

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME V NO.6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1973

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

TANTO
(Japanese Daggers)
by Suzuki

ENGLISH TRANSLATION © JSS/US 1973

The translation is ready for sale! Prices are as follows: (P.P.)

MEMBERS \$5.00
NON-MEMBERS \$6.50
WHOLESALE \$4.50/10 copies minimum

The translation is 86 typewritten pages in soft cover (extra-heavy paper) with GBC plastic spiral binding. The book consists of the index, the historical introduction of the tanto, and a full translation of the Japanese text corresponding with the excellently illustrated Japanese book. Two blank pages follow each period of history, for the use of the student. This is a wealth of information and will help to fill craving needs of the stateside collector.

ORDER YOUR COPY (COPIES) TODAY! For those so desiring, a few unbound copies are available. Please clearly specify "UNBOUND COPY" if this is what you want.

Send all translation orders directly to Ron Hartmann Make checks payable to the society - payable in \$US only. This is most important...all foreign (non-U.S.) orders must be made in \$US only. An international money order works well for this problem.

All orders will be mailed via "special fourth class rate" unless otherwise specified. Foreign orders can be had via Air Mail if so requested and an additional \$1US is included for each book.

JAPANESE TEXTS - DO NOT SEND ORDERS FOR THE JAPANESE TEXT TO ST. LOUIS. Jim Mitchell will have a limited number of the text available and any requests for these should be directed to Jim. The price and availability of these are not available at this time and can either be had from Jim or will be announced next Newsletter.

IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ AND (hopefully) RESPOND -

We have a temporary problem, and with a little cooperation and prompt action it can be eliminated. To date, the society has approximately \$850 - \$900 invested in the TANTO translation. Of this amount, \$580 is due the printer for printing, binding and corrilating. Our treasury has around \$350 on hand to date. This is a problem! All we need to put us back into the black would be a fast initial sale of 100 copies of the translation - something I would really expect anyway, but with the holiday season upon us, many orders might be neglected until later next year. Please do not delay in ordering....your prompt response in ordering will help us over this bump in the road without causing the poor treasurer any needless worry and further loss of hair.

It should be mentioned that after 1974 dues are paid, the treasury will be once again in a more stable condition, but it will be late February before 90% dues are in and we have several Newsletters and a 1973 Bulletin (a good issue too!) to put out.....it all takes \$\$\$.

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NEW MEMBERS -

The society welcomes three new members this issue:

R. H. McGregor

L. Gassan

Robert C. Bowman

It should be mentioned perhaps at this time that the increase in new members the last year is due to the fine promoting job done by several of our members. We always seek new members since a well rounded membership makes for a worthwhile society. Talk up your organization - show your Newsletters and Bulletins - and encourage joining.

BOOK SUGGESTION -

A very fine book has been brought to the Newsletter's attention, SHINTO SHU - a book of excellent oshigata of shinto smiths and their particular HAMON. Although this is a Japanese text, an english index (hopefully with Hawley and Fujishiro cross-index) will be made available in the very near future. This book would be a credit to any library and is available from Hawley for \$20.35US (\$20.48 Foreign).

NOTE: Anyone wishing to review a particularly good book which would be of interest to the membership should send what info they have on the book, publisher, price, etc., to the NL for publication.

EDITORS NOTE: The following report was transcribed from a tape supplied by Mr. R. B. Caldwell of Dallas, Texas. The report is presented below as an accumulation of ideas thus it's casual editing. Most important is the message contained - caution buying - buy good items worth their price!

RH

A REPORT ON THE TIMES

by R. B. Caldwell

For the first time since I have been following the field of Japanese art, particularly as it applies to the sword, I am beginning to see some real storm signals being raised. One signal and probably the most important (even though it is not big yet), is the deterioration of cordial relationship between the Japanese people and ourselves. This relationship can change and deteriorate very rapidly. As militarism and nationalism rises in Japan, which it did back in the 1930s, the worship of the sword becomes very fanatic. I can very easily see an embargo of all blades leaving Japan, that could happen over night without any warning. Anybody with blades over there might find themselves very uncomfortable.

Secondly, people always overdo things. I am not saying that the prices of swords, good authenticated swords, have reached a peak in Japan today - far from it. I think these will continue to rise 15% - 20% a year for many years to come. Rather what you are seeing is the junk stuff that is bringing exorbitant prices in this country that bare no relationship to reality in Japan, for example the gunto and the showato with armor stamp - these have finally caught up to a realistic level I'll admit, and some have gone way above that. Now anybody who knows nothing about Japanese arms are willing to pay a fabulous price just because it is Japanese. A lot of people are getting burned already. I attended the Parke-Bennet auction (early 1973), prices were good, there is no two ways about that! They were even exorbitant in areas, but there were real values in those prices and there were knowledgeable people who were bidding for them. So far, dumb-dumbs don't go to the auctions, but dumb-dumbs go around buying at gun shows and pay exorbitant prices for showato with armor stamps! There are quite a few dealers now who have stocks of tsuba at \$400 and \$500 prices who are finding it absolutely impossible to move them at these kind of prices. I still think it is easier to buy good tsuba today rather than good swords.

For the first time, I am taking pieces out of my collection, pieces that I do not want to keep in my permanent collection, and selling them. I have never done this before. I am sending tsuba, lesser swords, other pieces that I do not want to keep personally, and sending them to auction. I feel we may go through some very difficult times here in the next couple of years. I am sending off enough stuff to pay for what I want to keep free and clear, and I am for the first time battening down the hatches for some kind of storm.

REPORT (cont'd.)

This is basically all that I am saying. I certainly do not want to sell my collection even if I could get the price that I would ask for it at the present time - I would rather have the collection than that amount of dollars. It may get rather difficult to sell some things one year hence, therefore I am doing what I have said above.

For the first time, CAUTION probably is a good attribute to consider, knowing full well that certain mistakes are going to be made but that rising price levels will take me out of the bind a year or so hence is past and by the boards.

First, I am going to make certain that what I buy is good because I am having to pay such a high price for it now. Secondly, I am going to make certain that I can get it properly authenticated if it has not been already, and that I can get it properly polished and cared for. So be careful! Fortunately (or unfortunately), which ever way you want to look at it, there is not that much loose material around these days one can get in trouble on. It is drying up fast and I believe a whole era is passing. The days when we could go out and pick up thing, good things, easily at a good price, is gone. This is all part of economic maturity and part of any major cycle. From now on probably, if your going to buy anything worthwhile, you are going to have to buy a collection and/or pay through the nose for it. This is no fault of of anyone in particular. It would of happened at any rate. There where still the surplus dollars overseas, particularly in Japanese hands, that wanted their (our) treasures back. Whether it be coins, lacquer, prints, enro, nesuke, swords, tsuba, whatever - they would be or will be bought up by the people who have the most surplus dollars and who can appreciate the art the most - that of course would be the Japanese, there is no stopping that.

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WANTED ITEMS -

Wanted: Japanese firearms before 1870; Firearm accessories; Tinder lighters; Sword fittings with guns on them (motif); books on Japanese firearms. Contact: L. L. Vanice

Wanted: Any used books on swords or fittings. I would also be interested in hearing of any fittings which are for sale, particularly iron sukashi tsuba of good quality. Contact: Ron Hartmann
c/o Newsletter

FUJIWARA SADAYUKI with cutting test

oshigata by

Mel Oka

SHAPE: Shinogi-zukuri Katana with chu-kissaki, ihore-mune

HADA: Running itame

HAMON: Suguha with ko-midare. Nioi with much nie, especially in the boshi. Inasuma in the boshi and possibly in the blade (blade is not in polish so a complete examination is not possible). Boshi is maru-boshi.

NAKAGO: Ubu, one mekugi-ana

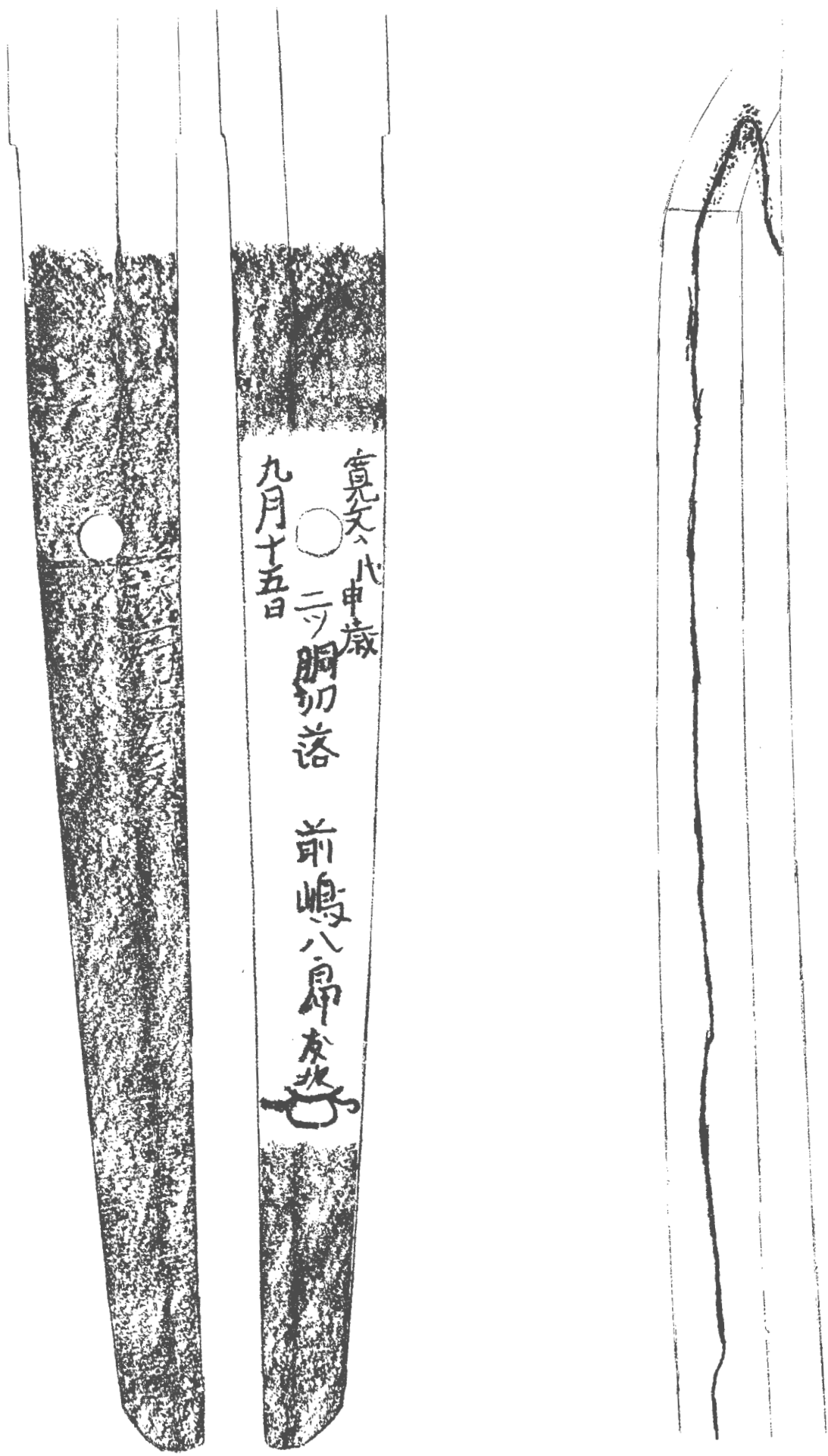
SIGNATURE: Fujiwara Sadayuki

TEST DATA: Kanbun Hachi nen Ku Gatsu Ju Go Hi (15 September 1669)
Ni Do Setsu Dan (two bodies with one stroke)
Maejima Tomotsugu (tester)

BLADE LENGTH: 28 3/4 inches

NAKAGO LENGTH: 9 inches

REMARKS: This smith apparently is the Bungo Takata smith. A very good example of Bungo Takata is the drawing of MASAYUKI on page 72 of Volume 4 Nihonto Zenshu.



FUJIWARA SADAYUKI KATANA W/ TEST

THE MAKING OF A SAMURAI -

A unique program, titled above, will be presented at the University of California - Berkeley Campus on December 8th and 9th, 1973. This promises to be a most unique experience for those able to attend. The coordinator of the program is Mr. Benjamin Hazard and he has scheduled many top name lecturers and demonstrators for this program. Perhaps one of the members attending can give us a summary of what was learned and seen, for publication in a future Newsletter. (A university flyer will be included with the NL for California members. Anyone else interested in receiving said flyer should request it from the NL.)

AT RANDOM -

A word of thanks is due Janet Oka for her donated typing time and efforts on the Tanto translation. This was done per gratis and would have cost the society a minimum of \$100 services if we would have had to hire a typist. So thanks to Janet...and thanks to Mel for having the patience to listen to the typewriter for hours on end.

The first Newsletter of 1974 will include an up-dated membership list as usual. If any member would like to have his area code and phone number listed along with his name, just forward this information to the Newsletter and it will be taken care of.

Speaking for myself and perhaps for many of the other members living in areas away from much of the action (swordwise), always feel free to stop and visit awhile when passing through this area. All visitors will be welcomed with opened arms since very few real collectors ever come to St. Louis. I am sure there are many other members in the same situation - so keep us in mind.

IMPORTANT - Jim Mitchell has requested to be excused of his duties as Editor to the Bulletin due to a lack of time available. If anyone is interested in taking over this job, please express your wishes. I will continue to assist in this job as in the past, but honestly need someone to handle the bulk of the job - typing the copy and assembling, etc., lets say 75% of that job. The job of the Newsletter and as Treasurer is enough basically - anybody interested???

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER -

The next scheduled NL is due out the end of January 1974. Please have all articles, requests, information, in my hands no later than the third week of January. Send all information to:

RON HARTMANN