

Toyokawa Mitsunaga

Toyokawa Mitsunaga II (豊川光長) (1850-1923), born Saito Yukichi (齋藤勇吉), was the apprentice, and later the adopted child and son-in-law of Toyokawa Mitsunaga I (1831-80). Toyokawa Mitsunaga I was trained in the Kikuoka school, which specialised in metalwork inspired by poetry, combining the styles of Yokoya Sōmin (1670-1733) and Yanagawa Naomasa (1692-1757)¹². The Kikuoka school is also known for its systematic arrangement of motifs and execution of perfect block script (*kaisho*)³. Saito Yukichi was the son of a retainer to the Matsudaira family, Saito Kisaburo, and was first a *kosho* for his father's lord⁴⁵. Unfortunately, his lord retired and he began his apprenticeship with Toyokawa Mitsunaga I as a metalworker at the age of 16 in 1866. His master handed the administration of the Kikuoka school to Saito Yukichi in 1868 and he subsequently married his master's daughter, Haru, in 1869, and was officially adopted into the Toyokawa family and took on the name Toyokawa Mitsunaga II⁶.

The second generation Toyokawa Mitsunaga surpassed his master and father-in-law, and became a figure of interest particularly due to his skills as a sculptor. He produced pieces for the Imperial Household and was an active judge in the Japan Art Association. His nominal successor and the third generation of the Toyokawa school was Fukase Mitsutsugu (n.d.), and his most successful students include Katsura Mitsuharu (1871-1962), Yoshioka Mitsuhide (d.1923), and Yanagawa Morihira (1899-1971). Toyokawa Mitsunaga II passed away during the Great Kanto Earthquake on the 1st September 1923 at the age of 73⁷.

¹ Sesko, M. 2012, p. 203

² Yokoya Sōmin is the founder of the Yokoya school, emphasising in realistic, lush, dynamic and 'extravagant' style which was a direct contrast to the earlier Gotō school style, marking a new phase in Japan's metal-carving industry. It appealed to not only the economically powerful merchants but also the daimyo and higher rank samurai. Yanagawa Naomasa is a student of the Yokoya school and founder of the Yanagawa school. Yanagawa created the *katakiri-bori* carving method which imitates the Japanese brush. The Kikuoka school emerged from the Yanagawa school as the founder, Kikuoka Mitsuyuki (1750-1800), was a student of Yanagawa Naomasa.

³ *Kaisho* style is one of the three main styles of calligraphy and is known for its precise brushstrokes.

⁴ Sesko, M. 2012, p. 267

⁵ Wakayama Takeshi 1996, p.175

⁶ Sesko, M. 2012, p. 267

⁷ Sesko, M. 2012, p. 267



Figure 1. A silvered bronze figure of mother and child, Marked: Toyokawa Mitsunaga II, Meiji Period (1868-1912), Height 36.2cm, Bonhams 2018.

In the collection

The Liang Yi Collection houses a *sekishū* style *rau-kiseru*, a popular pipe design, by Toyokawa Mitsunaga II. It has a simple structure, paired with precious materials such as gold, silver, and *shibuichi* (a traditional Japanese copper and silver alloy), as well as bamboo. A closer inspection of the *kiseru* shows the exquisite details that have been added to the pipe that depicts a scenery of Mount Fuji and boats on the water. The designs are applied through the *katagiri-bori* technique (one side cut carving with a chisel). The stark contrast between the gold and *shibuichi* is the result of a decorative technique called *waritsugi*, emphasising the colour difference as a means of expression⁸.

⁸ Sesko, M. 2011b, p.26

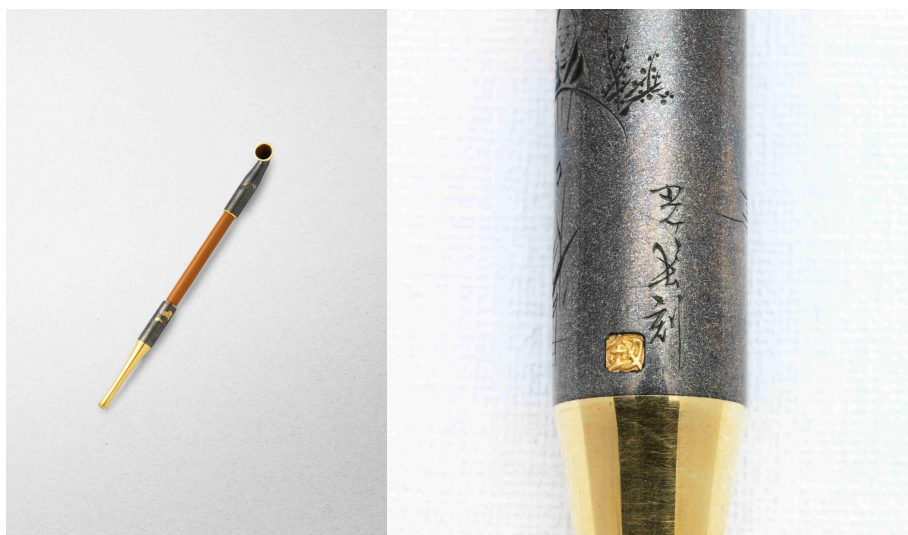


Figure 2. Rau-kiseru, Marked: Toyokawa Mitsunaga II, Japan, Meiji Period, Materials: shibuichi, gold, silver and bamboo, Length 19.6cm, Liang Yi Museum Collection.

On the other hand, this *tabakoire* fitting is made from iron with subtle designs on the surface depicting pine leaves, a common specimen for *bonsai* trees. The piece puts emphasis on the *katagiri-bori* technique and the way in which the chisel cuts the iron. It makes the piece both beautiful and elegant but understated, which correlates to the aesthetic taste of the nobility and aristocrats at the time⁹.



Figure 3. Tabakoire Fitting, Marked: Toyokawa Mitsunaga, Meiji to Taisho Period, Materials: iron, Liang Yi Museum Collection

Last but not least, this *sekishū* style *rau-kiseru* is a collaboration between Toyokawa Mitsunaga II and his best apprentice Katsura Mitsuharu. It is a delicate piece depicting moon and plum blossoms, made with silver, *shakudo*, gold and bamboo using the same *katagiri-bori* technique.

⁹ Nguyen A.M., 2017, p.47

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Figure 4. Rau-kiseru, Marked: Toyokawa Mitsunaga II and Katsura Mitsuharu, Japan, Meiji period, Materials: silver, shakudo, gold and bamboo, Length 30.5cm, Liang Yi Museum Collection.

Toyokawa Mitsunaga II had metalworking skills that were exceptional, paired with the rare ability to create expressive pieces with simple designs. He remains a notable metalworker of the Meiji period, with his works collected in local and international museums including Kiyomizu Sannenzaka Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and the Walters Art Museum.

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