

Tsuchiya Yasuchika School (土屋安親)

(A) We have now arrived at the Nara School master Tsuchiya Yasuchika.

(B) Yasuchika achieved fame in his lifetime and that fame has not diminished since. He is one of the *Nara Sansaku* and left the largest number of masterpieces from this group. Miyazaki Tomijirō's (宮崎富次郎, 1912-?) studies published in 1964 under the brief title *Yasuchika* (安親) added to his fame.

(Fukushi) As with Yokoya Sōmin, Tsuchiya Yasuchika is known by everybody in the sword world. When I first became interested in *tōsōgu*, I thought of him as the God of all sword fittings makers and read all the studies available at the time. They were universal in praise, which I learned was well deserved when I saw some of his masterworks for the first time. This, by the way, brings back memories. It was around 1962~63 when I visited the sword dealer Mr. S. who had a *daishō* with fabulous *koshirae* for sale. The *katana* was in *suguha* and by the *Kanbun-shintō* master Ogasawara Nagamune (小笠原長旨), and the *wakizashi* in a *koshi no hiraita gunome-midare* was by the Ōei-Bizen master Morimitsu (盛光). The *tsuba* of the *dai* was in *marugata*, of *shibuichi*, and showed *kebori* and *katakiribori* of the Lucky Gods Jurōjin, Daikokuten, and Hotei drinking, singing, and dancing; the interpretation of this lively piece was full of humor. The signature read: "Tsuchiya Yagohachi Yasuchika + *kaō*" (see item No. 5). The *tsuba* of the *shō* was of *shibuichi* as well and showed a tiger in bamboo in *katakiribori*. It was signed "Sōyo + *kaō*." K. *sensei* was with me at that time and he commented on how interesting and tasteful these *tsuba* were, and also that they were probably priced accordingly. I really loved this *daishō* and without consulting my wife, I went to my realtor and asked him to sell our house

As I have told you on different occasions, I sold my house several times to finance my collecting. Usually, my wife and children moved in with her parents, but that surely put a strain on our marriage; she wrote to me several times to say she was going to get a divorce and return to her parents for good. So, this time I went for a different strategy. I first sold a section of our plot and had a carpenter friend of mine build a new and smaller house on the remaining land. After five months we were able to move over and sell the old house as well. When I went back to the dealer with the money, he told me he had just the other day sold the *daishō* to H. *sensei* and that if I had simply asked, he would have accepted a down payment and the rest in installments. It goes without saying that I was very disappointed. Through some third and fourth parties, I learned that the *tsuba* ended up with Miyazaki *sensei*, who then published it in his book *Yasuchika*.

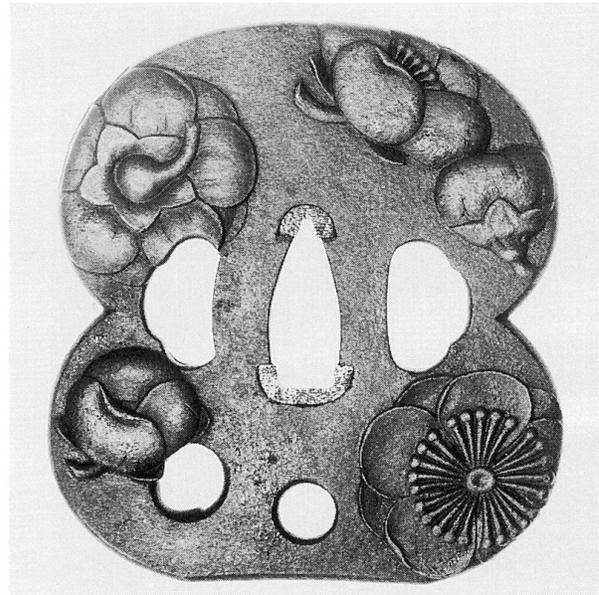
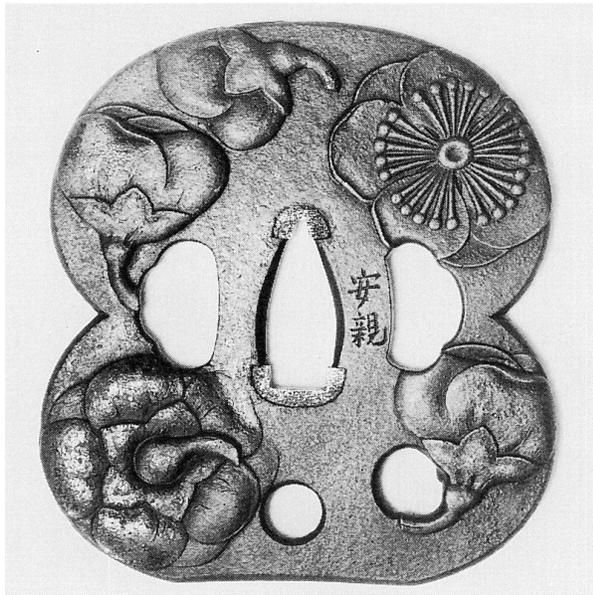
5. *sanpuku-san'yū no zu tsuba* (三福三友の図鐔) – Three Lucky Gods at play

mei: Tsuchiya Yagoyachi Yasuchika + *kaō* (土屋弥五八安親「花押」)

marugata, shibuichi, polished finish, kebori, katakiribori, kaku-mimi ko-niku, two hitsu-ana (both plugged)

This is the *tsuba* of the aforementioned *daishō* that I once tried to acquire. The interpretation is interesting and humorous and one also finds a combination of Lucky Gods, e.g., wrestling each other, with the Gotō School, although to my knowledge not on *tsuba*.

The motif is carved in *kebori* and *katakiribori*; it is possible that this is an early experiment by Yasuchika with these techniques. The plate is of polished *shibuichi*. Other than Jurōjin, Daikokuten, and Hotei drinking, singing, and dancing, we see carving of pines and bamboo, which results in a quite auspicious motif.



6. *sanbai no zu tsuba*

6. *sanbai no zu tsuba* (散梅の図鐔) – Arrangement of plum blossoms

mei: Yasuchika (安親)

daigaku-gata, iron, polished finish, sukidashi-takabori, kaku-mimi ko-niku, two hitsu-ana

This *tsuba* is of a *daigaku-gata*, a shape Yasuchika developed during his employment with Matsudaira Daigaku no Kami Yorisada. The unusual shape of *daigaku-gata tsuba* and *fuchigashira*, something not seen before Yasuchika, may help us understand why Yorisada hired Yasuchika: lovely to employ an artist who can create something entirely new. We can imagine Yasuchika racking his brain and experimenting with all sorts of shapes until he arrived at a tasteful novelty that went down in history as *daigaku-gata*. Inciden-

tally, two lobed *mokkō* shapes are seen also from Nobuie, Kaneie, and the Umetada School, but theirs are interpreted a quarter turn off, with the notches at top and bottom. With the flat bottom, Yasuchika's two-lobed shape reminds us somewhat of stacked *mochi*. Here we see a bold and lively carved arrangement of plum blossoms, which is as a whole both gorgeous and highly elegant.



7. *hatō no zu tsuba*

7. *hatō no zu tsuba* (波濤の図鐔) – Waves

kinzōgan-mei: Yasuchika – *Kaō* (安親・花押)

daigaku-gata, iron, uneven surface finish, *sukidashibori*, *kebori*, *kaku-mimi ko-niku*, two irregular *hitsu-ana*

This *tsuba* is mounted to an outstanding *katana* by Matsuba Motoyuki (松葉本行), worn by none less than Matsudaira Yorisada himself. The *fuchigashira* of the *koshirae* are by Yasuchika also. The entire sword, blade as well as *koshirae*, is ranked *tokubetsu-jūyō*. This *tsuba* is in *daigaku-gata* and shows vivid waves that bear resemblance to Rinpa School waves. Both *fuchi* and *kashira* depict, in a stylized manner, the tang of Motoyuki's *katana*, featuring *yasurime*, *mekugi-ana*, and the signature of the smith. All the fittings made by Yasuchika for this set have signatures and *kaō* inlaid in gold.