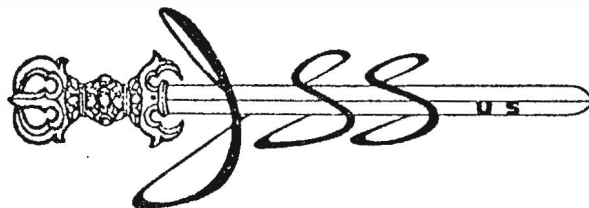


# Japanese Sword Society of the United States, Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

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

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Volume 9 No. 3

May - June 1977

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### NEW MEMBERS -

The following are new members in our society. We welcome them and hope that they will be enjoy their membership.

Major John F. Banks,  
Thomas Shigemitsu  
Steven R. Barth  
Stanley M. Misaki  
William J. Simanski  
Terrence R. Burke Jr.  
Mikio Sano  
Karl H. Felten  
Garrett R. Ivey  
Martin D. Shyba,

### BIRMINGHAM SHOW COMING

Due to popular request, the Southeast Token Kai will hold a summer sword show, August 19th thru 21st. This will again be held at the Rodeway Inn in Birmingham, Alabama and will be without any scheduled lectures (strictly a buy-sell-trade event this time). Anyone interested should contact: Paul Couch

If at all possible, the JSS/US should schedule a meeting at this show. It would be a good time to discuss a few things and to introduce each other. Any Officer or Director planning on attending should please keep this in mind and see that a meeting is called.

### SOCIETY DUES -

A number of people have neglected to pay their 1977 to date. Please check your membership cards for your "paid up to..." date to see if perhaps you have forgotten or over-looked your membership dues.



## TREASURE SWORDS OF JAPAN -

A stimulating letter was received the other week from David Pepper telling about the coming "Treasure Swords of Japan" exhibit which is to be held at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto from July 1 to September 5 this year. David is a member of the sword exhibition committee and is deeply involved in this presentation. His letter (in part).....

The show has been from the beginning, planned as an introduction to the subject (of swords) for the general public. However, as word came from Japan, there are some fabulous pieces being sent over. So, while there will still be much information on a general introductory level, the fine-art aspect of the exhibit has increased tremendously.

We are trying to give a good historical setting, and will have many accessory artifacts in the exhibit: armor, paintings, weapons other than swords, and much more. Part of the exhibit will be a "glossary" of both terminology and techniques, illustrated with actual examples. Again, this is aimed at the non-collector but the serious student will find items of interest throughout the display.

Among blades and koshirae will be many Juyō and even special Juyō pieces, as well as one Juyō Bunkazai tachi - the Ichimonji which was displayed in the 1976 Japan House exhibition. It is extremely rare that an Important Cultural Property such as this is allowed to travel.

If I may tantalize you with some names; in the way of blades we will have genuine examples of: Bizen Iyesuke, Bizen Chikakage, Yamashiro Kunitsuna, Sōshū Yukimitsu, Masamune, Sadamune, Muramasa (two), Bitchu Tsugunao, Hasebe Kunishige, Hankei, Kunihiro, Shimotsuka (Yasutsugu), Kotetsu, Inoue Shinkai, Sukehiro, among others! Koshirae: many types and periods will be represented including one 14th century tachi and some Momoyama and pre-Edo period examples. A large number of rare kodogu and tsuba will be on exhibit as well. The actual number of artifacts in the exhibit should be over 200, mostly swords and fittings.

This is not a commercial venture, but has been sponsored by various public and private institutions around the country. Dr. Compton very generously lending some of the same blades and koshirae previously exhibited in New York last year. Sponsoring institutions are Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Japanese Canadian Centennial Society, Ontario Science Centre, and the Royal Ontario Museum. There will not be any buy-sell-trade facilities as this will be strictly an exhibit.

Mr. Morihiro Ogawa has written the NL that he will be bringing these fine swords, etc., over for the exhibit. Total number he is bringing is 43! Hopefully, the JSS/US can push for a photographic coverage of the total exhibit for "everyones" enjoyment!

## THE JAPANESE AND TSUKUROI

by Peter Bleed

Keith Evan's discussion of Tsukuroi in Volume 14 of the society "Bulletin" was both enlightening and entertaining. I hope that Keith will continue to prepare papers of this kind because most of us are misinformed and mystified by the whole subject of "repair and alteration". As I read and re-read Keith's article, I recalled some experiences I had in Japan last year. I think they might shed some light on the Japanese view of Tsukuroi and I hope that they may be interesting to other members.

Since we lived in a relatively small city - Sendai - I did not get to know any big time dealers. I was fortunate enough, however, to make the acquaintance of a number of polishers, smiths and other craftsmen who make their living off of swords. Most of these fellows had small personal collections, but none were dealers or "hustlers". As a group, most were serious artists who loved swords and also had to make a living. The thing that impressed me was that they all did some kind of Tsukuroi but that it was not done in a dishonest or under-the-table manner. A couple of examples may well illustrate this.

On a visit to a young polisher, I found him cutting grooves on what had been a plain hirazukuri kotō tantō. I was shocked and asked him why he was doing it. He replied that the blade should have been made with grooves and that grooves would make it look better. It happened that his sensei was along and the young fellow proudly showed the half-finished work to the older man. The master said that it was indeed coming along well and that the blade would look good when the job was done. I asked if there had been some flaws on the blade and was told that there had been none. As far as this fellow was concerned he was applying his skill to a mediocre blade to make it better. He was very open about it and showed no hesitation in discussing his work.

Another time, while visiting a man who makes fittings and habaki, I was shown an album containing photos of his work. Intricate habaki and fine silver mounts were recorded with a single photo, altho two pages and several photos showed before and after shots of an Umegane project he had done. He described the inlay in detail and was clearly quite proud of his work. He said he had turned a bad blade into something worthwhile, and that the job had not been an easy one. I suppose that his work had increased the value of the sword, but that did not seem to be his motivation.

Finally, while visiting the forge of a highly respected swordsmith, I noticed some obviously old blades on a work bench. Thinking these might be something I should ignore, I thought twice before asking about them. Curiosity got the better of me though,

TSUKUROI cont'd.

so I decided to be a forward American and ask. The smith left what he was doing and told me that they were kotō Bizen blades he was retempering. He explained that although he worked in Yamato-den, retempering Bizen blades was one of his specialties. Again he was completely open, apparently proud of his ability, and convinced that he was improving an otherwise ruined sword.

It is possible that these men were more open to me than they would have been to other Japanese, but I doubt it. The smith's work with Bizen blades is described in published sources and I know other Japanese got to see the fittings maker's album. All this convinces me that Tsukuroi has its place and that it becomes bad only when it is improperly applied by a craftsman or misrepresented by a seller.

KINKO MEIKAN TRANSLATION -

John Yumoto has just announced that after many, many hours of translation the english translation of "Kinko Meikan" is almost ready. A limited number (100) of copies will be made available. Cost will probably be \$40 (U.S.) for the Japanese text plus the english translation. This set will be a must for every serious collector's library.

Briefly, the "Kinko Meikan" is a collection of signature photographs which appear on tsuba and other fittings of the sword. It also gives a brief informative explanation on the artist as well as an appropriate "rating" of the smith. In a sense, it is a fittings "Fujishiro" and invaluable as a reference works. The book is published by "Token Shunju-sha", Tokyo and authored by Mr. Kenichi Kokubo and Mr. Kenzo Otsubo, well known experts in this field and presently serving as judges for the NBTHK for tsuba and fittings. Mr. Kazuo Iida, president of Token Shunju-sha is to be commended for publishing this excellent book. A sample of one photograph from the book is illustrated below.

The "Introduction" to the translation fully explains format followed. John has set up a very complete yet simple to use format in english by which we can all use this book to full advantage.

For further information on this works and/or reserving your copy of the two volumes, please contact John immediately and express your wishes. Write: John Yumoto

On behalf of the membership, our thanks to John for making this project a reality!



軒  
菊地氏  
儀助  
四郎兵衛  
忠義  
山城  
任  
後期  
良工  
宋書

MOMOKAWA NAGAYOSHI OSHIGATA REMARKS -

John Yumoto has been kind enough to send in the following additional remarks concerning the oshigata which appeared in the March-April issue of the Newsletter.

The geneology states that Momogawa Nagayoshi was a student (or son) of Kanro (not Kando) Toshinaga. According to "Nippon-tō Meikan" by Mr. Masakuni Ishii and commented by Dr. Kunzan Homma, the most recent and complete directory of smiths, (P.687) there were four Nagayoshi of Momokawa who worked approximately from 1360-1530 A.D., the first master circa Teiji, 1362. According to Dr. Homma's comment, "Nagayoshi was known to be a student of Kanro Toshinaga, however at a slightly later period and judging from his work this relationship is doubtful".

Again on page 624, Kanro Toshinaga of Omi Province who worked circa Enbun, 1256. Dr. Homma commented saying "Toshinaga was said to be a student of Takagi Sadamune, however, studying his work it seems he was a student of Yamato school". Also Dr. Homma pointed out that a place called "Momogawa" is not historically found in the province of Echigo. The Nagayoshi inscribed "Etshu-shu" thus leads him to think it might be in Echizen Province (ref.P.687).

There is a brief comment made about Hokuriku-do blades, (coast of Japan Sea area such as Wakasa, Etchizen, Etchu, Etchigo, Kaga, etc.), by Dr. Kanzan Sato on the revised "Nippon-tō Koza" Vol.2 pp. 328. He states that "Hokkoku blades are underrated....specially around Oei period they have produced better blades than that of Hirotsugu and Hiromasa and others of Soshu school smiths, and are about equal with that of Nobukuni of Kyo, late Tegai school of Yamato, and many smiths of Bizen of that period....".

By studying the oshigata of the attributed Nagayoshi, the writer overlooked "togi-heri", or reduced in size by grinding. The original shape of the tantō was about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  bu wider than as it is today. The original shape figuring from the lost ha-machi and the curvature of Habaki-shita apparently was not such a narrow blade for it's time.

Also studying the nakago of the tantō, it seems that the nakago-jiri or butt was filed off

I agree as Dr. Sato teaches us that Hokkoku blades have often a touch of "Ayasugi-hada" which the writer of the oshigata described. I would still like very much to know if the "slight midare utsuri reflection" is not a "shirake-utsuri". (editor comment: I think the difference here is midare-utsuri would be more continuous and shirake-utsuri more spotty and less continuous.....John?). \*\*

I have also found that if a blade has a rather wide yakiba in the area of the kissaki (tip), I must make sure if the blade has been "Togi-heri" or not.

J.Y.

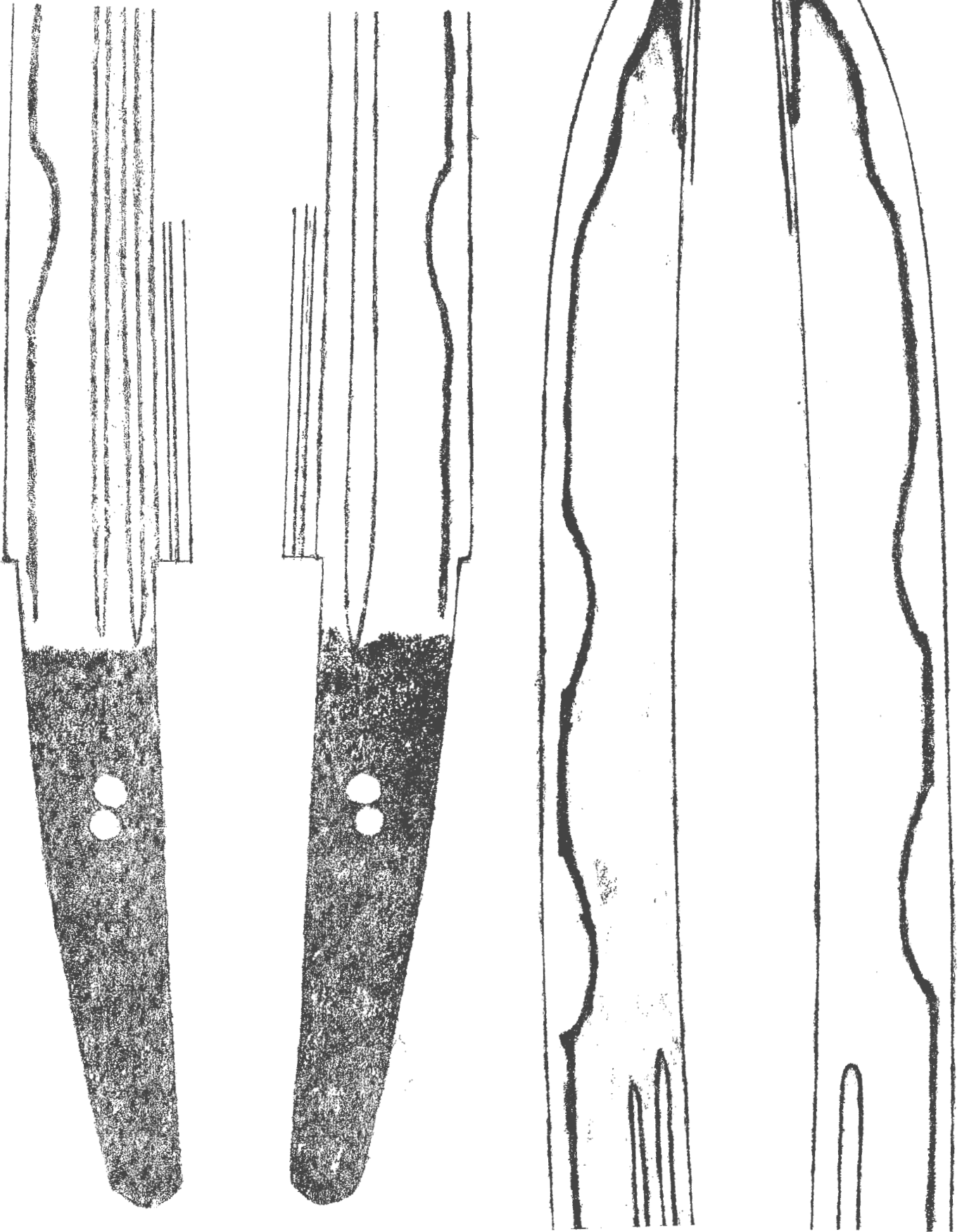
\*\*see page 9 this issue

SUNSHŪ SHIMADA JU YOSHISUKE III

Oshigata by Gary Haulman

- TYPE AND SHAPE: Ko-wakizashi of hira-zukuri shape and shin-no-mune. When the wakizashi is held one finds it is light and well balance.
- HAMON: The hamon is worked in nie and is typical of the Shimada school. The valley of the notare is close to the cutting edge and is suguha (straight). The boshi is komaru sagari with deep kaeri.
- JIHADA: Mokume Masame-majiri.
- NAKAGO: The tang is ubu and tango shape with katesagari file marks. The tip is kirijiri. The upper mekugi-ana is punched and the lower is drilled.
- DIMENSIONS: Length 35.0cm Sori 0.8cm
- HI: Ura: Gomabashi Omote: Koshi-hi
- SCHOOL: Shimada school of Suruga Province. They were very active and traveled around the Kanto Plain. They are known as Inaka smiths. They made blades in Soshu, Mino, and Bizen traditions. Though most of the Shimada smiths works are not considered first rate, they are still greatly appreciated by collectors. In the case of this blade, it is very high quality and a very beautiful blade.
- REMARKS: The blade has JoJo Saku papers from the Token Taikai Shinsa, San Francisco 1976. (JoJo Saku indicating very good work). It is attributed to "Sunshu Shimada ju Yoshisuke III" of the Tenmon Era (1532). This is Hawley number YO-987. At least one of this smith's blades is Juyo and is listed in Volume 12, part 2 - #32 of Juyo Token Nado Zufu.

The tsuka is wrapped with white tsuka-ito in the Makikake-no-Kashira style. The menuki are copper three legged urns with a lion on the top. The fuchi is very high quality with copper waves and gold/shakudo rocks and is signed "Nomura Kanenori Sei Kaneishi". The tsuba is iron with a gold, silver and copper plum blossom design. The Niji habaki is copper. The kodzuka has fan, jewel, comb and hat design. The saya is excellent with the quarter below the koiguchi kanagu ribbed and lacquered black and the remainder striped black and dark brown lacquer. The kojiri is of silver.



Sunshu Shimada ju Yoshisuke III  
Suruga Province - Circa 1532  
7.

STOLEN SWORDS -

The following is a news article, Hokubai Mainichi newspaper, San Francisco, March 29, 1977. Translated by Betty and Richard Hayashi.

JUYO BUNKA ZAI (Important Cultural Property) CLASS SWORDS  
STOLEN. \$10,000 reward offered for their recovery.

Kobe, Japan - March 1977: In the city of Miki near Kobe during a robbery, two Juyo Token (ICP) swords valued at over ¥100,000,000 (\$300,000) were stolen. Police investigation reports the following:

- #1 - Name of sword: BITCHU AOE MORITOSHI SAKU  
Signature: unsigned  
Mounting: Shirazaya  
Length: 74cm (29 inches)  
Period: early Kamakura  
Classification: Juyo Bunka Zai (ICP)  
Value: ¥60,000,000 (\$180,000)
- #2 - Name of sword: SUKEZANE  
Signature: signed "Sukezane"  
Mounting: Shirazaya  
Length: (not given)  
Period: Early Kamakura  
Classification: Juyo Bijitsu Token (IAP)  
Value: ¥40,000,000 (\$120,000)

The name of the person robbed is Mr. Nishimura, president of a company and also a sword collector. He has offered \$10,000 as a reward for their recovery. If found please contact him at:

Although unlikely, there is a possibility that these swords might turn up in the U.S. as they would be very difficult to sell in Japan.

\* \* \* \* \*

WANTED AND FOR SALE ITEMS - (A free service to our members)

- WANTED: A copy of "Higo", by Jacoby. Also, if we could find out if this book's copywrite has expired (or if we could get the permission of the Author, etc.) the society could publish this excellent German text in English (we have a completed translation on file). Any lawyer-member who would care to check into this would certainly be doing the society a favor. Please contact the NL Editor if you have a volume available and/or information regarding copywrite.

Copies of "Tantō" by Suzuki are also desired. Numerous requests have been sent to the NL by members.



WANTED/FOR SALE cont'd.

- FOR TRADE: Daishō, shakudo nanako kiri mon mounts (fuchi, kashira, menuki, tsuba, kogai and kodzuka all match en suite). Plain black lacquer saya, black sageo and tsuka-ito. Gold kiri mon on metal mounts. Blades slightly tired and unsigned; probably koto Bizen blades. Will trade for excellent or big name blades, super fittings, etc. Contact: Allen E. Feldman,
- WANTED: Shinshinto Taikan copy. Contact: Don Williamson,
- SERVICES: Hand made shirazaya and tsukamaki. First class work. Prices on request.

SOCIETY PIN -

Many months ago John Bracher wrote the NL and suggested that perhaps we should see about a society button hole type pin which when worn would point out one's membership at shows. Many years ago, such a pin was available (1960-61?) but a common supply was apparently never made available to the membership. This same pin idea is suggested every once in awhile by a member and perhaps we should look into this. A small society "Ken" would be okay and of very moderate price...perhaps given to a new member upon joining. If anyone wishes to look into this venture, feel free to do so. I would then aire the findings in the NL as they materialize.

SHIRAKE UTSURI - (ref. page 5 this issue)

A definition of "Shirake Utsuri" has been found to be as follows:  
Shirake Utsuri is an utsuri which appears near the edge of the shinogi and will be very clear and will not resemble any of the other utsuri. It will be whitish. The utsuri itself is not clearly definable since it's border lines are sort of "fuzzy". It is found on most of the Koto Kyushu smiths such as Naminohira, Enju, Miike and others including Minara smiths of Bingo Province, most of the Kaga smiths as well as on many of the works of the Seki smiths of Mino.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - The July-August issue of the NL will go to press around August 10th. Please have all material for that issue to the Editor well ahead of this date please.



RON HARTMANN