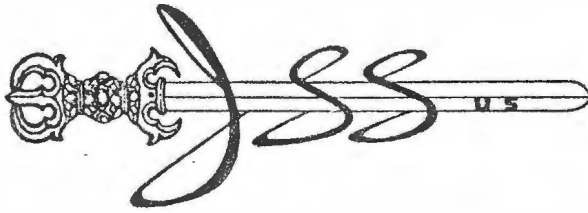


# Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

The Official Bi-Monthly Publication of the Society. Membership - \$10.00 Annually

Volume 7 No. 1

~~May - June~~ 1975

JAN - FEB.

### ELECTION RESULTS -

Officers for the two year term 1975 and 1976

CHAIRMAN.....Arnold Frenzel  
EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN.....Alan Harvie  
1ST VICE CHAIRMAN.....Peter Bleed  
2ND VICE CHAIRMAN.....Leo Monson  
SECRETARY.....Richard Mantegani  
TREASURER.....Ron Hartmann

Congratulations to the newly elected officers listed above. We have another fine roster of names which we can be proud of. All of these people are deeply interested in seeing our group prosper and grow and have shown this interest in the past by their actions.

Our thanks too to the officers who have served during the last two years. They have worked hard and have given their time and efforts freely, and for this we can say thanks!

The 'race' for Chairmanship was a very close one and judging by the good percentage of ballot returns, it was an election of interest to all. The final returned ballot tally was 39 - this is about 50% return - an encouraging sign compared to last years return of about 12% of ballots sent out. As was said earlier, the two nominees are both 1st class men, both deeply interested in seeing our club grow and expand - so we could not lose no matter who won! It is only too bad we couldn't keep both in office, but I am sure Bob Lewert will continue to be of great assistance to us even if he does not hold the office. To these two candidates a particular thanks and to our new Chairman specifically - good luck!

### NEW MEMBERS -

We are happy to welcome our first two new members for this year.

Mr. Otto Nishida .

Mr. Ronald Palmer

## 1974 WIND-UP AND 1975 PROSPECTS -

Perhaps since this is the first NEWSLETTER issue of the year, it is a good time to say a few things in general pertaining to the society. The following thoughts are off the top of my head, so to speak, and hopefully will not be too disjointed.

There were six (6) issues of NEWSLETTERS mailed out in 1974, plus the 1973 annual BULLETIN which was mailed out about this time last year. Check your files and see that everything has reached you as intended.

The annual 1974 BULLETIN is ready for the printer now and will probably be mailed out within a week after the mailing of this paper. You may notice that the NEWSLETTER has taken on a new look this issue, as will the coming issue of the BULLETIN. Finally, after intending to simplify my job as editor by working up an official 'form' for the NL and BULLETIN (rather than doing it from scratch each time), the 'form' has been worked out. Personally, I feel it looks okay and a bit more 'official' lets say. The clarification of what type of publication each is (bi-monthly and annual) coupled with our dues clearly stated and the Treasurer's address in sight, I think we will pick up more new members this year simply from people seeing our work. So show your issues around, advertise a little....we can use more numbers in our club so we can grow!

Membership has picked up this past year by around 17 people. Our dropouts have almost stopped too - this all adds up to a well-rounded membership of about 88 people as of now. This is great and is taken as an indication that we are giving everybody what they are looking for from a sword society.

Projects for the coming year will be headed by a proposed book of oshigata. This will be made up of swords which came through the society in connection with the polishing program of years ago. As soon as the NL and BULLETIN are out of the way, the project will go into motion. It promises to be something very worthwhile!

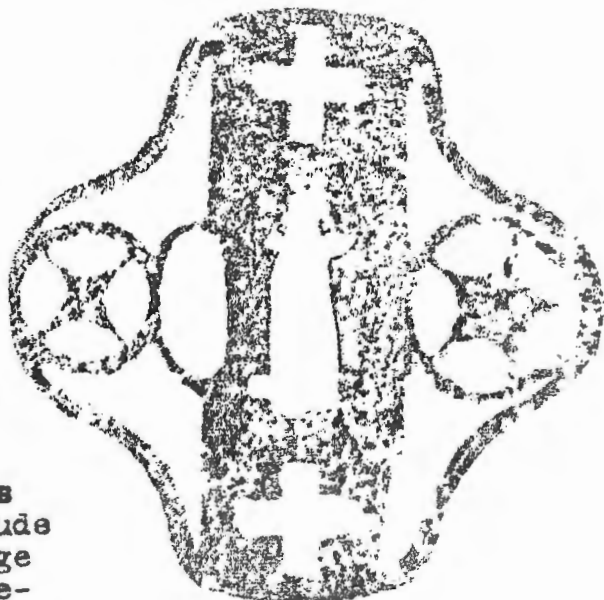
It is intended to expand our other services such as more supplies being made available, at least a discount on books purchases, and a more active library service. Speaking of our library, Jim Mitchell expects to better locate our books and also weed out some of the less useful books - offering them fore sale (via the NL?) and use the \$\$ to buy some new books. We should buy several of the 'better' books each year and expand our facilities - this would be titles which we are less likely to all own already. We neglected this in the past due to a lack of funds, but our treasury is a bit more in the black as we go into this year.

Our undertaking of 1973-74, the TANTO book translation, has paid for itself and then some. Of course most orders have been placed and we only pick up an occassional order now, but the whole thing was a success and was what helped build up our treasury.

CHRISTIAN TSUBA DISCUSSION (part 3) -

Tsuba No.1 - CROSSES

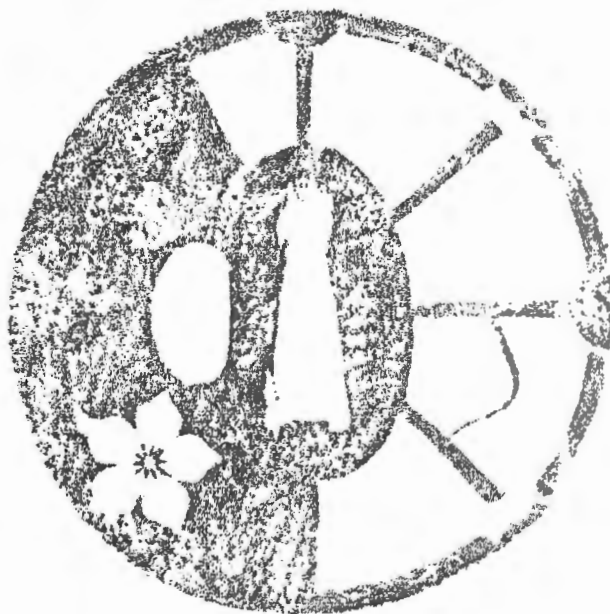
EW measures 78.7 mm  
NS measures 79.0 mm  
Seppa-dai 3.8 mm  
Rim 3.5 mm  
Material: Iron



This would seem to display an obvious Christian association. It is a rather crude work, but with clear indication of both age and use. It may have been fashioned by reworking a katchushi or tosho plate, and one would expect that it was made in the late 16th century and mounted on the sword of a low ranking provincial samurai. Its blatant Christian theme argues against it being later than speculated. This tsuba came from a larger group brought from Korea during the Korean War, and this leads to the conjecture it once belonged to a Christian samurai who refused to abandon his faith or for some other reason was banished to Korea. Of course it is also possible that it was lost in battle there during a Japanese expedition, or later brought there during the long Japanese annexation.

Tsuba No.2 - FIVE NAILS

EW measures 81.5 mm  
NS measures 81.5 mm  
Seppa-dai 3.6 mm  
Rim 4.0 mm  
Material: Iron  
Signed: TADATSUGU



Four nails in positive silhouette are fairly obvious, and the fifth has been partially filed off though part of it remains as a bent nail bridging two others. The head of that nail has been removed. This tsuba is considerably more subtle than the former, and it seems to represent an interesting cryptographic example. I know of two similar pieces, one of which is illustrated as #555 in Takezawa, M. NIHON TOBAN ZUSETSU.

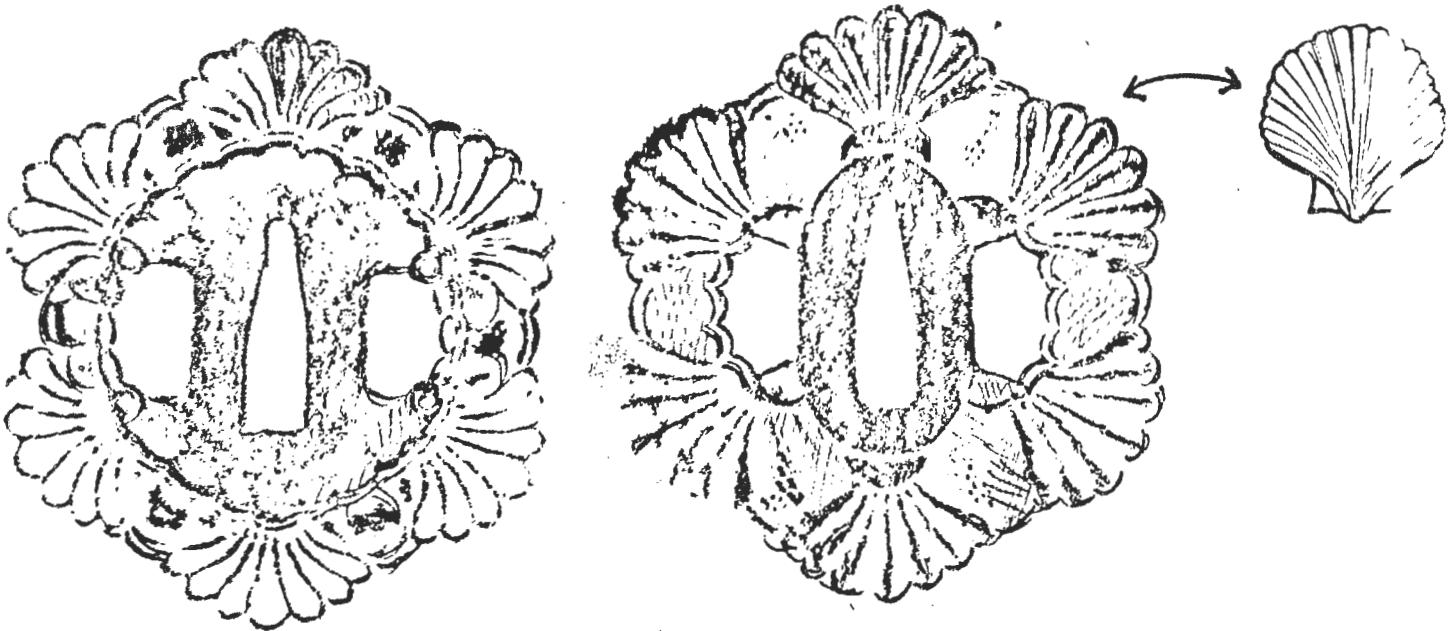
(Hakurinsha, 1968), and described as "The Christian Style, 16th-17th century, Iron with open work. Five nails." Another is illustrated on the back cover of Kokubo, Kenichi et al. SUKASHI TSUBA. (Kogeisha, 1968), but not otherwise explained. It is possible that one of the nails was obscured to further add to its cryptographic quality. The Christian association of nails is clear enough to anyone aware of its elementary symbolism, however the exact meaning of five nails is less clear. The article by Clement Milward, "Some Military Relics of the Christian Century in Japan", reprinted in our 1974 BULLETIN makes reference to

CHRISTIAN (cont'd.) -

nails on p.46, but there refers to groups of three and four. It is possible that the meaning is to the five wounds of Christ, or the belief that there were four nails in the cross and the fifth nail represents the spear wound in the side. It is also possible that the number of nails has only symmetric significance in the design. The flower, as the stars, flowers or snowflakes in the previous tsuba might be just a design feature or meant to serve as a mon. I suspect that this tsuba was made when Christianity was under severe repression in Japan, and possibly after the 17th century. The iron is of excellent quality, which is consistent with my understanding that there was a man named Tadatsugu who made tsuba along with horsebits and arrowheads

(Editor's note: The above discussion was supplied by Arnold Frenzel)

Tsuba No.3 -



Iron, with complete overlay of silver **nanome-zogan**. An almost identical tsuba is illustrated in the **Naunton Collection** catalogue, but it is treated with enamels in the **Hirata Style**. True "Namban" Tsuba - based on a European (probably Portuguese) original. Edo Period - 18th or 19th century.

**Scallop Shell:** An old Christian symbol, the badge of pilgrims to the Shrine of St. James (Santiago de Compostela) in Spain. Santiago was one of the most popular saints at the time of first European contact with Japan, particularly among the Portuguese and Spanish.

Notice that in this reaction, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is produced again. This CO<sub>2</sub> combines with the charcoal to form more carbon monoxide, as in reaction #2. The reaction will continue on indefinitely until all the charcoal is used up, or the temperature drops so the reaction ceases.

However, as stated earlier, the clay used is relatively impervious to the oxygen, and if only clay and charcoal were used, there could be no carburizing. This is where the uchiko (calcium carbonate CaCO<sub>3</sub>) comes in. At temperatures above 900°C (the range in which forging is done), calcium carbonate breaks down into calcium oxide (CaO) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>):



The uchiko thus supplies the CO<sub>2</sub> needed for reaction #2. In technical terms, the uchiko is called an energizer. Straw ash may be used in place of uchiko to some extent, since some ash contains large percentages of carbonates of calcium, magnesium, and barium, which can be used as energizers.

But why repeat this at every folding? Why not case-harden once and save further labor? The trouble is, the carbon absorbed in the steel diffuses very slowly. In a thick piece of steel, one could increase the carbon in the outer layer until it was much too brittle, and yet have almost carbon-free iron inside. Therefore, the swordsmith carburizes only a thin layer each time. At each folding, two carbon-enriched faces are folded inward. After repeated foldings, he would have a piece of steel with thousands of layers of high and low carbon steel. However, with repeated heating and hammering, there is some diffusion of carbon, so that eventually, the metal becomes almost homogenous in composition.

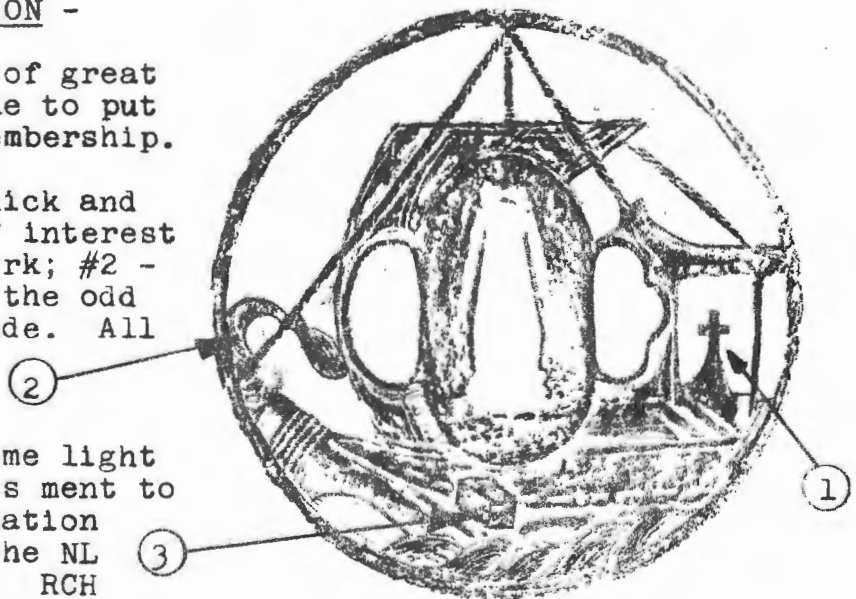
The end result is a steel of the proper carbon content and distribution.

#### A CHRISTIAN TSUBA FOR DISCUSSION -

This particular tsuba is of great interest to me and I would like to put it up for discussion by the membership.

It is mumei, iron, 4mm thick and looks Choshu school. Items of interest is #1 - the cross in a framework; #2 - the odd bow on the ship; #3 - the odd "box" sticking out from the side. All of this is repeated on the opposite side.

Anyone who could shine some light as to what kind of ship this is ment to represent, or any other information on this design, should write the NL with his comments. Thank You. RCH



WANTED ITEMS -

As a reminder - members are invited to place for sale or wanted ads in the NL as a membership benefit (unless a page or so ad is needed at which time a nominal printing charge would be made). Send your ad to the NEWSLETTER editor.

Wanted: A good example of a Kaga School iron tsuba with insects of gold hirazogan, in the style shown in Jisl's SWORDS OF THE SAMURAI, plate #55. Contact: Ed Dobrzanski

Wanted: Volumes Nos. 2, 3 and 4 of the JUYO TOKEN series. Contact: Laurence A. Barandes

Wanted: Wakizashi or Katana of Naginata Naoshi for or Nagamaki Naoshi form. Contact: Andy Quirt

Wanted: Christian theme tsuba or fittings. Also looking for a mate to a lone Goto fuchi of autumn flowers with grass hopper on nanako ground - prefer wide (1/2") style kashira. Contact: Ron Hartmann c/O NEWSLETTER.

Wanted: All styles of JAKUSHI kodogu. Signed or unsigned. Motifs will run from dragons, landscapes, animals, to bamboo scenes. Will buy or trade with blades or kodogu. Contact: Michael A. Quigley

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ITEMS FOR SALE -

Tanto bags of domestic silk, lined, with tie cords, various colors. Will accommodate up to 17" lengths. Send overall length and width measurements. Price \$5.00 postage paid (one way) and (3) day inspection. Contact: Clarence J. Siman

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NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE -

The next issue of the NEWSLETTER is due out around the 1st week of APRIL. Please have any articles or copy to the editor no later than the end of MARCH in order to make this issue.