

# The Tiger -- A *Taxus cuspidata* BY MASSIMO BANDERA, ITALY



I acquired this *Taxus cuspidata* in 2005 . It was collected in the Japanese mountains and sold to my teacher. It arrived in Italy during the winter. This series of photos shows how we deal with an old tree already carved by nature.

The great "head of hair" vigorously grew in five years of cultivation. The important natural sculpture of this specimen is revealed when we move the foliage away from the branches.



All of the foliage is on the solo cascading branch (*Otoshi-eda*). Today the bonsai is 90cm in height. It is not easy to face a sculpture of this complexity. Some parts of the tree are already very beautiful and it is difficult to compete with nature's work.

Work on the tree includes carving and improving the dead wood, but also the refinement of its living parts.



Work on the lower and middle trunk.

We added the detail of two holes in the upper part of the shari. The living vein of the tree is sheltered below the shari.





# The Tiger continues



The sculpture is completed. Over time the marks made by tools will disappear and the shari will reveal a “patina” of age.

In the photo with the coin, the dimension of the growth rings on the trunk are seen. Grown in the mountains, I estimate that this *Taxus* had a trunk around 50 cms in diameter. The part of the trunk which remains today shows about half a thousand rings. From this data we estimate that the tree is 500 years old!

At the first wiring the bonsai reveals its potential as an old bonsai.

Collector (photo 21) and Author (photo 22) stand next to The Tiger after a day of work.

After five years The Tiger is photographed in a magnificent pot by Hiroshi of Tokoname.  
The shari already appears very natural even though it will be many more years before the hand of man totally disappears.



Photos 23 and 24 by Maurizio Elia.