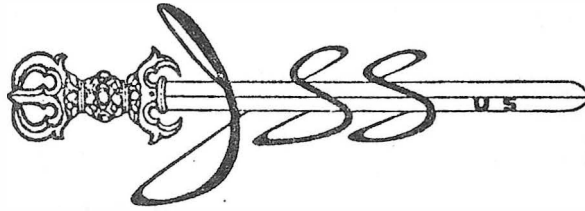


Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



NEWSLETTER

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

Volume 9 No. 1

January - February • 1977

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE NOW DUE FOR MANY OF OUR MEMBERS. CHECK THE LOWER RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THIS NL ENVELOP. IF A RED CHECK MARK IS PRESENT, YOUR DUES ARE PAYABLE NOW. \$10.00 U.S. and Canada - \$14.00 for all others. U.S. Dollars only Please. Send your dues today c/o the NL address above.

1977 ELECTION OF OFFICERS -

Ballots have been mailed out for the 1977 Election of Officers. Important Correction! Somehow, the wrong city was specified on the secretary's address on the ballot. Ballots should be returned to:

Any ballots sent to Turlock will most likely be directed to Tiburon since zip code should rule....but if any ballots are returned, just correct the address and try again. The deadline will be extended to the end of the month because of this mix-up. Apologies are given.

We have an excellent slate of nominees this year which means the society can not lose....but we need votes! Please do vote.

NEW MEMBERS -

A super (15) new members are welcomed this issue! This puts our membership at 199 members, a good place to start the year at.

Richard C. Smith, John A. Royse Jr.,

Gerard R. Morin, Richard Pohrt Jr.,

Joel A. Hamady

Sid Nagamori,

Robert A. Coleman Jr.,

Patrick E. McCafferty,

Ernest M. Christl, 1

Dr. W. H. Murenbeeld,

Gary Oglesbee,

Robert F. Troiano,

Richard C. Hasser,

John Gentile,

John E. Pegg,

TREASURERS REPORT -

Cash on hand 1/1/76		\$987.79
Income:		
Dues	\$1718.00	
Supply Sales	1060.62	
MACA Rebate (1976 show)	60.00	
	<u>\$2838.62</u>	\$3826.41
Expenditures:		
Clerical	\$ 106.14	
NL, Bulletin Printing	909.82	
NL, Bulletin Postage	333.94	
Miscellaneous Printing	209.80	
Miscellaneous Postage	172.80	
Supplies Purchased	<u>798.20</u>	
	\$2530.70	\$1295.71
Balance on hand 12/31/76		\$1295.71

Respectfully submitted:



JSS/US Treasurer

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A FEW WORDS FROM YOUR EDITOR -

The year 1976 has been a good year for the society. With our excellent leadership of Arnold Frenzel plus the promoting of the society by a number of our members, membership has grown to 199 to date - something to be proud of for all of us! The dues realized from this size membership will enable us to improve both the quality and scope of our publications. All of this together adds up to a means towards helping the society function as intended, towards the preservation and appreciation of the sword through advanced study of the sword as an art object. These goals are our purpose for being.

With our growth some problems have also developed. Increased membership has brought about an increased work load on those presently involved. A concern has also been expressed that a broader cross-section of the membership should be involved in society operation and that the society operations be decentralized by this total membership involvement. This is a very valid concern and perhaps by briefly outlining available "work to be done" and asking for volunteers, this desired decentralization and sharing-the-load can be achieved.

1) ELECTIONS - The 1977 Election of Officers has come a bit later than usual this year. This delay developed primarily because of the same people trying to handle this job year after year and still coping with personal obligations. We need someone (or two) who will handle the next election process (Directors - for 1978/79). Such a new committee will assure us a successful election in the future.

2) DIRECTORS - Twelve Directors will be needed for the next election. The primary job of the Directors is to act, as a board, in approving/disapproving proposals made by the Chairman and his officers. Nominees with a true concern for the betterment of the society and a willingness to respond to the needs of the group are needed. There must be members who feel that they could perform such duties but who feel shy about coming forward. Think about it and later this year when nominations are in order, come forward.

3) BULLETIN EDITOR - A most rewarding job and a labor-of-love perhaps for the last six years, but a change is needed. The primary function as editor is finding material. The actual printing and mailing involves a week or two of evening work. Willing staff members are available for typing copy. It is hoped that a new Editor could be found - someone with an eye to making this important publication a more professional and formal publication, a publication which will promote the society by its stature. Anyone wishing to tackle this most rewarding task should come forward.

4) CONSTITUTION/BY-LAWS - Contrary to earlier findings, these documents need up-dating, reprinting, and distribution to all of the members. It is not such a big chore but perhaps time-consuming until it is finalized. The final draft would need a lawyer's approval and eventually Board (and membership?) approval. It is a job in need of doing - anyone familiar in handling such a task?

5) NEWSLETTER EDITOR AND TREASURER - The job of NL Editor is again, truly a labor-of-love! The position of NL Editor would like to be retained by your present Editor until further notice (or until the membership feels a change is needed). Being Editor is rather a pet project of mine and one which is enjoyed. It is not a burden in itself - rather it is trying to handle too many other jobs which develop into a chore. The membership cooperates with contributions for the NL which greatly helps in publishing a worthy paper on a regular basis. The Treasurer's job sort of goes hand-in-hand with being editor since the NL demands a constant need for funds. This position too would like to be retained until further notice. Both of these positions will remain a labor-of-love with a constant eye towards improvement - but help is needed by way of volunteers to help handle the other jobs outlined above.

6) LIBRARIAN - This is a job which has been readily accepted by Howard Sloan of St.Louis.

7) SUPPLY SERVICES - This job can be demanding at times what with packaging, post office visits (and hassles), storage, etc., but is pleasurable too simply from correspondence with members and suppliers. Anyone interested?

In conclusion, there is work to be done and workers are needed. Think about it and if you are so inclined, contact any of your Officers and express your wishes. A sharing of the work load will reward us with an improved society which will in turn benefit all of us. Thank you for your allowing the presentation of these (not so) few words.

RCH

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM DR. HOMMA -

The following is a translation in two parts of a New Year Message from Dr. Junji Homma, Chairman of the Society for the Preservation of the Japanese Art Sword (NBTHK) in Japan. This message was presented to NBTHK members in the January 1977 issue of the official NBTHK Journal, TOKEN BIJUTSU. Because of the importance of this message, John Yumoto has translated it for us for our understanding. John has also suggested a proposal to us by which we American collectors can a significant contribution towards preservation of the Tōken. The proposal is presented at the end of this article.

PART ONE -

TWO TASKS

by Dr. Junji Homma

When I wrote the New Years Message which appeared in the January 1976 edition of TOKEN BIJUTSU, the proposed undertaking to reconstruct a TATARA was still under consideration. After receiving approval from the NBTHK Board, we have decided to proceed with this undertaking. Obviously the Bureau of Cultural Affairs is freely backing this movement too.

(Translator's note: TATARA is a peculiar Japanese style of low temperature forging of sand ore, iron ore taken from sand. The end product is called TAMAHAGANE.)

The TAMAHAGANE, which is the indispensable material needed for the making of Japanese swords of Important Cultural Property quality, was produced during WWII and there is still some TAMAHAGANE left over from that time. However production has ceased since the end of the war and it is obvious that in the very near future, the supply will run out. If this is allowed to happen, it will become impossible to manufacturer such Japanese swords. So, to us sword lovers this becomes a most urgent and important thing. Some may have the tendency to believe rebuilding of the TATARA FORGE is just to benefit the swordsmith and therefore be not too concerned about this. Possibly this is felt because NBTHK did not stress the importance of this project. We recognise this fact now, and we must now reconsider and put more emphasis on how important this undertaking really is. It is obvious that when this TATARA project is completed, it will benefit the swordsmith, but placing emphasis on this is wrong. Our official title is, Society for the Preservation of the Art Sword, and we must carry out that title. Therefore, we went full force into managing this undertaking. It is obvious that members of our society (and non-members too) who love the sword, realizing the importance of this undertaking, forget their parties and affiliations and let us unite and carry out this project.

The TAMAHAGANE is the best steel one could obtain in the world. We assume the skill and technique of making TAMAHAGANE by means of TATARA forge probably started in the 4th century, and has been proudly carried on since then. It is not necessarily just for the sword, but it is important to reconstruct and put this important skill and technique into operation. The NBTHK is going ahead with this project,

TATARA (cont'd.)

and has established a TATARA DEPARTMENT with the cooperation of the Hidachi Mineral Company, who have had much experience in this area, and also we have contracted the expert, Mr. Abe Yoshisō, who will be the MURAGE, the old term for Head Technician of Tatara.

However, the thing that worries me most is that Mr. Abe is an old man of 75 so that even if all the arrangements are made, without him - the MURAGE - this undertaking will almost become impossible. Fortunately Mr. Abe is in good health at the present and he is looking forward to firing the forge. Consequently, we are urging everyone to support this project and to donate funds which will be necessary to operate the TATARA and make this movement possible. So, to each member of NBTHK, I urge you all to give considerable donations to this cause. Also you are urged to advocate how important this project is to your friends, government officials, and everyone. When we think back to the time when we built the sword museum at Yoyogi, at first we received a rather cool reception. Perhaps this was because it was the time under the depression or maybe people thought it was not a matter of immediate concern. However, that was wrong thinking. This new undertaking is another epic-making event, perhaps even greater than the building of the sword museum. Please recognise the fact that only NBTHK can carry out such an enterprise. We ask your generous support for this movement. (see translator's proposal on next page)

PART TWO -

LET US LEAD THE SWORD LOVERS OF EUROPE
AND AMERICA IN A PROPER MANNER.

In recent years there have been many foreigners - European and American - who have tried to understand Japanese culture through the appreciation of the Japanese sword, and this is very gratifying. Last year Dr. Walter Compton displayed his collection at the Japan House Galleries in New York City, and it received tremendous reaction. Consequently, interest in the Japanese sword greatly increased both in America and Europe. This too is very gratifying. About the same time of the Compton Exhibit, the great blades belonging to the Boston Museum were polished in Japan with arrangements made by NBTHK. Afterwards, these swords were exhibited at various places in Japan and this was very successful. Consequently, such success inevitably has effects on the future exhibitions planning of the Boston Museum. These are very gratifying events and we expect fruitful results from these events and enthusiasm. It is my sincere wish that sword lovers of foreign countries develop their interests in a healthy way. In order to do this, we the senior researchers of swords, must offer a guiding hand to them. However I am afraid. As you well know, in Japan there are numerous fake blades in existence and which are being traded amongst collectors. I hope that this will not contaminate the collectors outside of Japan.

When we the experts of Japanese swords are asked our opinions on blades, we should not be influenced by personal reasons. We must answer right-is-right and wrong-is-wrong. This will obviously guide them well. I have personally been asked by many foreign students to judge a blade or so by oshigata or photograph. I conscientiously

MESSAGE (cont'd.)

and frankly give a friendly judgement and reply, as much as possible under the circumstances. Our NBTHK has already conducted SHINSA twice in the United States and we are sure we have carried out very good judging.

The fall of last year, we had our annual Convention of NBTHK of Tokyo. Twenty-odd sword lovers of Europe and America attended, studied, and appreciated the sword well. Thier attitude was that of a good connoisseur of Japan. This gave us great ease and comfort. So, in the future let us not damage thier sincere study in foriegn lands. Let us guide them well and bring them up in a healthy manner.

Dr. Junji Homma

* * * * *

A PROPOSAL from John Yumoto

I feel that sword lovers in the United States ought to help this movement by giving considerable donations. I propose this: I have made one tsuba, which is an iron tsuba, a replica of one of the Important Cultural tsuba in Japan. (see rubbing below) I would like to offer this as an incentive in the form of a raffle. To become eligible for this drawing, send me \$100 or so donation. Within say three months, the funds will be forwarded to NBTHK in your name for use towards this project. We shall then have a drawing and this tsuba will be awarded to the luckey winner. If all of us pitch in together and make a donation of \$100 or so, I am sure this will make a very effective jesture on our part towards collectors both here and in Japan. Make checks payable to NBTHK -cashiers check in U.S.dollars prefered -and mail to: John Yumoto

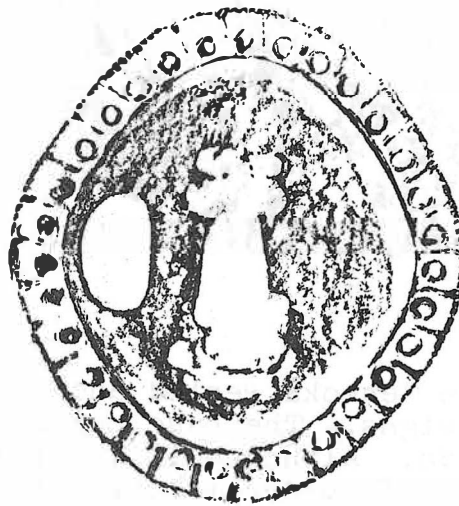


Editors note: I have further suggested to John that to assist members who would like to contribute towards this cause but have limited funds, perhaps local groups could go together and raise funds as a group, and in turn present it under the group's name. The incentive tsuba if won could then be given to the group. I am also sure that any donations towards this project would assist in it becoming a reality. It is a worthy cause and a chance for the U.S. collector to express nis sincerity.

EVOLUTION OF TSUBA DESIGN

by Dr. Keith Evans

The Muromachi Period was a time of continuous war in Japan, and the taste of the warrior was severe and plain. Although there were many designs which did not carry over into peaceful times, the Odawara rim* was an important design factor which did, along with the simple, large bilateral piercings.



TSUBA #1

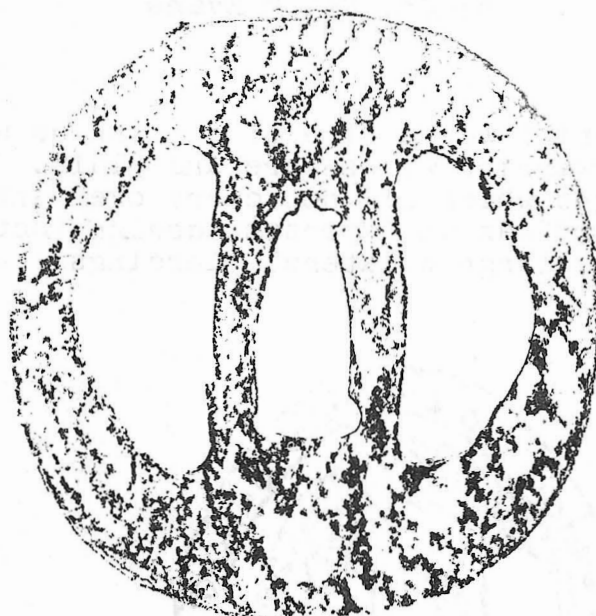
Tsuba #1 is a fine and rare example of a brass rim, the precursor of the Odawara rim, on an iron plate of extreme thinness. It was made by the professional tachi fitting makers and was made in the early Muromachi Period.

Tsuba #2 is from the Momoyama Period and is of the Higo Shoami School. It is of thin iron plate, rough hammered surface and very large openings. There is a silver nunome overlay at the edge.

(following page)

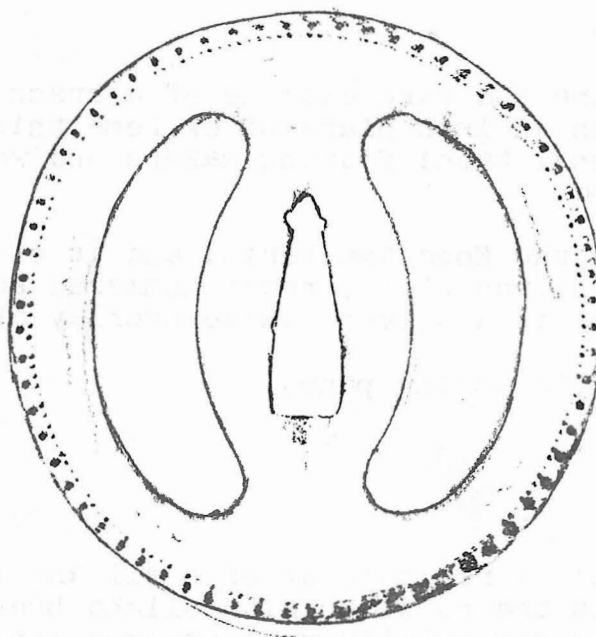
*Odawara fukurin: A rim made up of small and larger bubbles, hammered towards the outside, with slight breaking of the bubbles giving a wonderfully worn or aged look to a normally sterile-looking rim. (GREAT MASTERS OF TSUBA-KO, J. Solomon, Token Taikai, 1976, p.110).

EVOLUTION (cont'd.)



TSUBA #2

Tsuba #3 is from the Genroku Period and shows a blend of the two earlier tsuba designs. The base metal is copper and the Odawara rim is shakudo. Although it is of much smoother design, the warrior taste of an earlier time is still obvious.



TSUBA #3

WANTED - FOR SALE ITEMS - (Send your ad into the NL - a free service)

- Wanted: Swords by Musashi Taro YASUKUNI. Other signatures of this smith are Tota HIROSHIGE, Bushu YASUKUNI, Yamamoto YASUKUNI, and BOKUYU. Any sword by the SHITAHARA school (also called SHIMOHARA). Please contact: Bob Benson,

- Wanted: New member would like to purchase swords, tantō, wakizashi, etc. Have several brass U.S. Navy ships chronometers 1940/43 (mint) available for trade. Contact:
Phillip Davis

- WANTED: Pair of fine quality menuki, gold or yellow brass in dragon fly design (for tantō tsuka).
- FOR SALE: Katana, Gendaitō signed MISHINA YOSHIAKI with Toensha Jyo-saku rating. Wakizashi signed FUJIWARA NAGAYUKI (NA-287) Takata group, ca.1573, Bungo Province, weak yakiba. Also, wakizashi ca. 1700, Shinto KINMICHI GROUP. Contact: Jim Ishimaru,

- FOR SALE: Good study sword. Typical Muromachi-form Bizen sword. Fair polish, hamon and hada clear, fine nakago. It is clearly KOTO, but it is equally clearly falsely signed (BISHU OSAFUNE KIYOMITSU). There is a yakizukure as well. Blade only \$300.
- FOR SALE: Katana, with papers from Sword Research Society (hakusui Inami). BIZEN SUKESADA (Kanbun Period), mumei, O-suriage (26") Fine polish, chu-suguha, faint boshi but there. Very fine itame-masame hada. Black lacquer saya, good tsuka-ito, f/k, menuki. Good old iron tsuba. \$650 as above. Contact: A. Z. Freeman

- FOR SALE OR TRADE: Several tsuba, fair to excellent condition. Priced right. Send 2 stamps for details. Contact: James Hugo

- WANTED: Copies of TANTŌ (Japanese book of plates). Several members ask for these from time to time. Contact: NL Editor.

- FOR SALE: The katakiri-ba wakizashi AWSHU KAIBA UJIYOSHI (see NL issue V6N6 oshigata feature) is for sale. Also, a group of good to excellent tsuba are available. Write for details.
Ron Hartmann c/o Newsletter

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NIHONTO NEWSLETTER INDEX - Remember that this important index is now available from the society. It is a much needed, workable aide to using your volumes. \$6.00 U.S. ordered from the NL Editor.
.....

ECHIZEN YASUTSUGU 5th

Oshigata by

Gary E. Haulman

SCHOOL - Aoi Shimosaka

STYLE - Ko-wakizashi in shinogi-zukuri style with ihore mune.

JIHADA - Mokume

BOSHI - Ō-maru

HAMON - Mixture of suguha, notare-gunome midare of fine nie.
There are ashi in the gunome. Ji-nie and some swept nie.

NAKAGO - Futsu shape, tip is katayama kengyo. Yasurime are katesagari.
One mekugi-ana which is punched. There is engraved Hollylock
Crest.

LENGTH OF BLADE - 37.9 cm with sori of 6 mm.

REMARKS -

The blade has sashikomi style polish and is in fine condition. The saya is lacquered reddish brown with a fancy black lacquered overlay. The tsuka is wrapped with black tsuka-ito. The kashira is copper with gold dragon, clouds and waterfall. Menuki are open-work copper dragons. Fuchi is copper with gold dragon. Tsuba is iron shishiai-bori dragon in clouds. There is also iron wari-kogai and tempered kozuka.

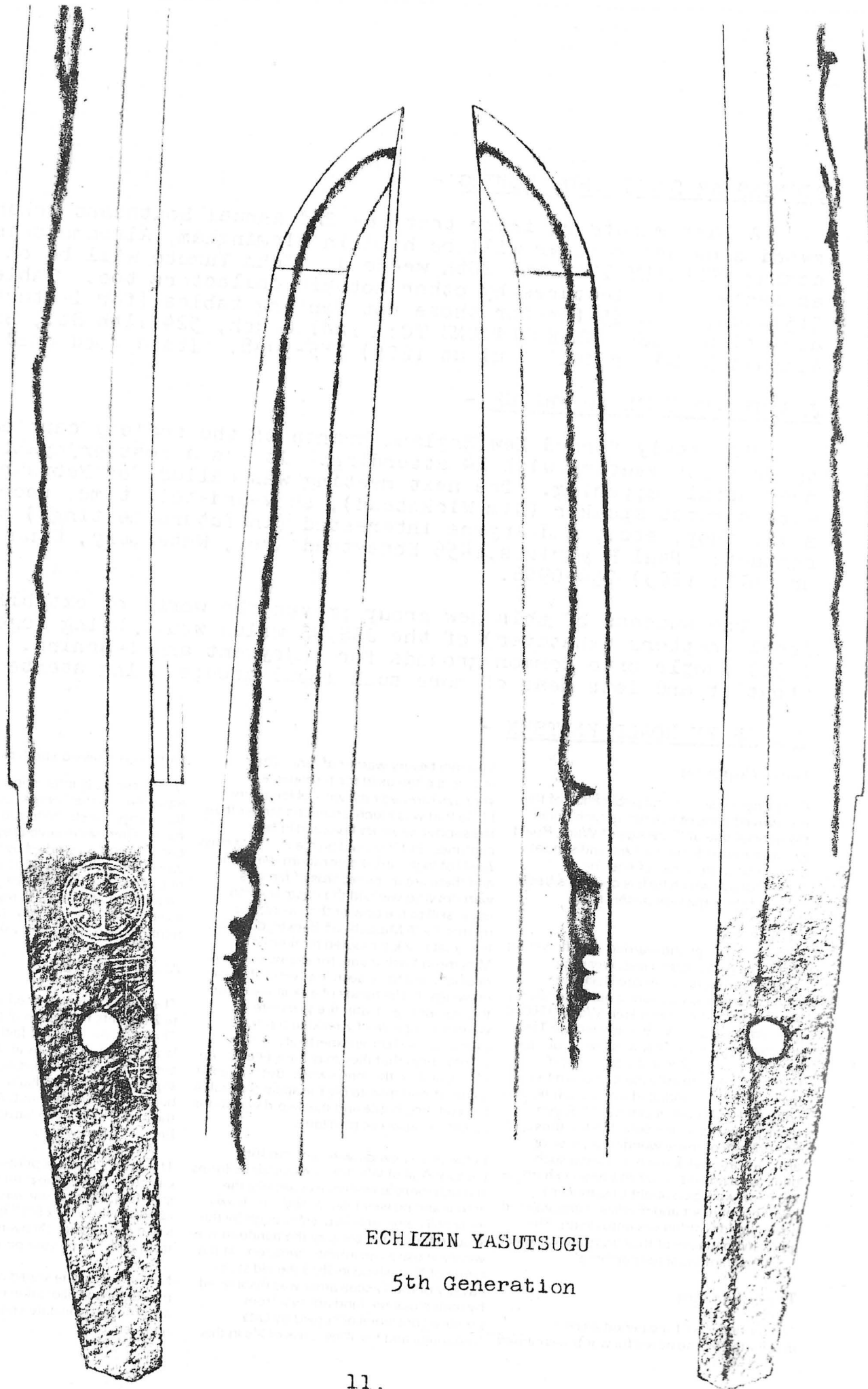
Fifth generation YASUTSUGU was born 1683 and died 1734. He is listed in Hawley's list of swordsmiths as YA-464 and in Fujishiro as S-294. The blade has JOJO SAKU papers from the TOKEN TAIKAI shinsa, held in San Francisco the summer of 1976. Though there were twelve generations of YASUTSUGU only the first generation through the fifth are noteworthy.

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DONATION RECEIVED -

Apparently, an article appearing in the recent edition of the AMERICAN COLLECTOR made mention of our organization. Several inquiries came in as to membership as well as a very thoughtful letter from a Mr. R. G. Hughes of Longview, Washington.

He says, "Recently read the article in the AMERICAN COLLECTOR and wish to congratulate your group in their work. I am enclosing a check for five dollars to help cover costs." It is very good that some people are moved to help in some way to assist us in our efforts. It is commendable on Mr. Hughes' part. A letter of thanks has been sent to him, thanking him on behalf of the society.



ECHIZEN YASUTSUGU

5th Generation

BIRMINGHAM SWORD SHOW COMING -

A last minute reminder that the 2nd Annual Southeast Token Kai sword show and seminar will be held in Birmingham, Alabama this coming FEBRUARY 19th and 20th weekend. John Yumoto will be on hand as sensei with lectures by other notable collectors too. Tables are \$15 each, or a \$5 fee for those not renting tables (for lectures and admission. SEND RESERVATIONS TO:

JSS/US NEW ENGLAND BRANCH

The newly formed New England branch of the society carried out their first meeting with 14 attending. It was a most enjoyable and successful happening. The next meeting was called for February 4th with a guest speaker (Jim Wickstead), show-and-tell time, secret sales shop, etc., and anyone interested (in future meetings) should

contact:

or call:

The success of this new group proves the worth of establishing local chapters (whatever) of the JSS/US which would bring together local people onto common grounds for enjoyment and learning. Think about it and lets hear of more such local groups being started.

PRINTS BY ROALD KNUITSEN -

The background

Following the successful publication of the first two editions of five prints each under the general title of "The Age of War", Roald Knutsen has widened his field and specially drawn two more series of fine line illustrations in which he has created a fresh image of the Japanese *bushi* on the battlefield.

In these drawings the warriors, the flowering of the emerging *bushi* class, wear the splendid armours of the late Heian and Kamakura periods, covering here specifically the time from the bloody Heiji War in 1160 to the Gempei War 1180-85 between the Taira and the Minamoto. This was the heroic age of the Japanese *Bushi*. It was a time of fierce warfare with little mercy shown to the defeated, but it produced many great figures endowed with martial virtues. Although these prints are in line only, the textures and fine colours of these wonderful *yoroi*, or armours, are well known. Wearing such brightly laced and richly embellished harness the great warriors sought to symbolise pureness of heart and displayed unparalleled bravery and faithfulness unto death. The glory and panache of their wars are captured in several famous scroll paintings.

The equipment

The battlefields of the period were dominated by the powerful war bows carried

by almost every warrior of rank. Their retainers often used the formidable *shobuzukuri-naginata* with its long curved blade that was much larger and longer than the shorter *naginata* favoured in later centuries. But it should be realised that even *bushi* of high rank did not scorn the spear and there are many records of famous warriors who wielded the *naginata* with equal skill to the bow or the sword; the mighty Saitō Musashi-bō Benkei (d. 1185), the great black armoured retainer of Minamoto Yoshitsune, for example. These *naginata* are to be seen in several of these drawings. In the hands of a skillful warrior this *naginata* and later the *yari* were weapons capable of wreaking terrible execution and some experts of classical *bujutsu* hold that they may have been more effective than the long sword. But it needed a very strong man to ply the spear through a long pitched battle and the sword was more suited to Japanese physique.

In the three new drawings of the 16th century Age of War the *yari* in various forms is much more in evidence especially the longer and heavier bladed *omi-yari*. Bows were still commonly in use although by the second half of the century the handgun was widely in use as an infantry weapon. At the battle of Nagashino in 1575 the old style cavalry of the Takeda army was decimated by matchlock fire (and arrows) from prepared positions occupied by Oda Nobunaga and his allies. Loss of life in this

battle was heavy on both sides, though.

One particularly interesting piece of equipment is the *horagai*, or war horn, made from large conch shells and carried by many *bushi*. There were several systems of communication studied by the *samurai* that came under the general heading of *heijutsu*, or tactics. The horn was of great importance on the field of battle and one school (*ryū*) for its study still survives; the Takeda-ryū from Soma, near Sendai, in northern Japan.

About the prints

There are genuine limited editions restricted to 200 prints from each of the 10 drawings. They are carefully and faithfully printed in litho from the originals and each print has been inspected and passed by the artist and signed by him individually, not on the plate but in pencil on the print. After printing all the plates have been 'struck' to ensure no further reproduction.

The illustrations are printed on a high quality cartridge paper. The print is within a standard drawn frame measuring approximately 9" x 5 1/2" but printed on a sheet cut generously oversize to allow you to suitably frame your print or sets.

No more than the stated number will be produced and allocation will be made strictly according to the date your application is received.

PRINTS (cont'd.) -

These historically accurate prints are available from Mr. Knutsen. For further details, contact Mr. Knutsen or write the NL Editor and a copy of his flyer will be forwarded to you with prices.



Mr. Knutsen was contacted earlier as to the possibility of having him do some articles for our Newsletter. He was very happy to help us out with such material, but was in want of suggestions as to topic material. Any suggestions along these lines should be forwarded to the NL which in turn will be suggested to Mr. Knutsen. (Mr. Knutsen is author of JAPANESE POLEARMS and is a highly recognized authority on the pole arm and tactics, use, etc.).

LIBRARY TRANSFER -

Requests for library books should now be directed to the new librarian: Howard Sloan. An up-dated book-list will be sent out very soon.

QUESTIONS? -

John Yumoto had kindly offered his services to us in answering sword/fittings questions from the membership. Questions of general interest will be included in the NL. John asks that a SASE be included with any requests. He also adds that the only restriction he would have to observe would be on the mention of monetary values. All appraisals would, of course, be based on the information provided and be based on his own knowledge and opinions. Editor's note: It is perhaps best to avoid "dollar questions" from any of our advisors and if such questions are in order, realize the limitations of such judging via the mails from descriptions and oshigata.

BOOK SERVICE -

Albert Yamanaka has confirmed that books can be ordered directly from Japan through him. Such orders will prove a savings to those ordering. He asks that a 40% charge (verify this) would be added on the cost for postage and handling, which means still the cheapest price in town for us. It is suggested that you write and ask for a firm price prior to ordering. Mention JSS/US membership. Write:

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1976 WRAP-UP - A total of six NEWSLETTERS were mailed out in 1976 (Vol.8 Nos.1-6). The 1975 BULLETIN went out in February. The 1976 BULLETIN hopefully will be mailed towards the end of this month. Anyone not receiving what is coming to them should contact the editor.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - The next NL will be mailed about the first of April. All material needed for that issue should be in to the Editor no later than the third week of March.

RON HARTMANN