

A Daisho mounted in a classic Autumnal themed Koshirae.

Introduction:

In the tradition of London Buses having just complete a write up on a Daisho with an Autumn themed koshirae a second one has appeared. This is very different when compared to the first. Once again, I am extremely grateful to George Miller for his detailed description of the koshirae within this article.



Description:

A well mounted daisho in a Mino-Goto autumnal themed koshirae and with blades dating from the late Muromachi and early Edo period.

Dai:



The blade is O- suriage shinogi-zukuri and iori mune. It has a moderate tori-zori and has a chu-kissaki. It has full length bo-hi. There is scarce hira-niku. The nakago has three mekugi ana, it is mumei.

Nagasa: 66.3cm sori: 1.9 cm motohaba: 3.0cm

Sakihaba: 2.3cm kasane 0.70cm.

Although O-suriage the blade maintains an elegant shape which is enhanced by the very well cut bo-hi which runs in to the nakago. If one assumes the lower mekugi ana was the original the blade will have been shortened by approximately 10cm.

Hada:

The hada is a subdued small itame with some nagare. It is well forged and on the ura there is sporadic ji-nie which increases in frequency in the monouchi. On the omote the activity is further enhanced with several tobiyaki. In the monouchi one of these is stretched into an elongated ovoid form and the very bright ko-nie of the periphery is clearly visible.



Tight itame hada



sporadic tobiyai

Hamon:

The hamon comprises of a tight nioiguchi in classic sue-Seki form. It combines an irregular small gunome and choji with infrequent togari elements. It is reminiscent of early Seki work by Kanesada and Kanemoto before the later Kanemoto generations started to produce the more contrived and uniform sanbonsugi for which they became famous. This is altogether more spontaneous and natural in form. Other than very small area of ko-nie forming short sunagashi there is surprisingly little activity within the hamon. There is faint shirrake utsuri.



The hamon is a combination of small gunome and togari

Kissaki:

The blade has a chu-kissaki. Unfortunately at some point in the swords history this appears to have been roughly sharpened/polished which has obscured detail. However, the overall shape looks healthy and the boshi appears to be intact. The boshi appears to be midare with a sharp turn back.

**Nakago:**

The nakago is O-suriage with three mekugi ana. The yasurimeji are not visible. The suriage nakgojiri is kiri.



Comment:

The sugata and hamon suggest this is a sue seki blade from the mid 16th century. Attempting a more precise attribution is challenging. The sue seki school were prolific and the quality of their work varied greatly. The two most famous names associated with the school were Kanesada and Kanemoto. In both cases the second generation were regarded as the greatest masters of the line. The hamon on this blade has some similarity with the early works of Kanemoto, made before later generations started to work with the rather more contrived and formulaic sanbonsugi. The subdued jihada and the tighter nioiguchi are more suggestive of the works of Kanesada from circa 1550. With this in mind I am more inclined to put this in the Kanesada line rather than the Kanemoto group. Whoever the smith was this is a very well made blade and is in very good condition.

Sho:

The blade is ubu shinogi-zukuri and iori mune. It has a moderate tori-zori and has a chu-kissaki. The nakago has one mekugi ana, it has a nagamei.

Hada:

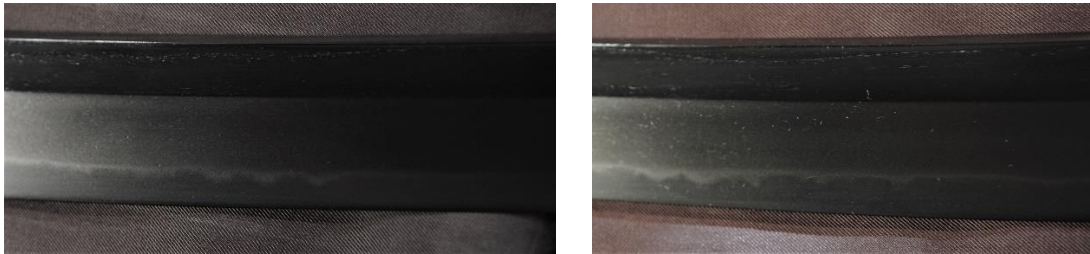
The blade has a uniform ko-itame hada. There is ko-nie and chickei which increases in frequency as it progresses in to the monouchi. Overall, the jigane is well forged and shows a strong Yamashiro influence.



Tight ko-itame hada with ji-nie and chickei

Hamon:

The hamon is a very gentle midare with a bright nioiguchi with sporadic ko-nie. There are small ashi. There are more and larger nie in the monouchi. On the omote this activity burst through the nioiguchi in to the jihada.



Gentle midare hamon with ko-ashi

Kissaki:

The blade has a chu-kissaki. The current polish obscures much of the detail. However, the overall shape looks healthy and the boshi is intact. The boshi appears to be sugu with a sharp turn back. It contains a great deal of nie and there is hakikake.



Nakago:

The Nakago is ubu with one mekugi ana. The yasurimei are katte sagari There is a naga mei.

The nakago jiri is iriyama-gata-jiri.

Mei: Higo (no) kami Mitsuyo 肥後守光代. (Also pronounced Mitsuhiro)



Comment:

The works of Mitsuyo are relatively rare. He is believed to have originated in Yamashiro before moving to Mino and then Owari. He subsequently worked for the famous swordsman Yagyu-renyasai Toshikane. Toshikane was a member of the founding family of the Owari Yagyu Shinkage-ryū school of fencing and instructors to the Owari Tokugawa clan. Mitsuyo then studied under Tsushima-no-kami Tsunemitsu. He was awarded the title “Higo (no) kami” by the emperor in 1661. Although not prolific nor particularly well known today he must have been very highly regarded in his day to receive the patronage of such a high-profile individual.

This sword with the very tight ko-itame hada and suguha hamon clearly shows the Yamashiro heritage of Mitsuyo. The nie although fairly sparce is bright and clear and the nioiguchi compact and consistent.

This is a very well made sword in excellent condition.

Koshirae:



A classic Mino-Style Daishō Koshirae in a Autumn Theme with:

- (i) Two Mumei (unsigned) Shakudo Yotsu-Mokkō-Gata (four-lobed shaped) Tsuba from the Owari-Kinko/Kyo-Kinko School each with two Hitsu-Ana depicting Suemon-Zogan (separately carved and inlaid) gold and shakudo Botan Flowers (Peony - a symbol of regal power) on Karakusa (Arabesque) Vines against a very fine Nanako Ground that extends over the Maru-Mimi (rounded edge);



Dai



Sho

- (ii) Two Mumei (unsigned) Shakudo Fuchigashira each with two gold Shitodome (wrapping washers) each and deeply carved in classic Mino-Bori style depicting gold Suzumushi (Bell Crickets) and gold, shakudo and silver Autumn Flowers/Grasses and dew drops including Kiku (Chrysanthemum), Ominashi (Golden Lace), and Kikyo (Bell/Ballon Flower);



Dai



Sho

- (iii) two Menuki sets decorated in gold, silver and shakudo carved in classic Mino-Bori style depicting Autumn Flowers/Grasses including Kiku (Chrysanthemum) and Kuzu (Kudzu);



Dai



Sho

- (iv) a single Mumei (unsigned) Shakudo Kozuka (with the Sho - Wakazashi) of Koberi (framed) construction depicting Suemon-Zogan (separately carved and inlaid) gold, silver and shakudo flowers/leaves floating in a stream against a Ji-Ita (ground) of very fine Nanako with a Kogatana signed Seki Kanesada.



- (v) two Tsuka with white Same wrapped in black Ito; and
(vi) two Saya with dark brown Sageo (tying cord) and decorated in gold, red and black (Tsugaru Nuri) Gyobu Nashiji lacquer.

Conclusion:

As mentioned above I had previously written an article describing a daisho with an Autumn theme. In that case the blades were made in the same school some twenty years apart. The Koshirae had been carefully assembled to subtly convey the theme of Autumn.

This Daisho is very different. The blades were made approximately 100 years apart and in different, unrelated traditions. The Mino Goto fittings also clearly convey the theme of Autumn using flora and insects seen at that time of year. They are altogether more complex and intricately made showing considerable skill. Interestingly although the swords come from different traditions, Mino and Owari, according to George's description the tosugu originate in both the Mino Goto and Owari-kinko groups. The kogatana is also signed Seki Kanesada placing it firmly in that tradition.

Which set one prefers is a matter of subjective taste. Both are of good quality. Whether the blades in this set were favourite family pieces or brought together in the process of assembling this daisho we will never know. Both are good quality blades in very good overall condition, and both clearly display the features associated with the schools and smiths described.

While very different to the previous daisho described this is also of above average quality and a very attractive example of the form.

Reference material:

The Connoisseur's book of Japanese Swords Kokan Nagayama

Nihonto Koza (various volumes) Drs. Homma and Sato (Harry Afu Watson translation)

NBTHK Juyo zufu (various) NBTHK Token Bijutsu (various)

The Koto and Shinto kantei volumes by Markus Sesko

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2023

