four gentlemen') and represent the four seasons.

A certificate of authenticity from the NTHK-NPO states the tsuba was crafted during late Edo period, circa 1780~1867.



Resonating with Confucian and Zen ideals, the four gentlemen have been a meaningful subject amongst artists Chinese and Japanese for centuries.

These seasonal plants have come to symbolise purity, humility and perseverance even within the harshest of conditions.

The heart-shaped motifs in the four corners are called *inome* - referring to the *eye of a wild boar*. The samurai greatly admired the *inoshishi*, known for its single-minded focus.

Note how the holes of the tsuba have been filled in by *shakudô*. Only a samurai with financial means would be able to afford such a luxury. The *gold dotted inlay* on the plum blossoms and other areas are an example of the understated elegance of Japanese art.



ume (plum blossoms)

ran (orchids)

take (bamboo)

kiku (chrysanthemums)



This lovely *fuchi-kashira* strengthens the harmony of the *kiku* (chrysanthemum) motif as seen on the tsuba. Notice the intricate detail of each petal.

This beautiful artwork has been certified and attributed to *Kikukawa Chôbei* who also worked in *Edo province* during the late Edo period.





The *menuki* (decorative grips) are depictions of *nasu* (eggplant), which carry interesting significance in Japan as illustrated in the story below.



Hatsuyume is the first dream one has in the new year. The contents of such a dream would traditionally, foretell the luck of the dreamer in the ensuing year.

It is considered to be particularly *good luck to dream of Mount Fuji, a hawk, and an eggplant*. This belief has been in place since the early Edo period.

One theory suggests that this combination is lucky because Mount Fuji is Japan's highest mountain, the hawk is a clever and strong bird, and the word for eggplant (*nasu* or *nasubi*) suggests achieving something *great* (*nasu*).

Another theory suggests that this combination arose because Mount Fuji, falconry, and early eggplants were favourites of the shogun *Tokugawa Ieyasu*.



Mount Fuji, a hawk, and an eggplant



Koshirae bag.