

## Swords that we like: 2) Tsuneiye

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### Introduction

A recent article by Fred Weissberg (**Weissberg (2019)**) describes in great detail a sword by the famous Bishu *Osafune Tsuneiye*. The article by Weissberg describes a magnificent (*Tokubetsu Hozon*) *Tachi*, with a *nagasa* of 67.5 cm. We would like to describe a *Wakizashi*, also *Tokubetsu Hozon*, by the same smith. So in a sense complementing the article by Weissberg. We will also describe the *koshirae* of the sword.

We introduce *Tsuneiye*, drawing heavily from the article by Fred Weissberg. We discuss the generation conundrum. The fact is that there are several generations of this smith and we will explain how we determined which generation smith forged the subject sword. We rely on the sources given in the **References** section of this paper.

### A brief introduction to the generations of Tsuneiye

We believe this *Wakizashi* is from the third generation *Tsuneiye* of the *Kozori* group. His father was *Oei Tsuneiye* whose first name was *Yajirō* (弥次郎) and was the son of *Kozori Morikage* (小反守景). He worked from 1392 to 1429. The third generation worked from 1429-1452. (**Sesko eIndex**). It is difficult to identify precisely which *Tsuneiye* forged this sword. In the swordsmith directory by **Shimizu (1998)** there are five smiths listed, only one worked mainly in *Eikyo* and it was the third generation. This was confirmed by a dated *oshigata*. (His father worked until *Eikyo* 1). The subject sword was dated in *Eikyo* 6, so most likely the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation forged it.

It is interesting to note that in the older literature (**Hawley (1978)**) the *Oei Bizen mono* is divided in two branches: *Oei Yasumitu* and *Oei Kozori Morikage*. Also, there are smiths named *Iyesuke* and *Tsuneiye* in both *Oei Bizen* branches.

### Technical description

**Measurements:** *nagasa* 38.2cm, *sori* 0.6cm, *motohaba* 2.56cm, *Kasane* 0.65cm

**Shape:** *shinogi-zukuri*, *ihori-mune*, *sunnobi tanto style*

**Kitae:** *ko-itame mixed with mokume with bo-utsuri visible*.

**Hamon:** *ko-nie deki in choji midare pattern, some ashi is visible*.

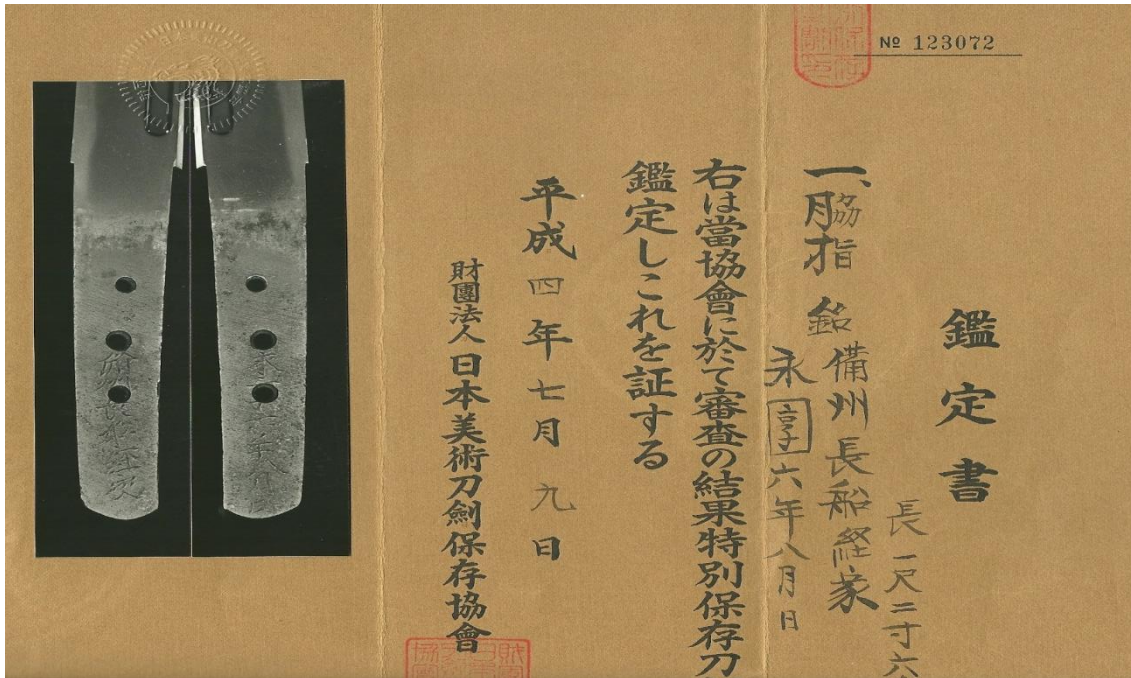
**Boshi:** *ko-maru with kaeri – bizen rosoku boshi (candle flame style)*

**Horimono:** *bo-hi* both sides

**Nakago:** *ubu with three mekugi-ana (two filled), kasane 0.72cm*

**Yasurime:** *katasagari*





Tokubetsu Hozon Certificate issued by NBTHK 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1992.

**Bishu Osafune Tsuneyie – Eikyo 6 nen 8 gatsu (August 1434)**

Note that when this photograph was taken the *mekugi ana* were not plugged.  
(see below)

**Sayagaki:** Bishu Osafune Tsuneie, Kanzan Sato Spring 1967



**The current *nagako* -**

In this photograph two *mekugi* are plugged. This probably means that the *koshirae* in the photo below was made after 1992.

## Artistic Impression

This long *hira-zukuri* wakizashi from Tsuneiyé is a beautifully forged work of art, better than the average Kozori work. The third generation Tsuneiyé was known for his excellent forging and this blade is no exception. It has beautiful wet looking refined *ko-itame* and *mokume* mix and *jihada* with an active *hamon* of well-defined *ko-gunome* and *ko-choji* structures full of *hataraki*. The *hamon* is not a typical Oei Bizen style. It is a little more subdued and controlled version, probably closer to what you would find in earlier works of the Kozori smiths. *Bo-utsuri* is visible and in the *ha*, there are many scattered small *ashi*. Although you might mistake this for an earlier work, the fact that it is dated in Eikyo 6 makes that impossible. Also it does possess a typical Oei Bizen candle flame *boshi* (*rosoku*) and is *zaiméi*.

## Koshirae (The sword mounts)



The *koshirae* is an *aikuchi koshirae* with a black *urushi saya*. There is an engraved cicada are of gold plated *shakudo*. There is a *kozuka* with a *nanako* plate of *shakudo* and a bamboo leave in gold is engraved on it. As mentioned before this *koshirae* may have been recently made. The blade was mounted at least three times and now it uses the original *mekugi*. This conclusion is of course tentative and is based on a previous article's reasoning. (Brent (2019))

## **Notes and References**

**Weissberg (2019)** -Frederick Weissberg, *Bizen Tachi by Tsuneiyu*, TO-RON, October 2019, pages 9 to 16.

**Homma and Masakuni (1994)**-Honma Kunzan and Ishii Masakuni, *Nihonto Meikan*, Yuzankaku, Tokyo 2.

**Shimizu (1998)** -Shimizu Osamu, *Tosho Zenshu*, Bijutsu-club, Tokyo.

**Hawley (1978)**- W. M. Hawley, *Japanese Sword Groups*, Hawley Publisher, Hollywood

**Homma and Koizume (1994)**- Homma Junji and Koizume Hisao, *Nihon To Koza*, Volume IX, Koto Kantei, Part 3, page 348. Afu Research Enterprises, Inc, Texas USA

**Homma Junji (1994)**, *Nihon To Koza Koto volume IX Part III (Oei Bizen section)*, Afu Research Enterprises, Inc, Texas USA

**Kokan Nagayama (1998)**, *Kokan Nagayoshi, The Connoisseurs Book of Japanese Swords*, Kodansha USA, page 184 7.

**Homma Junji**, *Nihon-koto-shi*, 5.14

**Kantei Results**-NBTHK Token Bijitsu Kantei results, 97.642 and others

**Markus Sesko**, Markus Sesko, eIndex of Swordsmiths

**Brent (2019)**- W. B. Tanner and F.A.B. Coutinho, *Real life kantei of Swords #16: About the position of the mekugi ana in the nakago* , To-Ron , April 2019 , page 3-11