

刀装具
Tosogu Spotlights
www.tosogu.de

Takase Eiju - 高瀬 栄寿





Dear Fellow Collectors,

I welcome you to the first book of this format. The goal of this series Tosogu Spotlights is to present interesting, quality pieces of Tosogu in large scale images with accompanying information, as a potential substitute to in-hand study.

The pieces are high-quality specimen, with all of them being authenticated by the NBTHK. As the availability of a significant number of such specimens from a particular artist for detailed photography and study is limited or impossible to reach for most collectors, this book and the following ones, seek to provide insights using exemplary pieces to cast a spotlight on a specific artist and, if possible, typical pieces and craftsmanship from his hand. In this context, I will present biographical information on the artist, as well as contextual analysis of the Tosogu along with focus on the motif of depicted items, carried by my belief that many of these works carry a deeper meaning.

In my opinion, Tosogu can have numerous attractive features, starting with a charming and lovely motif, excellent craftsmanship with magnificent details, or an overall artistic interpretation and visualization that is very appealing. However, especially the last of those points can be quite difficult to evaluate without sufficient material to study.

I remember a phrase that Darcy Brockbank wrote to me years ago when discussing an outstanding Fuchigashira by Omori Eishu with classical wave motif - 'When you have seen and studied the real omori waves by a master like Eishu, you will recognize them and you will also see the difference to other Omori artists and especially the counterfeits. You will never again buy a gimei Omori piece'. Since then I often remembered it and it popped to my mind on several occasions. With time it became sort of a gut feeling, a good foundation to decide whether something is worth a closer, analytical look.

When studying a pair of Ichinomiya Nagatsune Fuchigashira, spending hours to understand the depiction and deeper meaning of the motif, I came to another important realization. It was only due to very productive discussion with a collector friend that we made progress step by step, finally putting the puzzle together - a wonderful moment when it all fused and made sense. Thus I realized how specific and how much in-depth knowledge a western collector needs to fully understand the world depicted on Tosogu, made in a cultural bubble so foreign to most of us. Therefore, information on the motif and a detailed interpretation, even if based on speculation, shall also be part of this series.

Finally, I want to thoroughly thank George Miller, Ruslan Tarasenko, Hans Eschbaum, Moritz Fink and Markus Sesko for very helpful advice and information which I occasionally use or cite.

I sincerely hope that you will enjoy this Spotlight Book and those that will follow.

Marco Kristen
Wiesbaden, February 2024

In this book, works from Takase Eiju (高瀬栄寿) and his son Takase Eizui (高瀬栄随) will be presented.

The civilian name of Eiju was Takase Izaemon (高瀬伊左衛門) and he studied under the 1st generation Sekijōken Motozane of the Ōyama school. The exact years Eiju worked are unknown and so are his dates of birth and death. However, it is known that he worked around the An'ei (1772-1781) to Kansei period (1789-1801) in Hitachi province and Edo, signing with differing names and titles. In addition to his name Eiju, he used two gō: *Fūryūken* (風柳軒) and *Izaemon* (伊左衛門), which are found frequently on his works. He seemed to be a retainer of the Matsu-daira Daimyō in Mito province and later went to Edo to acquire the gokenin rank.

He was succeeded by his son Tetsugorō (鉄五郎) who worked under the name Takase Eizui (高瀬栄随). Eizui trained several students and signed with the gō *Fūryūken* (風柳軒), *Shunshōken* (春松軒) or *Suiryūken* (水柳軒). Finally, a 3rd generation followed under the name Eimin (栄珉).

The works of Eiju vary greatly in their style and material, however, the minute detail of carving and inlays is ubiquitous. The motifs are widely spread among Japanese popular culture of his time, however, especially landscapes and detailed depictions of old Japanese and Chinese tales can be found. The works of his son Eizui are similar in design and choice of motif, yet a little less refined from a technical perspective.

One Tsuba by Takase Eiju depicting a great phoenix was exhibited by the NBTHK in November 2023 and has been designated Juyo by the NBTHK.

All of the following items have been authenticated by the NBTHK. The pieces 1, 4, 5 and 7 were displayed in the NBTHK bulletin *Token Bijutsu* number 593 and 594.



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Daisho Tsuba - Eight views of Ōmi

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eiju + kaō ; Takase Eiju + kaō (高瀬栄寿)

Material: Shibuichi with gold and silver inlays

Motif: Eight views of Ōmi



These daisho Tsuba are worked from a high quality shibuichi ground plate shimmering in nuances of dark and light gray, sometimes with a green or brown tint. The forging structure is visible on the backside of the sho, with light grey patches of shibuichi running across the seppadai. This resembles an area with increased silver content, similar to those patches found on so-called 'tiger-stripe-shibuichi' and is accompanied by an overall granularity of the alloy, which, in this piece, delivers an excellent coloration and mist-like appearance for this landscape motif. Additionally, some parts of the inlay are worked in shibuichi, albeit most are done in solid gold, with the moon on the sho being solid silver that has darkened over time.

The depicted landscapes from 'Eight views of Ōmi' all show popular scenes from the southern end of Lake Biwa filled with trees, animals, iconic buildings and landmarks.

The Ōmi-scenes shown on the Daisho are depicted as follows, starting top left:

- 1 *Evening rain at Karasaki* - Karasaki no yau (唐崎夜雨) A cape with a single large pine tree.
- 2 *Wild geese returning home to Katata* - Katata no rakugan (堅田落雁) An iconic hut and geese.
- 3 *Evening bell at Miidera* - Mii no banshō (三井晚鐘) One of the 'three bells of Japan'.
- 4 *Evening glow at Seta* - Eta no sekishō (瀬田夕照) A Chinese style bridge at Seta.
- 5 *Evening snow at Hira* - Hira no bosetsu (比良暮雪) The mountains visible from the lake.
- 6 *Returning sails at Yabase* - Yabase no kihan (矢橋帰帆) An old harbor at Lake Biwa.
- 7 *Clear breeze at Awazu* - Awazu no seiran (粟津晴嵐) A rare depiction including Zeze castle.
- 8 *Autumn moon at Ishiyama* - Ishiyama no shūgetsu (石山秋月) A temple built on rock formations.

The work is highly detailed and cleverly uses perspective to create an even more vivid scenery. Here, fine details, such as the temple bell on the dai reverse, or the high depth of field created on the sho reverse, with the temple and mountains stacking up from front to back, give plenty to explore and keep the eyes wandering across the piece. The buildings are accurately depicted, especially considering the lack of photography at the time of making. This daisho is the condensation of a whole ukiyo-e series onto two Tsuba, making it a very interesting and also expressive piece.

This set is indicative of the great ground work of the plate, well-designed compositions and the outstanding details that can be found across works of Takase Eiju. Likely one of his best works.

















高頼榮壽





Tsuba - Landscape with palace and pagoda

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eiju + kaō, 高瀬栄寿

Material: Shibuichi with gold and shakudo inlays

Motif: Landscape with palace and pagoda



This Tsuba is made of a finely forged shibuichi groundplate in classical round shape with plenty of inlay in solid gold and some in shakudo. It depicts a waterscape with palace and pagoda, potentially Mount Hōrai.

Many sansui (Chinese Landscape) Tosogu that show a forested mountain with a temple or pagoda near the top are references to Mount Hōrai (Chinese: Mount Penglai). The temple or pagoda is almost always in a Chinese architectural style and has a path or stairway that begins with a Chinese style gate. There will often be a small boat near a landing with people and a horse or donkey walking on the path. Mount Hōrai is a legendary, holy Chinese mountain in the Eastern Sea that is often visited by hermits and is the base for the Eight Immortals. Legend has it that the Chinese Emperor sent Jofuku (Chinese: Xu Fu) to find the elixir of Immortal Life on Mount Hōrai, and he found Japan instead, deciding that Mount Fuji was Mount Hōrai. The mountain is covered with trees that bear jeweled fruits and peaches that grant immortality - no one is ever hungry. This was a very popular theme that illustrated ideas of heaven on earth and eternal life. The location of the “mythical” island with Mount Hōrai/Penglai has been a subject of scholarly debate for centuries - with possibilities of Taiwan, Okinawa, Honshu Japan, etc. In Japan, Mount Fuji is the top candidate even though there is a mountain actually called Mount Hōrai, with a famous temple Hōrai-ji.

The scenery on this Tsuba is carefully designed, using decent shapes for clouds, mountains and cliffs. It is complemented by rich gold inlays of trees and other plants, all of these done from solid gold alloy, some of these cleverly designed to give a very full and bushy appearance. One beautiful feature of this Tsuba is the sparse, yet very expressive use of shakudo for a pair of distant mountains. Looking at their shape, they are likely the same on the front and back of the plate and the use of shakudo to mimic the shadow that the moon has cast upon them is both clever and elegant. Paying attention to detail, a carved rim that runs along the shakudo-shibuichi border can be observed. This has been intentionally placed and is especially well done on the back plate, scattering light in a way to give the silhouette of a back-lit, dark mountain. The patina along the edges of the mountains gives a strong impression of distant fog.

Furthermore, the water is finely carved, nicely fading out behind the willow towards the mountains and the waterfalls running below the bridge are excellently worked with great detail on the foam and splashes below. Finally, the gate of the temple section is worth a closer look, carved quite deeply and thus casting a small shadow, just as a real gate would. The opening reveals a staircase running up towards the temple, of which the first two stairs are carved. The perspective on this gate is worked out really well, considering the tiny size and strict limitations in the depth of carving.

This Tsuba could be described as very typical Takase Eiju work, both in terms of minute detail and an overall great composition with cleverly used design techniques.











高穎榮壽





Tsuba - Sakura in morning fog

Private collection

Mei: Fūryūken Takase Eiju + kaō, 風柳軒 高瀬栄寿

Material: Shibuichi with gold and shakudo inlays

Motif: Sakura in morning fog



This Tsuba is truly wonderful in its richness of detail and elegant design. It is heavy as made from a solid shakudo ground plate bearing a deep black patina with nuances of blue shimmering. The surface is completely flat with all inlay polished to the same height.

The sheer richness of this bicoloured Tsuba is astonishing and the number of inlay dots that have been hand carved, punched in, flattened and afterwards polished is in the thousands. This type of inlay is similarly and frequently found in the Omori School, as well as adapted in the Ichijo School. These tiniest inlays gradually increase to dots of around ten times their scale and form misty shapes, interrupting heavy gold inlay of the three sakura trees. The sakura trees are reduced to massive trunks in gold, bearing cherry-typical bark patterns done in *katakiri-bori* and carrying dozen of flowers. The flowers are very detailed, comprising the iconical five petal shape typical to *rosaceae* species and adds one more botanical detail to this rich and diverse diverse piece.

The scenery depicts the sakura trees standing in morning fog, the gold inlays being the light scattering of mist wandering across the morning scenery. Another thought would be a stream reflecting the sakura on the water surface with the cloudy gold being the reflections on the waves, but the scattered bamboo sprouts at the foot of the trees suggest a solid-ground scenery.

The sakura blossom is one of the predominate symbols of Japan recognized all around the World and represents birth, life and the flourishing of it, but also the inevitable and all too quick ending. This morning scene is reminiscent of an old Japanese song in which it says that the distant sakura trees look like fog among the mountains. The Bushi were especially fond of this motif and their lives were often compared to a sakura blossom - a flower with magnificent blooms that quickly die in a dazzling display of falling petals. Many Samurai dreamed of dying this way: fighting and dying magnificently in battle. This is one of the reasons that the cherry blossom is one of the main motifs on Gunto.

This Tsuba is truly excellent and was likely commissioned by a wealthy customer. The bicoloured design, extreme amount of work and the very refined design likely make it one of the best Takase Eiju Tsuba.









風神軒

高瀬末壽
圖





Tsuba - Chrysanthemum flowers

Private collection

Mei: Fūryūken Takase Eiju + kaō, 風柳軒 高瀬栄寿
Material: Shibuichi with gold and shakudo inlays
Motif: Chrysanthemum flowers



This Tsuba is made of shibuichi that has been perfectly polished on the seppa-dai and otherwise punched and hammered, giving an uneven, darker, yet glossy finish. Upon this carefully prepared plate, chrysanthemum plants are set in various shades of gold and deep-black, high-grade, shakudo, also used for the ategane. The gold of the flowers is done in two types, with the lighter one carrying orange coloration on the inside of the petals. This might be an application of lacquer done by the artist himself.

The flower shapes comprise different states of chrysanthemum flowering, starting with plump buds, over currently opening flowers like in the top middle, up to fully blooming chrysanthemum showing numerous layers of petals and a stigma in the center. These are embedded between glossy-black shakudo leaves and stems in a naturalistic shape with balancing blank space on the back side of the Tsuba. In total, three plants are engraved, two of them with very long and heavily loaded stems. This depiction stands out as a rather detailed and quite naturalistic composition in terms of Tosogu, that includes the various flowering states and composes full plants with these, instead of just placing more or less abstract flower bouquets.

This accuracy in depiction would become more popular and refined by the end of the Edo period and can be found there in its mastery by artists like Natsuo, Unno Shomin and other artists. However, works like these, supposedly made around 1800, are the link between the abstract works of early to mid Edo and the highly naturalistic pieces of latest Edo and Meiji times.

Chrysanthemums symbolize the sun, perfection, longevity, power and also nobility. The Chrysanthemum is the official flower of Japan and can represent different branches of the aristocracy, depending upon the number of petals. The Emperor is normally symbolized by 16 petals, other members of the royal family with 14 and so on. It is worth noting that those chrysanthemums that are fully shown on this Tsuba, all display 16 petals. This might indicate the support of the owner for the emperor.

A beautiful and strong Tsuba, also with its motif, giving an impression of the wide varieties of styles seen in the work of Takase Eiju.



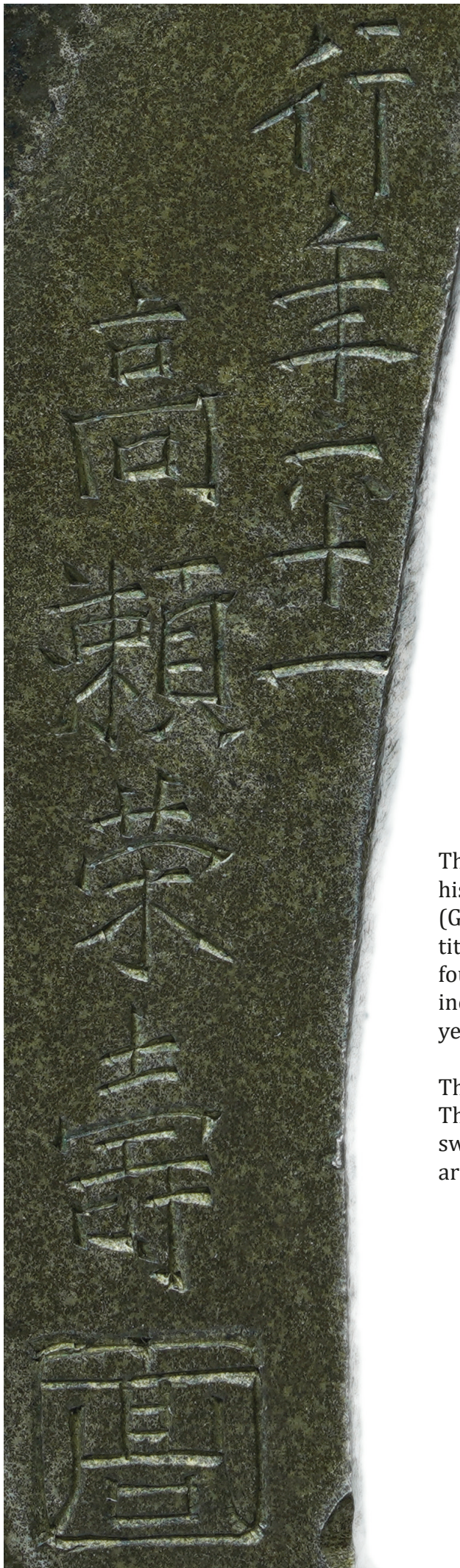






風標新





The signature on this Tsuba is an extended version of his mei carrying the age at which he made the piece (Gyōnen roku ju ichi, made at 61) and his honorable title Fūryūken (風柳軒). The kao is one commonly found version at this age and he seems to have included his age more frequently from around 60 years on.

The strokes are executed with courage and routine. The rare, but clean curvatures in his mei, suggest a swift and unerringly execution. Further comparisons are drawn in a separate section of this book.



Fuchigashira - Yoshitsune and Benkei

Private collection

Mei: Fūryūken Takase Eiju + kaō, 風柳軒 高瀬栄寿

Material: Shibuichi with gold, silver and copper inlays

Motif: Ataka no Seki, Yoshitsune and Benkei in the mountains



These Fuchigashira are made of shibuichi that has been modeled to deep and pronounced structures, complemented with minutely carved figurative, botanical and naturalistic details in gold, silver or copper.

The scenery depicted on the Fuchigashira could be Yoshitsune and Benkei as told in a version of the kabuki play 'Ataka no Seki'. In this play, Yoshitsune and Benkei (and a few other followers) are climbing through the mountains trying to escape from his brother's troops who are trying to kill them. They meet a stranger who shows them the best passage to avoid most of the enemy. Yoshitsune takes the 'perilous passes' through the mountain cliffs dressed as Yamabushi. They eventually come to a checkpoint and meet Togashnosuke Ienao, the guard in charge of the checkpoint. He has been directed to find and kill Yoshitsune and Benkei and he has descriptions and drawings of them. He ends up being so impressed by Benkei's loyalty to Yoshitsune that he pretends not to recognize them and allows them to leave the checkpoint, knowing that his Lord will kill him for his actions.

In the play, Benkei is described as 'One with a sun-burnt face, with prominent cheeks and shining eyes will be treated as Benkei, the strongest warrior in Japan'. One of the figures shown on both the Fuchi and Kashira meet this description exactly, with a dark red, copper-made face and gold shining eyes. By these features he stands out from the other characters, giving him a decent spotlight.

When climbing the cliffs, Benkei tells the others: 'It's silly of you to shed tears. If the divine is not to be trusted, we're not to be called sinful, nor Lord Yoritomo, the high. How care-free it is to look at the water falling in a mountain spring'. This scenery and dialogue is resembled on the Kashira, with the waterfall being present on the Fuchi as well.

This motif would be inspiring to his owner as Yoshitsune was a great swordsman and leader, with Benkei being a strong warrior and excellent servant. Both provide role models for certain attributes that were highly prized by the Samurai. It would be of course also possible that a lover of kabuki plays would choose such motifs of famous plays, but this might be a special and rare case.

These Fuchigashira are clearly proving the skill and talent of Takase Eiju. The figures are of rigorous detail, especially the fabric patterns and equipment. Even at this tiny size, the figures have facial expression rather than those often found generic faces. Furthermore, details like the clouds on the Fuchi, both in execution and placement as a design element, further enhance the impression that they are wandering through high mountain trails, complementing the excellent figurative work.











Daisho Fuchi - Bathing crows

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eiju + kaō, 高瀬栄寿

Material: Shibuichi with gold inlays

Motif: Bathing crows



These daisho Fuchi are made from shibuichi and only carry minor inlays in gold, highlighting the crows' eyes and claws. Thus, the overall appearance is subdued and requires a closer look to see all of the detail present on this piece.

The Fuchi ground is polished and hammered to give a diverse-light scattering and a warm dark-brown background. In the foreground, two huge, old trees are depicted, leafless as in deep winter. Below, a stream is flowing and in it one of two depicted crows is bathing. The other one is watching closely from the neighboring tree and the entire scene is very similar on both the Dai and Sho.

Looking closely at the crows, the body is modeled smoothly, with pronounced feathers on the wings and at the tail. The beak is interestingly modeled with thick, meaty crinkles around and above it. Traditionally, crows are known as spiritual birds that transport spirits, and one famous folklore describes crows as birds of death. It was believed that if a crow cawed loudly, a person died nearby. Although this depiction may seem to associate the crow with something negative, it is far from the truth. Japanese culture places great value on these birds and believes that they symbolize gratitude, guidance, divinity and good fortune. In Japan, two types of crows occur, the large-billed crow (commonly known as 'jungle crow') and the carrion crow, the latter of which populating rural areas. Looking at the branches and roots, the large dots surrounded by smaller ones are lichen and are similarly found on works of the Yokoya school and the many schools related to it.

Beside these species, Japanese folklore knows *karasu-tengu*, a hybrid of crows and a human-like creature and *yatagarasu*, a three-legged crow taken from Chinese culture. Especially the *karasu-tengu* is a very complex creature with loads of background in Japanese culture of Edo times and Shintoism, thereby well worth additional research. Finally, there is a Japanese saying that if a bathing crow faces you, you will die. Luckily, in this case both of the bathing crows seem to face their mate, or is it maybe their rival?











Bird Fuchigashira - Hawk and herons

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eiju + kaō, 高瀬栄寿

Material: Shakudo with gold and silver inlays

Motif: Hawk and herons



The Fuchigashira appear in a more conservative style using a shakudo nanako base for three herons in silver and gold on the Fuchi and a hawk flying over reeds on the Kashira, worked completely in gold. Additionally, all eyes are inlaid in tiny shakudo dots that are nicely rounded and well-shaped. The nanako is rather fine and regularly shaped, worked in vertical lines on the Kashira and horizontally on the Fuchi.

At first sight, the craftsmanship on the Kashira may seem superior, especially comparing the level of detail on the hawk and herons, however, in terms of the overall artistic articulation and naturalistic depiction, the herons are done at least equally well. While the feathers, beak and claws of the hawk are very detailed and worked out better than those features on the herons, the posture is very classical and may be called a little stiff compared to more naturalistic work from him. The first and third (left and right) herons are also depicted in a very classical manner, showing a profile of the flying bird. The second one however, on the curved side of the Fuchi, is depicted slightly from behind in a more three dimensional view. This is also evident looking at the nicely designed folded neck and how excellent both the beak and eye section are executed.

Hawks were a popular theme among the samurai class and so were falcons. In Japan, both are described with the term 'taka', however, falcons can be identified by their notched beaks while hawks have smoothly curved ones. Taka are strong, with a piercing gaze and are often depicted with potential prey, either birds, monkeys or snakes. The piercing gaze and body language of the hawk on the kashira reveals the theme of this fuchigashira: the focus and ferocity that a warrior should have when he engages in battle. Samurai would sometimes describe that martial attitude with the expression *taka no me* (鷹の目), which can be translated as "the eyes of a hawk" but it really means the gleam in a hawk's eyes after it has started to engage with the enemy.











Kogai - Monkey and octopus

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eiju + kaō, 高瀬栄寿

Material: Shibuichi with gold, silver and copper inlays

Motif: Monkeys fighting an octopus



This Kogai features a rare theme of an octopus fighting two monkeys. It is made of shibuichi with inlays of copper, silver and gold on nanako ground and is overall in a balanced shape.

The scenery is often found on Netuske, frequently with the octopus sitting on or fighting from below a clam shell. Normally, it features mid-fight scenes of the monkeys biting the arms of the octopus, which, in revenge, often strangles one of the monkeys. However, the impression here is that the bigger monkey is trying to drag the octopus away, or it fleeing the octopus?

In Japanese mythology, the octopus is considered an animal of great healing powers, just as monkeys are for horses in particular, which is why they were kept with horses in barns for centuries. Taking a step back, one story behind the meeting of an octopus and monkeys is based on a story about Ryujin, the Dragon emperor of the seas. Ryujin had a daughter that got very ill and the octopus attended as her physician. He prescribes the liver of a monkey, so the Dragon king sends his attendant the jellyfish (which at the time had bones and a shell, similar to a turtle). The jellyfish agrees, but after capturing the monkey and on the way back to the king, the monkey persuades the jellyfish that he doesn't have his liver with him at the moment, but if they could return to shore, they could retrieve it safely. Once back on dry land, the monkey escapes, and when the jellyfish returns to the palace, Ryujin is so angry that he knocks all the bones out of the jellyfish's body, giving it the shape we know today.

However, the story more likely depicted here is an old, supposedly true story about a group of monkeys on one of the smaller Japanese islands who have a unique way of gathering food that requires sacrifice and teamwork. A single monkey from the large monkey troop will approach the shoreline and begins flailing its hands and head in the water. After a while, the action will attract one of the large octopus living in that area, and the octopus will grab the monkey trying to pull it into the ocean in order to eat it. Once the two animals are engaged, the other monkeys will rush forward grabbing their friend's legs and start a tug-a-war with the octopus. While the octopus can overpower and eat a single monkey, it is no match for an entire troop of monkeys. As a group, they are able to pull their companion back on shore, and the octopus (who will refuse to let go of its catch) will be dragged ashore too. Then all of the monkeys will jump on the octopus and tear it apart leaving a large piece for the brave 'bait' monkey. Not only is this a humorous story, but it also illustrates the benefits of self-sacrifice and teamwork in overcoming the enemy. In addition, this theme has a kotoba asobi (wordplay) aspect. The words for octopus and monkey sound like the words for capturing lots of happiness.

The quality of the work is fine with good nanako and especially visible on the monkey faces and octopus's arms. While only six arms are depicted, this is not rare on Japanese artwork and varying numbers of six or eight arms are frequently found.







Fuchigashira - Rooster and chick

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eizui + kaō, 高瀬栄随

Material: Shakudo with gold, silver and copper inlays

Motif: Rooster and chick



This Fuchigashira is also done in a rather traditional style and on a classic motif by Takase Eizui, the son of Eiju. The inlays are worked in various metals, spanning shakudo, silver, copper and gold. The Nanako is fine and ordered in horizontal lines on the Fuchi, while vertically on the Kashira. The forging of the ground plate and the way in which the copper and shakudo plates are fused is very clean.

As with the previous Fuchigashira of hawk and herons, the craftsmanship of the figures looks a bit more refined on the Kashira. The rooster on the Kashira has very elegantly and well-made tail feathers, forming a bushy structure, yet every feather is recognizable and all details are visible. The curvature, proportions and overall length of these feathers are in good balance and give a satisfying impression. The rooster on the Fuchi is also worked finely, but the overall proportions are a tad out of balance, especially looking at the abnormal positioning of the right foot under its wing. The chick as well is a bit disproportioned. While the body and head display good shape and surface treatment to imitate the woolly down, the wing and claws are shaped poorly. Additionally, the gilding work, especially on the fine legs, is not perfect and somewhat imprecise, albeit, one has to acknowledge that similar imprecise gilding marks can be even seen on some of the birds made by the best Ishiguro masters.

The generic plants added to this motif are worked with a few of the flowering buds being a bit rough at a closer look. However, the sweeping grass on the back of the Fuchi is nicely made and well designed, as it highlights the blank space around it.

The rooster is the tenth symbol of the Japanese zodiac signs and is associated with gain (*torikomu*), being a lucky animal for businesses as the rooster is called *tori*. However, in this setting as the patriarchal head of the family including a chick, it can be also seen as a prospering family with succesful offspring.

The work is in parts very good, as for the rooster on the Kashira, but overall a bit weaker than that of his father Eiju in being less refined and bearing unnatural physiology.











Fuchigashira - Temple on the coast

Private collection

Mei: Takase Eizui + kaō, 高瀬栄随

Material: Shibuichi with gold and copper inlays

Motif: Temple on the coast



These Fuchigashira are made from shibuichi and gold inlays, depicting a temple scene at the sea, made by Takase Eizui. The depicted scenery reminds of previously mentioned Mount Hōrai with the Chinese style Tori gate, the path up to the mountain and the steps in front of the gate modeled in a subtle way as depressions on the shibuichi ground.

The landscape comprises a coastal hillside bearing a temple between remarkably formed rocks and a pagoda amidst a forest near a cliff. Here, three great pines, as well as a human riding on a horse or mule fills the scenery. The work uses a nicely modeled ground plate to create the stone structures and fills it with well shaped buildings and trees. However, the quality of both architectural and botanical pieces is significantly less dignified compared to the previous depictions on Tsuba by Takase Eiju with the same motif. This is also true for the human and mule which are a tad unrefined.

Additionally, with some parts being gold inlay, like the dot inlays, the majority of the gold on this Fuchigashira is gilded as evident from gold loss or unprecise gilding marks. This is also in contrast to the previously mentioned pieces that featured solid inlays of gold alloys.

Overall this is a good quality Fuchigashira by Eizui which only falls behind in direct comparison to the fatherly works and should be considered around average for later Edo standards.









高瀬栄随



Mei comparison

Within the following section, a good comparison of the different Mei, especially with their kaō, should be possible. It comprises 10 Takase Eiju and 2 Eizui kaō and the respective number of full Mei. Three pieces comprise an additional gō and one further Tsuba is dated.

This is the largest compilation of high-resolution signatures by this school that all have been authenticated by the NBTHK. I would like to point out that special attention should be paid to the Daisho pieces, as they were most likely created in close proximity. Thus, the signatures should be very similar and give a great idea of mei variability, not over working periods, but rather in terms of daily variations.

We see here substantial differences, especially looking at the kaō of both the Daisho Tsuba and the Daisho Fuchi. Chisel angle, depth and also the ease of flow, looking at the smoothness of the groove, differ quite substantially. This may be taken as an indication that not every slight variation of single strokes is directly a sign for a piece to be gimei.

Takase Eiju seal



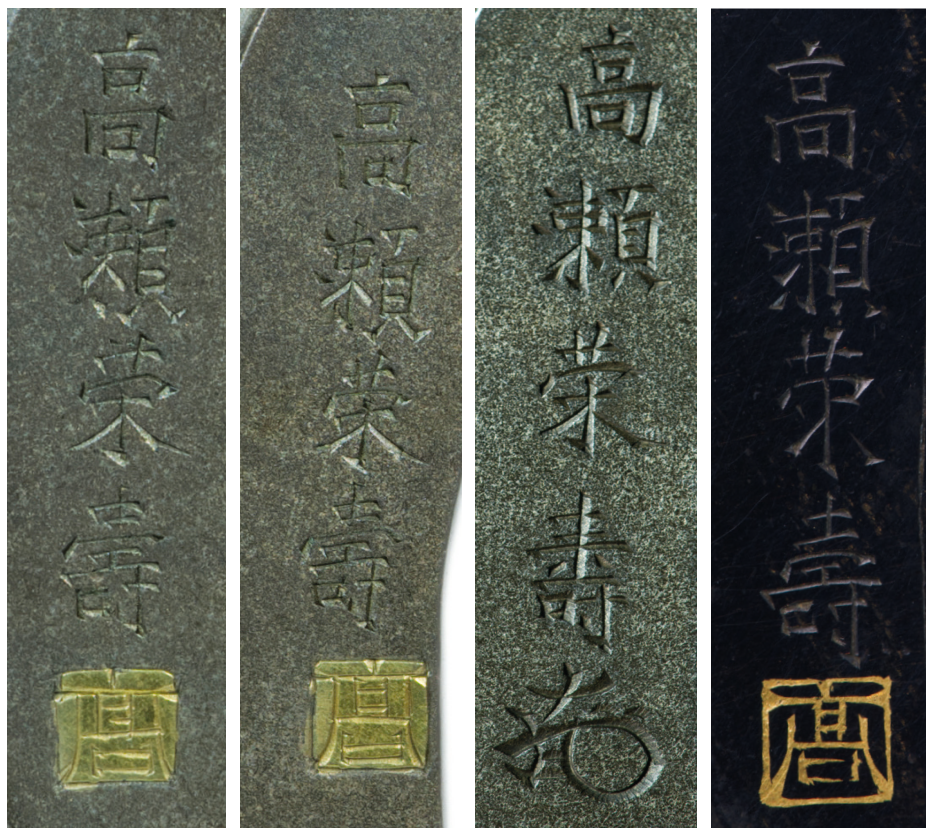
Takase Eiju kaō



Takase Eizui kaō



高瀬栄寿
Takase Eiju



高瀬栄随

Takase Eizui



Takase Eiju



Takase Eiju gō Fūryūken 風柳軒



A work at 61 years of age

行年六十一



