

## **Shodai and Nidai Norisuke**

### ***Official fittings makers of the Owari Tokugawa***

#### **Niwa Norisuke (shodai)**

Born 1782 and died April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1852. He is buried in the Sodoshu (Zen sect) temple of Nagoya. He used the personal names of Jihei, Jihachiro, and Jirouemon. His haiku pen name was Kotetsuan Otonobu.

Both shodai and nidai Norisuke are known for making copies of older pieces, often at the request of the Shogunate. Their Yagyū copies are particularly fine and sometimes eclipse the originals in terms of workmanship. They were masters of many styles and there are very few schools or artisans they could not or did not copy: even including Umetada Myōju, Yasuchika, and the famed Kaneie. They also created many original designs and works, keeping excellent records of many of their works. Fortunately, several of these workbooks were passed to the NBTHK in 1970. Quite literally, they could *-do it all-* and were paid by the Owari Tokugawa and other patron families to do so.

Of kantei note:

- [1] The many top grade copies made by shodai and nidai Norisuke were deliberately made smaller than the originals.
- [2] The Norisuke tsuba are almost never thicker than 5mm, usually closer to 4mm.
- [3] Many will show forged layering in the mimi that is usually associated with early Yagyū tsuba, only the *filo-dough* layers are tighter. These layers will be visible to some degree on close inspection of the tsuba.
- [4] The iron is a well forged. The color is distinct dark grey "iron sands" that seems common to many better Owari works, including Yagyū and Ono works.

#### **Iwata Norisuke (nidai)**

Born 1817 and died 1883. Buried at the Nichiren-shū temple in Higashi-Tachibana cho of Nagoya. He also used the artist names Toda Masachika and Norishige\* (see tsuba reverse) with date of 1849. He also used pseudonyms of Kotetsuan, Enjusai, Zeko Dojin, Horaishi, Kaioshi, Seijosai, and Shojosai.

Adopted by the shodai, the nidai would long support shodai's work in making sword furniture for the Owari Tokugawa. In many ways his skills and personal designs would eventually surpass the shodai. He also is known to have made a rare kozuka or two and helped with horimono placed on a valuable sword.

Daisaku works do exist. Nidai's style closely resembled that of the shodai. Mokko gata designs were a popular choice. Works signed 'Futagoyama Norisuke' are his. The evolution of the shodai and nidai's signatures are well documented.

Through association with the Owari Tokugawa and famous patrons, Norisuke works have a certain prestige in the kodogu pantheon. In a bit of irony, there do exist gimei imitating the works of the most famous copiest of the 1800s. Usually these can be quickly identified by the iron or faults in the signature.

**Pictures:** The first is a very rare tsuba signed on front by the shodai and on the back by the nidai with his early Norishige signature. In England for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the work's authenticity was doubted due to quirks in the shodai's signature. The NBTHK determined the shodai's signature was

assisted by the nidai and the design is consistent with one of the last known works by the shodai-possibly to complete a commission in 1851-1852.

The second tsuba is a very clean and simple example by the nidai, most likely around 1870 due to the change in certain elements of the signature. The sukashi of a simple rice kama through well forged iron is a clean rendering that reminds me of the The Twilight Samurai and the protagonist samurai's desire to become a farmer.

Like many of Futagoyama Norisuke's later tsuba, it has significant presence. Accordingly, the Nagoya NBTHK named their Norisuke reference "Futagoyama Norisuke Ko", though this signature is associated with the late works of nidai Norisuke. There were numerous capable students from this school on into the Meiji and Showa era.

#### References:

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Okamoto, Yasukazu. Owari to Mikawa no tanko. 1982. Pages 3-73

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