

How to Replace the Blade on Futatsu Wari Tools

Every blade and handle of the Japanese woodcut tools is made entirely by hand. When they were originally made, the handles on *futatsu wari moku hanga to* (two-part handle woodblock carving tools) were made to fit the original blade exactly, so the replacement blade and/or handle may need some slight adjustments before they fit.

First of all, remove the old blade. With *komasuki* (u-gouges), *sankaku to* (v-gouges) and *aisuki* (chisels), this means removing the brass ferrule from the handle. If it does not slip off easily, try prying it gently from the wide end of the ferrule with a thin blade, or wrap a cloth or paper towel around the ferrule and gently pull it off with a pair of pliers. After removing the ferrule, open the handle like you would open a fan. Notice how the blade fits into the handle, with the bent end fitting into a little notch. This bent end keeps the blade from slipping back into the handle when you are carving. Now you can remove the blade. With the *hangji to* (knife), remove the ferrule and lift out the blade.

Note how long the original blade is and compare this to the new blade. Decide how far out you want the new blade to extend from the handle. Once you decide on the new length, you may need to remove some of the metal at the end of the blade opposite the tip (read the next paragraph before taking this step). You can do this by grasping the blade between two pliers and bending it gently back and forth until it breaks off. You may want to file this broken end so it is smooth again.

With *komasuki*, *sankaku to* and *aisuki* replacement blades, the end opposite the tip

needs to be bent so it will fit into the little notch on the inside of the handle. Look at the old blade and see how long this bent part is. Using a pair of needle-nose pliers, slowly and gently bend the end of the replacement blade so it is the same length. It needs to be bent fairly sharply, but be careful, since it can break off. Now try placing the blade in the groove in the handle, with the bent end in the notch, and closing the handle. If the bent end of the replacement blade sticks up too high for the handle to close, you can use wire cutters to trim off some of the excess metal or dig out some of the wood in the notch so the bent part will fit down further into the handle. A small *aisuki* is useful for this task. When the replacement blade fits correctly, you will be able to close the handle easily. Replace the ferrule when you are done.

Replacing the blade in the *hangji to* is simply a matter of shortening the new blade to the correct length, if necessary, then placing it in the original groove and replacing the ferrule.

Sometimes the new replacement blade is slightly thinner or wider than the original blade. If it is thinner, try putting thin strips of tape along the curved or straight sides of the blade until it is built up enough to fit snugly into the groove. If the new blade is wider than the groove in the handle, you can use sand paper to gently widen the groove in the handle, checking the fit frequently, until it is the correct size for the blade.

If you have having problems, please feel free to return the handle and blade to us and we will be happy to make these adjustments for you.



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