

Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 6 NO. 6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1974

ELECTION OF OFFICERS -

Another election is upon us and a very admirable slate of nominees are on hand. The nominations are: CHAIRMAN - Arnold Frenzel and Robert Lewert; Executive Vice Chairman - Alan Harvie; 1st Vice Chairman - Peter Bleed; 2nd Vice Chairman - Leo Monson; Secretary - Rick Mantegani; Treasurer - Ron Hartmann.

Obviously, the only contest is between Arnold Frenzel and Robert Lewert - two equally fine gentlemen and devoted collectors. It is a rather impossible task to indorse one man over the other - both are very well known to the collecting field, are very interested in the society and it's advancement, have contacts in Japan by which we can hopefully benefit - in other words....we can not go wrong on either of these nominees!

The remaining nominees will be voted in by acclamation, but a 'vote' is still required - so return your ballots as requested.

A word of thanks is at hand for those officers stepping down this year - Alan Harvie from Chairmanship; Jim Mitchell from Executive Vice Chairman; 2nd Vice Chairman Frenzel; Secretary Mel Oka. For the effort these men put into the society (reflected by our increased membership this past year), on behalf of all the membership, allow me to say Thanks! It is only through the help and efforts of such members that we exist at all - and to grow and advance - well that speaks for itself!

DUES -

1975 dues are once again at hand. Please note your enclosed dues notice and return your remittance at your earliest convenience. We are still trying to put everyone in phase with a 1/1/year due-date - the "amount due" reflects this effort.

NEW MEMBERS -

Two more new members are welcomed into the society this NEWSLETTER. They are: Mr. Andy Quirt Mr. Clarence Siman

It should also be noted that Allen Feldman has switched to a LIFE MEMBERSHIP in the society. Congratulations! This is only our 3rd Life Membership - something we should all do!

AUCTION REPORT -

The BUTTERFIELD & BUTTERFIELD auction which was held November 11th has apparently developed into a....less than expected....effort! From reports which have come in, the prices very low on most items, with only a few 'select' items bringing realistic prices. Apparently, this auction was arranged as a move to stimulate future auctions in the San Francisco bay area - to bring more 'action' into this area. Perhaps today's sad economy had a lot to do with it, but prices were down and it was a buyers market!

It should be noted - although we all hate to pay high prices for good pieces, if the prices fall flat then our collections values also all fall flat! To find a bargain is naturally the 'name-of-the-game', but an obvious show of 'lack of confidence' in prices is not too good and hurts us all in the long run. When one sees a silly lamp for the bedroom dresser sell for \$80 or a plaster plaque with crossed swords sell for \$50....then a iron tsuba sell for \$30....200 years old and perhaps several weeks of work-hours in the making....we must ask ourselves, are we really learning to appreciate our field of collecting?something to think about.

NEWSLETTER FOLLOW-UP -

The following info was kindly sent in by Mr. John Yumoto in reference to the last issue of the NL and the Kaga IYETADA oshigata.

More info in Iyetada of Kaga. Available from KAGA SHINTO-SHU, 200pp 1965 and KASHU SHINTO TAIKAN, 300 pp 1973. Both are publications of Kanaza branch of NBTHK, Chief Editor and leader, Mr. Kabei Ueno.

Surname was SUNOZAKI not Suzaki.
The first signed KICHIBEI no JO, Died 1655.

The second; Died 1670, began signing IYETADA, 1656.

One KUNITADA: lived and worked Daishoji, signed SHICHIZEMON NO JO. (good suguha artist).

The work of the FIRST is very much similar to KANEWAKA. He was specially excellent when he made in the style of Tegal - fine masa and suguha.

Apparently a typographical error - DARANI not Tadani.

They say to tell the FIRST, he had a signature in fine line, and the SECOND with bold lines, however, it is not necessary so.

Our thanks to John Yumoto for this added information. A letter will be sent to John expressing this thanks and also requesting more info on the two texts referred to. Their availability and price will be passed along when available.

UJIYOSHI Oshigata

by Ron Hartmann

The following is not an oshigata of a particularly fine sword, but rather simply an interesting style of blade. Perhaps the following research will prove interesting to the membership.

SHAPE AND STYLE - Katakiri-ba O-wakizashi, slight taper, maru-mune.

EDGE - Medium doran becoming more notare in monouchi. In nioi but nioi looks weak.

JI-HADA - O-itame with masame mixed in, becoming tight and more mokume along cutting edge.

SIGNATURE - ASHU KAIBU JU UJIYOSHI (signed on the tachi side of the blade itself - not on the nakago).

DISCUSSION -

Very little 'facts' were found with respect to this style of blade. The first fact was that the smiths of AWA seemed to like to make this form and they usually signed "on the blade surface" as is the case here.

Judging from the way it is signed (tachi-mei), it is assumed such a blade was carried in tachi style.

JSS/US Bulletin issue Vol.7 no.2 - Masahide, Kenko Hidenshi, Chu no Maki: "Pertaining to the kissaki on the left and the right.... From ancient times a blade with a kissaki on the left was said to have been used for beheading purposes, and it was used for criminals. This is because criminals were beheaded while the executioner was standing to the left of the criminal, and also it was said that one did not need to cut through to the lower jaw. Since there are very few who know of this, I list this here for that purpose.

Blades with the kissaki on the right were originated by the KAIFU smiths of AWA PROVINCE. These were called Jinata and are said to be ideal for cutting wood and bamboo. They are said to be very handy for use by those of lower ranks."

Apparently, this blade is what is referred to "kissaki on the right" and is a utilitarian type of blade.

Mention is made (JSS/US Bulletin Vol. 1 No. 2) - "late Kamakura period, tanto style...katakiriba-zukuri with curvature as well as without. Osafune Kagemitsu, Takagi Sadamune and Kanro Toshinaga worked in this style...". JSS/US Bulletin Vol.1 No.2 - Momoyama Period - wakizashi appears....wakizashi divided into three styles..... KATAKIRIBA-ZUKURI - though this form is rare. Some country smiths

smiths made this style but it is rare among master smiths. The reason UMETADA MYOJU and some Horikawa students made this style was apparently the convenient surface it made for horimono.

Apparently, this style again appeared during the late Edo Period too.

Another deduction - this was done by many third rate smiths (AWA smiths, etc.,) but if done by a top smith (MYOJU, etc.,), it can be most noteworthy!

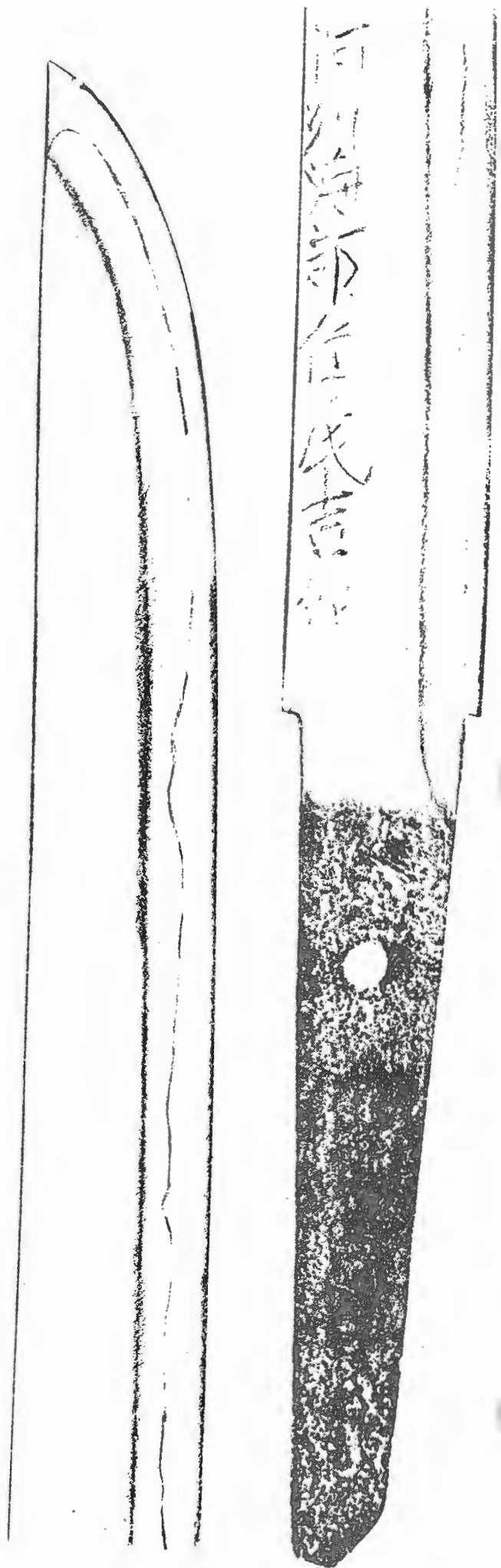
The particular blade of this oshigata measures 55.2cm cutting edge x 14.6cm nakago. Apparently, this length sets this blade apart from the more common short lengths. Although the hamon appears 'weak', the blade in general is most interesting and is well forged.

The blade received a WHITE PAPER at the Newport Beach, Ca. shinsa of 1974.

Although any reference to "period" was omitted from the shinsa papers on this blade, judging from it's polished down state....it is assumed to be of the late koto period rather than the late Edo period.

Any comments on this blade specifically, or on this style in general, would be most welcomed.

RCH



Recently, Albert Yamanaka put together some random notes on the sword which he called TIDBITS ON NIHONPO. The following notes on polishing are a part of these thoughts.

POLISHING - by A. Yamanaka

To appreciate a Japanese Sword, the sword must be in fine polish and as such, polishing is very important to the blade as well as to it's appreciation and preservation.

A blade given to a polisher, depending on the abilities of the polisher, the blade can be rendered worthless or be given a new life. A poor blade given to an able polisher, will be given a new life, though these days, no polisher of any ability will polish such a blade. However, a fine blade given to a poor polisher, he will "ruin" the blade! So, it becomes necessary to have the blade polished by a very qualified and able polisher, even though this may be a little costly.

The following will give a brief description of the stones and their uses.

STEP ONE: ARATO OMURA or KONGO.

In the olden days, a stone called OMURA and/or JOKENJI was used, however, these stones are no longer available and in their place, KONGO (carborundum) is used.

The very start of the polishing is made with the strokes in KIRI style, that is in horizontal lines, and in each step thereafter, the strokes become SUJI CHIGAI, so that in the last step of the large stones, the stroke is made in O SUJI CHIGAI.

STEP TWO: AMAKUSA or BINSUI

The INSUI stones that which is most commonly used today. Professional polishers will use (3) stones, one for the HAMON, one for the JI and one for the KISSAKI. This stone is quite expensive. Made at slight SUJI CHIGAI.

STEP THREE: NAGURA or KAISEI - slightly deeper angle than No. 2.

STEP FOUR: CHU-NAGURA - deeper than step No.3.

STEP FIVE: KOMA NAGURA - still deeper angle than No. 4.

STEP SIX: UCHIGUMORI

Two stones used separately, one for the JI and one for the HA.

The forgoing (6) stones are the ones which are used for the basic polishing and all are the large stones.

POLISHING cont'd.

STEP SEVEN: HAZUYA

UCHIGUMORI stone is split thin and with a rough carborundum stone, it is made still thinner. It then has a Yoshino paper pasted on with lacquer, it is then still made thinner on NAGURA stone. With the "juice" from the UCHIGUMORI stone, a small piece of this paper backed HAZUYA is placed on the thumb and rubbed along the hamon. The thinner the stone, the better the result it will bring.

STEP EIGHT: JIZUYA

Like the HAZUYA, this tone is a very thinly made piece from the NARUTAKI stone. In this stone, the thin stone is made as thin as possible, about as thin as onion skin paper - the thinner the better. It is then placed on the thumb and then, after the stone is placed on the JI, the small thin stone is crumbled, the lubricant used in this case will be AKI SUI which is nothing but water which has had straw ash mixed in it.

STEP NINE: NUGUI

There are many different kinds of NUGUI, such as KANAHADA NUGUI, TSUSHIMA, KUJAKU SEKI, KAMOGAWA ISHI and NAGURA. In the olden days, only the TSUSHIMA atone was used, and though this stone gives good results on the border of the HAMON and JI, at the same time, it tends to make the JI a little rough, so of this stone, one should be very careful.

Today, the KANA HADA is the one which is most widely used and all others though they have their distinct good results, it still has contrary results at the same time in other areas as the TSUSHIMA.

KANAHADA is iron chips made during the forging of the sword and in a word, it is iron oxide. This is placed in a bottle with oil and mixed well, the oil then filtered through several layers of Yoshino paper and with a clean ball of cotton, the oil "juice" is rubbed on the blade.

STEP TEN: MIGAKI

With a steel stick which is made like a pencil and that has been tempered very hard, the tip is made into a sharpened point. A NARUTAKI stone which has had a groove made on it, now has the steel pencil rubbed on this groove and polished finely.

The SHINOGI which is to have the MIGAKI done is first rubbed clean of all oil. Then the MIGAKI is rubbed on the SHINOGI surface along with powdered deer horn, used as a lubricant. IBOTA powder is also used. This is also done on the MUNE as well.

STEP ELEVEN: YOKOTE KIRI

In drawing the YOKOTE line, the blade is wrapped with soft cloth about a few inches below the area where the line is to be drawn. The

POLISHING cont'd.

area above the cloth is then wrapped with Mino paper about an inch or so, a ruler-like implement is made specifically for this purpose, is placed at the point where the line is to be drawn and it is then held in place with your left thumb. With a HAZUYA and the "juice" from the UCHIGUMORI stone, the line is rubbed.

STEP TWELVE: NARUME

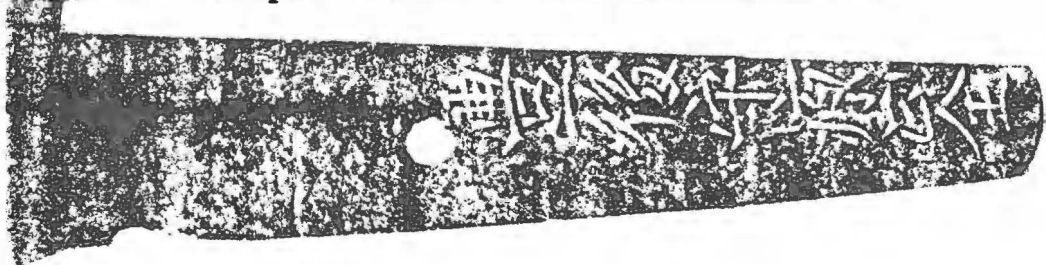
A HO wood which is made for this purpose, called NARUME DAI is used in this step. The area where the NARUME is to be made, that is, the KISSAKI and the tip of the MUNE, is rubbed with this NARUME DAI with UCHIGUMORI juice.

A.Y.

EDITORS COMMENT: Reading the above once again makes one appreciate the effort and patience which goes in to any polish job, particularly a first class polish! Perhaps a reminder to guard and protect that polished blades with loving care - respect it!

WANTED ITEMS -

Wanted: Blades by BUNGO no KAMI MINAMOTO MASATOMO (Hawley MA-657 or MA-524b). Will buy or trade for any reasonable example of this mans work. Contact: Arnold Frenzel
Onta See example below:



Wanted: Any tsuba or other fittings of good quality which show some christian theme - particularly crosses. Contact: Ron Hartmann

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

The next issue of the NEWSLETTER (starting the 1975 volume) is due out the beginning of February. Please have all intended items in my hands no later than the end of January. As a reminder, the 1974 BULLETIN will hopefully be typed and out about this same time - as always, depending on personal time available. This year's BULLETIN promises to be a very worthwhile one again - as usual. Send all notes and comments intended for the NL to:

RON HARTMANN

